

BOARDROOM CHATTER

PUBLICATION PREPARED BY ACPS PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mrs. Crystal Bender, President
Mr. Robert Farrell, Vice President
Mrs. Debra Frank
Mrs. Tammy Fraley
Dr. David Bohn
Mr. Jeff Blank, Superintendent
Mr. Mitchell Septoff, SMOB

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Present Proclamation Recognizing May 3-7, 2021, as National Teacher Appreciation Week

The school board presented a proclamation recognizing May 3-7, 2021, as National Teacher Appreciation Week sponsored by the National PTA. Teachers mold future citizens through guidance and education; they encounter students of widely differing backgrounds; and our country's future depends upon providing quality education to all students. Teachers spend countless hours preparing lessons, evaluating progress, counseling and coaching students, and performing community service. The school board encouraged all members of the community to join in expressing appreciation to ACPS teachers for their dedication and devotion to their work.

Recognize 2021 High School Student Salute Winners

Three ACPS students were recently selected as 2021 recipients of the WCBC/Frostburg State University annual High School Student Salute Program scholarships. Jada Jones, Fort Hill High School, will receive a \$5,000 one-year scholarship to FSU for the 2021-2022 academic year. Richard Day, Allegany High School, is the recipient of \$500 scholarships to FSU for the upcoming year. Emily Lease was originally selected as a \$500 scholarship recipient as well, but has opted to attend ACM's nursing program. The Chamber of Commerce Education Committee will select a new Student Salute winner in the near future. This program is a collaborative effort to recognize high school seniors who excel in the classroom. The program was founded by WCBC and is sponsored by Younger Toyota, FSU, the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce, and the Board of Education. Those students identified as exceptional academic achievers, based on GPA, school and community leadership, and who intend to enroll in FSU earn the opportunity to qualify for scholarships. Applications are distributed and then collected by ACPS. The information on the applications is then converted into "on-air" salutes that run daily on WCBC. Applications are then forwarded to the Chamber of Commerce's Education Committee to select the FSU scholarship recipients.

Recognition of Student Page

Mr. John Logsdon, ACPS Supervisor of Federal Programs, announced the 2021 Student Page, William Swink, an incoming senior at Fort Hill High School. The purpose of this program is to raise the youth awareness level in state government and legislative proceedings. In order to qualify for the program, students must be in their senior year of high school at a Maryland public or private school and be at least sixteen years old. He served virtually for a two-week period of the legislative session.

Present Proclamation Recognizing May 7th as School Lunch Hero Day

The school board presented a proclamation recognizing May 7, 2021, as School

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meetings held on April 20, 2021
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of April 1-30, 2021
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of April 1-30, 2021
4. Receive monthly IT report
5. Receive monthly financial report

Lunch Hero Day as designated by Maryland's Governor, Larry Hogan. Nutritious meals at school are an essential part of the school day. To promote growth and development of children, the ACPS Food and Nutrition Services Department staff are committed to providing healthful, nutritious meals. The men and women who prepare and serve school meals help nurture children through their daily interactions and support. The school board encouraged the community to join them in expressing their deep appreciation to these valuable employees and commended their good work on behalf of the students in ACPS.

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES

Summer School & Recovery Programs Update

Dr. Kim Kalbaugh, ACPS Chief Academic Officer, updated the school board on ACPS's summer school and summer recovery programs. At the elementary level, ACPS will sponsor summer recovery programs in English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Additionally, students in the special education program will be invited to attend the extended school year services and/or compensatory services. Pre-K and elementary students will attend a half-day program, which will focus on skill building, and school counselors will provide lessons to classrooms from the Toolkit program promoting social-emotional well-being. For ELA, students will receive instruction focusing on identified standards and key areas of focus. For math, students will receive 60 minutes of math instruction each day. Each session will begin with direct instruction on the identified standards out of the iReady Classroom curriculum. The direct instruction will be followed by a hands-on project/activity to reinforce the instruction. Elementary special education students will attend their Extended School Year services and/or compensatory service the same weeks the general education students attend. ESY is determined annually at each student's IEP meeting. In addition, the regional SLE programs currently at Cash Valley Elementary School will attend a four-week program at South Penn Elementary School.

For secondary summer compensatory and recovery programs, thematic units have been designed around middle school ELA, math, science, and social studies standards. Social-emotional learning in the areas of Restorative Circles and emotional/behavioral instruction will be taught. A variety of hands-on, engaging activities are planned, including robotics activities and physical education. All secondary students with disabilities are invited to attend as well. At the middle school level in ELA and math, students will be using the Moby Max online program, which provides individualized learning, customized to each student meeting them where they are in their learning. Moby Max has shown strong, positive improvement in student performance for both contents. The enrichment activities could range from arts and crafts to music to physical education to STEM along with other options dependent on the teachers' talents and interests.

39 seniors are currently in jeopardy of not meeting high school graduation requirements, and some are failing multiple courses. Senior Summer School is an opportunity for students that are 1-4 credits short of graduation requirements to earn them and participate in a summer 2021 graduation ceremony. There is no cost to students. Credit recovery Summer School is available to any high school student that failed a course during the 2020-2021 school year or before. There is no cost to attend credit recovery summer school. The senior summer school and credit recovery summer school are in-person and offer transportation and a meal to students. In-person is needed because these students didn't respond successfully to the virtual model of instruction and need in-person support. 75% of students who failed semester one did not log on and take the opportunity to complete the course work through the online program Apex that would have raised their semester one grade to 60%, or passing.

Original Credit Summer School is available for all ACPS students in grades 9-12 for the 2021-2020 school year. Courses are open to students who are enrolled for the first time, and payment can be made through the student's PayPams account or by check or money order. A reduced rate of 50% is offered to students who meet the federal guidelines for the free and reduced meal program. PE will be in-person at Allegany from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. daily. Local field trips may be arranged on Fridays if local health metrics permit. For in-person programs, transportation and meals will be provided. Health, Personal Financial Literacy, and Contemporary Music will be offered as completely online courses and will use the Apex online platform with a designated time for daily instruction. Health will require one day of in-person instruction for CPR.

Parents should contact their child's school counselor if they need additional information. For the high school credit recovery or original credit courses, parents can contact the school counselor or Trina Simpson, the coordinator of these programs, at trina.simpson@acpsmd.org.

FINANCIAL UPDATES

Budget Amendment / Financial Update

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, provided the school board with a financial update and requested approval for a budget amendment. ACPS had a number of positive variances compared to budget this fiscal year as there were programs including Outdoor School and many professional development opportunities, for example, that did not occur as a result of COVID. There were also savings in Fixed Charges as the district had a good year relative to healthcare costs. However, the district also had other areas where additional funding has been required to be spent, such as in Food and Nutrition Services.

Therefore, Mr. McKenzie requested the following year-end budget transfers for those items as well as one-time infrastructure items and efficiency upgrades.

- Budget transfer of \$400,000 to cover anticipated shortfall within Food and Nutrition Services. While students have been eating for free this year, ACPS has staffed food services throughout the various stages of the pandemic to provide children with breakfast and lunches daily without the benefit of the additional revenue resources that come when students pay for meals and purchase a la carte items.
- Requesting \$250,000 for Operations to purchase \$160,000 in additional equipment to use within buildings to more efficiently and effectively clean and maintain buildings. The additional \$90,000 will be used to upgrade telephone equipment at six remaining schools, which will provide SIP compliancy to allow phones to operate on the ACPS network without a telephone service provider.
- Requesting \$350,000 for projects and infrastructure needs within the Maintenance Department. This includes \$180,000 for the replacement of four trucks from 1999; an appropriation of \$75,000 to purchase carpeting for summer flooring projects within schools; and the remainder will be spent on paving projects.
- \$500,000 budget transfer to the Retiree Insurance Fund to allow the district to increase the balance of the fund without taking funds from the trust in the near future.

There are no budgetary implications relative to this amendment as there is a net difference of zero. The funds to appropriate for these transactions will come from positive budget variances. This transfer amendment will allow the district to move forward with projects this fiscal year as well as provide increased infrastructure stability into the future. The school board unanimously approved this amendment. This will now go to the County Commissioners for final approval of this amendment request.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

Chromebook Availability

Mrs. Nil Grove, ACPS Chief IT Officer, provided the school board with updates on chromebook purchases. A total of 8,600 devices were purchased by ACPS from April 2020 to date using CARES funding, Title I funding, grant funding, and local funds. All students will have new CARES chromebooks at the start of the 2021-2022 school year with accident protection not available on previous units. Some laptops are still necessary for students in specialized programs. ACPS plans to provide all 6th and 9th grade students with new devices.

Schoology Status

Mrs. Grove also provided the school board with an update on Schoology, a Power School product and ACPS's cloud-based learning management platform that offers learning opportunities that can very closely mirror face-to-face instruction. Schoology is a nationwide product also being used by other Maryland school districts including Frederick, Baltimore, Garrett, Kent, Worcester, Calvert, and Cecil Counties. Since Schoology is cloud-based and not hosted by ACPS, any outages or degradation of service will impact not only schools, but also those working virtually from home. ACPS has encouraged students and teachers to continue to refresh their Schoology pages in the event of an outage to continue to get current status updates. If an outage lasts longer than 20 minutes, an announcement will be made by ACPS.

Schoology also utilizes Amazon Web Services as their platform to store data, and ACPS also used this product for some of its own storage needs. Schoology has been very responsive to outages and notifies its customers of frequent maintenance and infrastructure growth updates. Schoology is reliant on Internet service, and ACPS has worked to grow and increase bandwidth to 4 GB to all buildings to ensure that if/when issues arise within Schoology they aren't being caused by the school system. Outages can occur at any time and cannot be predicted. ACPS has worked to implement a "Plan B" in these instances. Google Meet has been ideal in allowing students and teachers to continue to work together virtually if Schoology's Big Blue Conference tool is unavailable.

NEW BUSINESS

Athletics State Playoffs

Mrs. Tracey Leonard, ACPS Assistant Supervisor of Health, PE, Athletics, and Mental Health, provided the school board with an update on athletics, specifically several major agenda items on the MPSSAA's Board of Control Meeting scheduled for May 19th. The Executive Council is proposing the following waiver requests for consideration of local school systems and the state for the 2021-2022 school year:

- Maximum Number of Contests During a Sports Season (COMAR 13.A.06.03.06 B (1))
- Sanctioning for Interstate Competition (COMAR 13.A.06.03.09 (1) (b))
- Sanctioning for Intrastate Competition (COMAR 13.A.06.03.09 (2) (c))

On April 23, 2021, MPSSAA shared preliminary state tournament recommendations with local school system athletic supervisors. MPSSAA members will vote during the Board of Control meeting on May 18, 2021, on whether or not to move forward with spring state tournaments. Some of the steps taken by the Executive Councils and Sport Committee Directors are as follows:

1. Track and field and tennis regions have been divided into sections to host small geographical area 4-8 line brackets for the opening round.
2. Track and field has eliminated automatic qualifiers, ensuring only eight entries per event at the Regional Finals and State meet.
3. Tennis is set up as a single-elimination tournament, ensuring the Regional Finals will contest a single match and the State Tournament will contest a Semifinal and Final round only.
4. Baseball, softball, and lacrosse will not use a minimum divisor for seeding purposes.
5. Baseball, softball, and lacrosse will hold all contests through the State Semifinals at the home hosting site unless an alternate site is approved.
6. All events will have the flexibility to be adjusted to ensure graduation conflicts are avoided at all costs.
7. COVID-19 Situations:
 - a. If a team is unable to advance in the state

tournament due to COVID-19, the following should occur: If the teams have not played each other, the non-COVID team will advance to the next round of competition; If the teams have played each other and the advancing team cannot proceed due to COVID, the team scheduled to play next will receive a bye/forfeit and advance to the subsequent round.

- b. If a school had difficulty after the state tournament begins, and the school must withdraw from the tournament: If a team/individual has entered the state tournament and must withdraw for reasons other than COVID, leave the field of play before the completion of a contest, or fails to continue play when eligible to do so, it will be considered conduct detrimental to the state tournament and penalties will be imposed; When a team/individual competes and loses during the state tournament, the losing team/individual does not advance if the winning team/individual is unable to compete in the next round. The next round game will become a forfeit and the team scheduled to play will advance to the next round; Contest dates will only be altered if there is a conflict with graduation.

Mrs. Leonard also provided the school board with a timeline for various actions, the next of which is the vote at the Board of Control meeting on May 19th. The school board agreed to have Allegany County's two votes in favor of the waiver requests. Communication on State Championships and State Finals sites will be communicated to local school districts after the Board of Control reaches a decision. Baseball and softball playoffs will begin June 7th and conclude on June 18th or 19th. Track and tennis playoffs will begin June 7th through June 10th and will conclude June 17th through June 19th. Graduating seniors will be permitted to participate in these events.

Renewal of Legal Services

The school board voted unanimously to retain the legal services

of the firm Geppert, McMullen, Paye and Getty for another one-year contract.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session June 8, 2021, as Necessary

The school board voted to meet in Executive Session on June 8, 2021, pending any appeals or unfinished business. The public may watch the livestream of the meeting at <http://bit.ly/ACPSMedia>. Community members may submit public comment via email to comments@acpsmd.org. Emails must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, June 7, 2021. During the public comment portion of the meeting, emails will be read in the order in which they were received. Personal information will not be withheld and anonymous submissions will not be considered. The Board President or her designee will read the constituent's name in addition to the public comment. The meeting time and location will be TBD.

BOARD MEMBER UPDATES & SMOB COMMENTS

Mr. Robert Farrell

At the beginning of the meeting, Mr. Farrell asked for a moment of silence in memory of Bonnie Holshey, who recently lost her courageous battle with cancer. Mrs. Holshey was an ACPS employee and most recently was a secretary at Mountain Ridge High School.

Mrs. Crystal Bender

Mrs. Bender noted that the Policy Committee held their first meeting since the start of the pandemic on May 3rd and are scheduled to meet again on May 17th in the hopes of having some polices in place for a first reading at the June school board meeting.

Mrs. Tammy Fraley

Mrs. Fraley noted that ACPS is in the initial planning stages regarding offering a fully virtual program for the 2021-2022 school year. The Maryland State Department of Education does not require school districts to provide a virtual program. Local school districts have the option to determine if a virtual program is needed. Students may need to qualify for the virtual program if the ACPS moves forward with a virtual option. There is currently a survey being distributed to gather information from parents about the potential need for a fully virtual program in ACPS. Additionally, Mrs. Fraley also noted that she plans to attend a legislative update at the Chamber of Commerce and advised Mr. Septoff, SMOB, that this may be a good place for students to get involved and participate in legislative proceedings.

Mrs. Deb Frank

Mrs. Frank thanked Mr. Septoff for his passion and commitment to his position as Student Member of the Board and noted that she admires his work and appreciated everything he had to say on behalf of the students of the Allegany County Public School System. She also congratulated the graduating Class of 2021 on their upcoming commencement and certification ceremonies and thanked students, parents and families, teachers, faculty, staff and administrators on a job well done this past school year in the face of the COVID pandemic.

Mr. Mitchell Septoff

Mr. Septoff updated the school board on his work over the past month to increase student involvement at both the BOE and in local government. The common theme among his student peers is that their voices aren't being heard. He asked the school board to please consider three things: 1) move the SMOB report to the beginning of the meeting so that the members can consider what students have to say during the meeting rather than at the next meeting one month later; 2) that the SMOB is permitted to listen in during Closed Sessions of the school board; 3) a long-term goal of allowing the SMOB partial voting rights.

Mr. Blank also took a moment at the beginning of the meeting to present Mitchell with a parting gift

CONSTITUENTS' COMMENTS

Mr. Wesley Brown, Parent

Mr. Brown addressed the school board to encourage them to continue with in-person school five full days a week moving forward.

Ms. Teresa Ward, Parent

Ms. Ward emailed the school board with her concern regarding virtual learning, who also feels that in-person learning is a much better option for students and families.

for his participation as Student Member of the Board this past school year and wished him well in his future endeavors.