

BOARDROOM CHATTER

PUBLICATION PREPARED BY: THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Report from Annual MABE Conference

Dr. Cox, along with school board members Tammy Fraley, Laurie Marchini, and board attorney, Gary Hanna, had the opportunity to attend the annual Maryland Association of Boards of Education conference in Ocean City. During the several day event, attendees heard from key note speakers and participated in workshops presented by other local school districts. The Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Karen Salmon, was also at the event and spoke to the group about the number of innovative programs across the state, many of which are in Allegany County.

Some of the topics of the workshops included a review of the Safe to Learn Act, equity vs. equality; the role of school board members; learning gaps; social emotional learning and the tools to drive academic achievement; the Ignite initiative to rekindle teachers' purpose and passion; a partnership to provide in-school mental health therapy and substance misuse; and agricultural in-class mobile learning environment. Allegany County also had the opportunity to present on their Chinese Immersion Program.

Dr. Cox and the superintendent group, PSSAM, also had the opportunity to meet with board attorneys to hear updates and presentations on laws, new legislation, and policies. Finally, school board member, Tammy Fraley, was elected as the secretary of MABE's Board of Directors.

Recognize Dr. Edward Root, 2018 MABE Distinguished School Board Service Award Recipient

The school board honored Dr. Edward Root for being the recipient of the MABE

Distinguished School Board Service Award. Dr. Root served on the Maryland State Board from 1999-2007, four of those years as president, and six years on the Allegany County Board, 2010-2016.

Dr. Root was instrumental in initiating the partial Chinese immersion program at West Side, securing funds to replace the 120-year old Allegany High School, and developing productive working relationships with the local government and business community. Dr. Root was also an active member of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education and served on a variety of committees over the course of his term.

INSTRUCTIONAL & DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

Alternative Programs Restructuring

Dr. Kim Kalbaugh, ACPS Chief Academic Officer, updated the school board on alternative programs. Last spring, ACPS began to explore necessary changes to improve alternative programs. The restructuring aligns with statewide efforts to reform school discipline so that all policies and practices related to student conduct foster appropriate behavioral expectations and incorporate prevention, intervention, restorative, and incentive-based strategies to respond to student misconduct. Educational lawyers advised staff that ACPS needed to ensure that it was a full-day alternative program staffed to provide therapeutic services.

ACPS was charged with developing a full-day tiered alternative program staffed with individuals who can provide a therapeutic environment and deliver behavioral health and wraparound services to students who exhibit challenging behaviors. Staffing also was to include a social worker and school psychologist. ACPS was also charged with providing additional student support

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Mr. Nicholas Hadley
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Ms. Eesha Bokil, SMOB

services, access to interventions and staff training at the school level for universal, targeted, and intensive behavioral practices and interventions. Finally, ACPS was also charged with appointing a mental health services coordinator for the district as part of the new Maryland law.

ACPS began to examine the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies in use; the total number of suspensions disaggregated by age, gender, race/ethnicity, and disability; the disproportionality ratios for the same categories; and differences among schools in both rates of suspension, expulsion, and referrals and disproportionality rates. Based on an annual review, staff will identify areas of concern and provide additional supports, services, and professional development. Goals and strategies will be included in the School Improvement Plans.

The process for this program restructuring included review of a considerable amount of research. Input was gathered from a workgroup consisting of administrators, supervisors, school counselors, and other school system personnel. Presentations were made to principals, assistant principals, secondary school counselors, and pupil personnel workers.

Finally, it was decided to change the name of the program to RESTART (Rehabilitate Every Student Through Academics, Resources, and Therapeutic Supports) and will be

INSTRUCTIONAL & DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES CONT.

house at the Eckhart School. The program will consist of eight academic periods and PRIDE time. There will be a special education teacher and academic interventions available. Therapeutic services will include individual counseling, group counseling, drug/alcohol counseling, mentoring, and a social/emotional learning coach provided through Title IV funds.

ACPS is developing tools to standardize the risk assessment process which include a clinical review tool, clinical interview questions, parent interview questions, student support plans, and a team risk assessment tool. Staff is also working with school administrators and school counselors on tiered school discipline practices and interventions for all students.

Safety & Security

Mr. Matt Marlowe, ACPS Interim Coordinator of Student Support Services, updated the school board on the newly activated Safe Schools Maryland Tip Line. The Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Maryland Center for School Safety collaborated to provide this tip line to schools to aid in the efforts to improve school safety. This tip line is an anonymous reporting system used to report threats to the safety and/or well-being of students. Students, parents, faculty, staff, and members of communities throughout Maryland may use this anonymous, app and web-based reporting system to share their concerns, such as: mental health crisis, bullying, school and community violence, drug activity, abuse, harassment, and other issues affecting Maryland students.

Additionally, the Maryland Center for School Safety has awarded a Safe Schools Fund grant. The grant is in the amount of \$10.6 million statewide, \$256,000 of which will go to Allegany County. These funds can be used for projects to enhance safety and security, not for personnel. The IAC has also awarded a \$10 million statewide safety grant, of which \$110,000 is designated for Allegany County. These funds will be used for construction projects to include closed circuit TV. These funds are also not to be used for personnel.

Maintenance & Construction

Mr. Vince Montana, ACPS Director of Facilities, updated the school board on several projects, including the following:

- Allegany High School – Although the school has opened, the contractor continues to work on various systems, complete punchlist items, and conduct staff training. Closeout activities include programming and testing the HVAC controls; monitoring by the architect of the contractor's progress of a detailed inspection that documents installations that are incomplete or incorrect or incidental damage to finishes to materials. Wiring for two additional computer labs was completed by maintenance department staff.
- FY 2020 CIP – Staff has submitted the FY 2020 CIP requests to the PSCP. The new regulations have resulted in many changes to the process.
- Westmar – Staff has taken possession of the scoreboard from FSU for use at the Westmar field. The scoreboard is being stored at the maintenance facility. Crews will install the scoreboard when time permits.
- Westernport – With the impending rain several weeks ago, maintenance crews lowered the flood panels that cover the windows at Westernport. Crews spent several days power washing the concrete foundation at the school while the panels were in place.
- Mt. Savage – Maintenance crews have replaced a large section of sidewalk at the rear of the school.
- Active Learning Labs – Two maintenance department mechanics are working nightshift to install wiring for the new elementary ALLs. The wiring has been completed at South Penn and is in progress at Flintstone. They have also completed the wiring for a new computer lab at Fort Hill.
- FY 2019 CIP – The final funding has not been approved by the BPW. Staff has not been notified when the funding will be approved.

Information Technology

Mrs. Nil Grove, ACPS Chief IT Officer, updated the school board on the following highlights from September 2018:

- Submitted for a State Farm Insurance grant for \$100,000 in order to provide more current classroom technology. Local funding has been severely cut and the demands for equipment has grown.
- Received notice that the ARC grant from additional Active Learning Labs will be provided once the full grant application is submitted. The due date is November 1st.
- Active Learning Lab furniture was delivered for Parkside, Flintstone, Northeast, South Penn, and Allegany. Staff is working on

INSTRUCTIONAL & DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES CONT.

the power, Ethernet, and computers.

- Began the conversion discussion efforts for Tyler Munis HR/Payroll. Kickoff meeting was held on October 2nd. Conversion typically lasts for six months.
- Bel Air's security storage server failed. Technicians tried multiple times to resuscitate unsuccessfully. Staff placed a unit pulled from the old Allegany at Bel Air for now until funding is available to purchase a new unit.
- Issues with the playback of the new Allegany security cameras. It appears that the ACPS video server cannot handle the number of cameras. It is recording by playback is unreliable.
- The PA system at Washington is failing. Staff is working with the vendor to perform diagnostics and pricing for a replacement, which could be costly.
- Changing the way the configuration and calling on the three new school's phone systems at John Humbird, Allegany, and Mountain Ridge, has resulted in a \$1,200 per month overall phone cost savings.
- Technician work orders are at their record high this time of year with teacher and student computer concerns, cameras, and badges.
- An updated to the ACPS website is underway to make it more responsive. Services were contracted with Blackboard to review new templates that adjust to any device so that the new site will be more accessible. The release date for the new design is coming soon.
- Staff continues to respond to more network, virus protection and software update questions from the auditors.

Preliminary Enrollment Update

Mrs. Nil Grove and Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, updated the school board on the 2018-2019 preliminary enrollment numbers as well as the local and state impact on the budget resulting from a decrease in enrollment. It is important to note that the information provided considered raw enrollment numbers only and not Full-Time Equivalency (FTE), which is a much more complicated calculation that considers a number of factors. September 30th FTE determines the school system's funding and Maintenance of Effort (MOE).

Enrollment figures are as follows:

- September 2018 Total Enrollment including Pre-K: 8,542 (September 2017 was 8,629)
- September 2018 Enrollment K-12 only: 8,071 (September 2017 was 8,191)
- Difference in Pre-K: 471 in 2018; 438 in 2017

Therefore, the change in enrollment from September 2017 to 2018 is down 87 total students including Pre-K; down 120 K-

12 students only; and up 33 Pre-K students.

Pre-K is still an unfunded mandate, so ACPS only receives funding for K-12 enrollment. The impact of a drop in enrollment on State Aid is approximately \$1.2 million. The school system was flat-funded by the County this year at \$30,424,308 this year; however, if ACPS loses 120 students, the impact on local funding, if they choose to fund ACPS at MOE in 2020, could be \$445,723 less. Therefore, the overall impact to ACPS could potentially be a \$1.6 million decrease in aid.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Consider Second Reading of School-Sponsored Student Media Policy (File: JICE)

The school board approved the first reading of the above policy, whose purpose is "to provide guidelines related to school-sponsored student publications and productions." The policy states, "The Board of Education recognizes that providing opportunities for responsible student expression is an integral part of the ACPS program. Student journalists have the right to exercise freedom of speech and freedom of the press in school-sponsored media, subject to certain specific restrictions. The Board also recognizes its responsibility to the schools, students, and community to ensure that school-sponsored media which provide a vehicle for student expression are consistent with legal and regulatory requirements, school system policies and procedures, civil discourse, responsible journalism, and professional standards."

CONSTITUENT COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Marsh & Mr. Edward Clemons

Mr. Marsh and Mr. Clemons addressed the school board separately, but both regarding their desire to see the board return a community school to the Westernport area.

Dr. Jeff Davis

Mr. Davis wanted to make the school board aware of and to publicly oppose the intrusions into the ACPS curriculum by Mr. Ed Taylor and his Cumberland Historic Cemetery Association. On two occasions, Mr. Davis stated that the group attempted to insert brochures into the curriculum, brochures he feels are an endorsement of those who fought to maintain slavery and to perpetuate crimes against humanity.

Mrs. Kim Sloane, ACEA President

Mrs. Sloan addressed the school board to commend them on their focused efforts to lower the student-teacher ratio at the

Pre-K through grade two levels. However, there are still a few classes in these grade bands with very large classes, and she's heard reports of large class sizes at the middle and high school levels as well. Mrs. Sloane urged the school board to continue to build on the positive policy of lowering these ratios. She also asked the school board to research ways to eliminate the continued lack of available and qualified substitute teachers in ACPS.

NEW BUSINESS

Consider Approval of an Additional Accountant for Finance Office

The school board voted 4-1 to approve an additional accountant for the finance office. ACPS has reduced staffing at all levels due to decline in state and county funding. Over the past nine years, 240 full-time positions have been reduced and have consolidated the duties to other full-time employees. Particular to the finance office, there was one accountant more than current staffing at one point in time.

The finance office is in the middle of a transition from the J.D. Edwards Software to Tyler Munis and is doing double work during this transition. Also this year, staff is undergoing the third Maryland Legislative Audit, with the legislators taking up residence in the finance department from mid-March to date. Auditors have made and continue to make significant requests for information, documents, and explanations that requires significant staff resource to support. In addition, other audits that the finance office supports include the MSDE Audit, the Title I Audit, the Special Education Audit, and the annual regular Financial Audit.

The finance office has worked and continues to work very hard through the Tyler/Munis transition and the audits; however, it was decided that this workload is not sustainable without the support of an additional accountant to keep the workflow progressing in a timely and practical manner. With a very low comparative administrative cost on a per-pupil basis, the addition of this accountant will still keep ACPS's administrative costs very low comparatively, and will relieve the pressure on the current finance office staff.

The addition of an accountant for the balance of this fiscal year would be approximately an additional \$30,000 to the budget and would require the school board's use of fund balance and would be offset by additional interest revenues that are over and above the projected revenue assumption in the approved budget.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session October 22, 2018, As Necessary

The school board voted unanimously to meet in an Executive Session on Monday, October 22, 2018, pending any appeals or unfinished business. The public meeting will begin that day at 6 p.m. at the Board of Education's central office.

REPORTS & COMMENTS

Ms. Eesha Bokil, SMOB

Eesha informed the school board that the ACASC Executive Board recently held a meeting to discuss the next general assembly for students, which is scheduled for November 9, 2018. They plan to host pro/con debates about the Student Engagement Survey results as well as other topics including school safety, schedule changes in the high schools, and bullying. ACASC is also hosting a service project in which students can make donations to the local animal shelter.

Mr. Wayne Foote, Board Member

Mr. Foote updated other members that he had the opportunity to attend the first meeting of the Local Advisory Council at the Career Center, which consists of 34 members. He feels that it is a wonderful group of individuals who advocate for those students not planning to go to college but rather enter the world of work.

Dr. Sara-Beth Bittinger, Board President

Dr. Bittinger read a prepared statement on behalf of the board regarding a potential conflict of interest of a candidate for a seat on the school board who is currently a plaintiff in a lawsuit brought against the Board, the superintendent, and other named staff members. The Board felt it seemed prudent to seek the [Ethics Panel's](#) advice regarding what impact, if any, there would be on the Board's ability to function if an individual in a private lawsuit against the Board were elected.

The Ethics Panel's advisory opinion stated that in order to avoid conflict of interest, the individual should recuse himself or herself from Board discussions and decisions regarding:

- Reappointment of the Superintendent
- The Superintendent's employment contract
- The salary, raises, or other financial issues directly related to the Superintendent or to the other individuals named as defendants in the lawsuit.
- Any personnel issue related to any of the individuals named in the lawsuit
- Any matters related to his or her lawsuit against the Board and other defendants named in the lawsuit.
- Any matter where the individual would stand to gain financially or otherwise by the outcome of the litigation.