

BOARDROOM CHATTER

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Update on Teaching Controversial Issues Policy

Mrs. Fraley gave an update on the status of the above policy, whose purpose was to protect teachers. The policy was originally tabled in July and sent back to the Policy Committee to ensure that all of the right attendees were present while it was being revised. At the most recent Policy Committee meeting, that included both staff and representatives from the teachers union, it was determined that there is an article in the negotiated contract for teachers entitled Personal and Academic Freedoms, that would do what this policy strived to do. Therefore, the policy is no longer necessary.

Consider Second Reading of School Safety and Security (File: ECAE)

The school board approved the second reading of the above policy, whose purpose is “to provide safe, orderly, and caring learning environments in which all students feel comfortable in adherence to the Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018.”

The policy states, “All members of the educational community share the responsibility for maintaining a positive and secure school setting. To this end, the BOE is authorized and empowered to employ School Safety Employees to work in cooperation with system administrators, and in conjunction with the existing School Resource Officers, employed through the other local law enforcement agencies, to enhance the day to day safety and security of all school facilities, faculty, staff, and students.”

NEW BUSINESS

Safety and Security Update

Mr. Matt Marlowe, ACPS Coordinator of Student Support Services and School Safety, presented the school board with a safety update. Mr. Marlowe began his presentation by stating that it is critical when it comes to school security, to make an informed, research-based decision. According to Livingston, M.D., Rossheim, M.E., and Hall, K.S. in *A Descriptive Analysis of School and School Shooter Characteristics and the Severity of School Shootings in the U.S.*, “The presence of a school resource officer was unassociated with any reduction in school shooting severity.” Mr. Marlowe also noted several school shooting cases in which the presence of an SRO wasn’t a deterrent, including Marshall County High School in KY (2018); Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in FL (2018); Great Mills High School in MD (2018); and Santa Fe High School in TX (2018). Additionally, Marlowe recalled a story about a guard at a CO school shooting that may have mistakenly fired on sheriff’s deputies and wounded a student amid a highly chaotic shooting rampage. There is no 100% solution.

Mr. Marlowe shared with the school board a framework of best practices for creating safe and successful schools put together by the American School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, the School Social Work Association of America, the National Association of School Resource Officers, the National Association of

Board of Education

Mr. Robert Farrell, President
Dr. David Bohn, Vice President
Mrs. Tammy Fraley
Mr. Wayne Foote
Mrs. Debra Frank
Mr. Jeffrey Blank, Interim Superintendent
Mr. Omaer Naeem, SMOB

CONSENT AGENDA

The school board voted unanimously to approve the following consent agenda:

1. Consider approval of architect engineering contract for security projects. The ACPS Facilities Department received proposals for the design of the security vestibules at Fort Hill, Braddock, and Washington. The project at Braddock will include the design of a handicapped access ramp to improve access to the school. Bushey Feight Morin Architects submitted the proposals. The costs for these projects are as follows:
 - Fort Hill - \$42,299
 - Braddock - \$47,372
 - Washington - \$36,946

Elementary School Principals, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Mr. Marlowe highlighted several of these items:

- “Improve access to school-based mental health supports by ensuring adequate staffing levels in terms of school-employed mental health professionals who are trained to infuse prevention and intervention services into the learning process and to help integrate services provided through school-community partnerships into existing school initiatives.”
 - HB844 states that the ratio for school psychologists should be 1:700 or one per school. ACPS employs 1:1,214 or 7 for 22 schools
 - Guidance counselors ratio 1:250. ACPS is 1:314
 - School social worker ratio 1:250. ACPS is 1:1,700
- “Balance physical and psychological safety to avoid overly restrictive measures (i.e. armed guards and metal detectors) that can undermine the learning environment and instead combine reasonable physical security measures (i.e. locked doors and monitored public spaces) with efforts to enhance school climate, build trusting relationships, and encourage students and adults to report potential threats. If a school determines the need for armed security, properly trained school resource officers (SROs) are the only school personnel of any type who should be armed.”
- “Armed security – decisions about school building security should be a local decision based on needs analysis and local community context. If a school determines the need for armed security, it is recommended that the only armed professional be a trained SRO who receives ongoing and frequent firearms practice that includes training exercises in simulated, high-stress conditions. There is significant risk associated with arming teachers and other school personnel who lack the necessary training to accurately engage in an active shooter situation.”

A School Resource Officer is defined as “1) a law enforcement officer as defined under § 3-101(e) of the public safety article who has been assigned to a school in accordance with a memorandum of understanding between the chief of a law enforcement agency as defined under § 3-101(b) of the public safety article and the local education agency.” According to NASRO, the role of an SRO is to be an informal counselor, and educator, a mentor, and a law enforcement officer. There is no evidence-based number of SROs as the need varies based on several factors. The NASRO recommendation is 1 SRO per 1,000 students. The Maryland Center for School Safety recommends using NASRO’s number as a guide and to use local law enforcement to augment SRO coverage.

Every school in ACPS has an SRO or adequate law enforcement coverage. ACPS’s SRO coverage is population-based. Using the 1:1,000 ratio, Cumberland Police 3.8, Allegany County Sheriff 3.2, and Frostburg Police 1.5. Around the state, other districts utilize unarmed security employees under various names (security assistants, investigative counselors). There is no district that has armed or unarmed security in every school. ACPS is the only district in the state employing armed security employees who are in the schools full-time. Local law enforcement agencies say that mental health should be the #1 priority; that an SRO is 100% the absolute best option for coverage; it is not possible and not necessary to have an SRO in every school; they could provide additional SROs with more funding and time; and they are not in favor of contract security guards.

The Maryland Center for School Safety states that the law does not prohibit armed non-sworn civilians to carry and provide security inside of schools. The law also does not prohibit armed security contractors to carry and provide armed security in schools. Only active sworn law enforcement officers (as outlined in Education Article §7-1508(e)) may be considered SROs or adequate coverage per statute. The MCSS asks districts who will ensure the qualifications of the individuals providing security?; who will be responsible for the weapon including maintenance and storage?; who will be held liable in the event of an incident?; has the individual or company been certified by the appropriate entity and are they permitted to carry?; how will they be dressed?; do they understand their role (for any crime) vs. that of a sworn law enforcement officer?

Budget Amendment Motion

Following Mr. Marlowe’s comprehensive presentation on school security, school board vice president, Dr. David Bohn, made a motion to direct the interim superintendent to present the school board with the recommended budget amendment at the October 8th meeting to enable expanded enactment of security and mental health services in schools. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS (CONT.)

Consider Approval of FY 2021 Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Blank, Interim Superintendent, addressed the school board on Mr. Vince Montana's, ACPS Director of Facilities, behalf to get approval of the FY 2021 Capital Improvements Program. The plan includes requests for the remainder of funds for the Career Center Roof Replacement and the Washington Middle Boiler Replacement projects. Both of these projects received partial funding in FY 2020. ACPS will also request funding for the replacement of the coal boilers at Braddock Middle School. Maintenance department staff is currently preparing the plans for the boiler replacement at Washington, and the goal is to have both projects ready to advertise for bids in April of 2020. The board approved the FY 2021 CIP.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session October 8, 2019, as Necessary

The school board voted unanimously to meet in Executive Session on Tuesday, October 8, 2019, pending any appeals or unfinished business. The public Open Session will follow the Executive Session at 6 p.m. at the Central Office.

SCHOOL BOARD & SMOB COMMENTS

Mr. Omaer Naeem, Student Member of the Board

Omaer updated the school board on the following:

- ACASC has been busy setting dates for General Assemblies, planning workshops, and scheduling service-learning projects.
- The first ACASC General Assembly and picnic was held on September 30, 2019.
- The Western Maryland Leadership Summit in cooperation with Washington and Garrett Counties has been postponed until the spring due to budget issues.

Mrs. Deb Frank

Mrs. Frank had the opportunity to attend the P-TECH recognition celebration for the 3rd cohort of students, and she commented that it is such an awesome program and a great community partnership. She also encouraged constituents to continuing reaching out to her with their concerns, especially regarding school safety.

Mrs. Tammy Fraley

Mrs. Fraley will be at the annual MABE conference in Annapolis with fellow board members and looks forward to hearing from other districts about best practices and plans to bring very beneficial information back to Allegany County.

Dr. David Bohn

Dr. Bohn recently heard from a teacher who came from West Virginia. She indicated that while she got an increase in pay, she still didn't have all the supplies she needed for her classroom. He plans to look into this matter. Dr. Bohn also very much enjoyed the P-TECH dinner and while there had the opportunity to speak with the president of ACM who spoke very highly of the quality of students from ACPS.

Mr. Wayne Foote

Mr. Foote was unable to attend the P-TECH dinner due to health issues. He also noted that it seems like everyone is happy with the way the school year is progressing thus far under the direction of Mr. Blank and hopes to continue to work together for the benefit of the system.

Mr. Bob Farrell

Mr. Farrell is happy to hear that Mr. Blank has been out visiting schools and feels that the year is off to a positive start. He, too, enjoyed the P-TECH dinner.

CONSTITUENT COMMENTS

Mr. Evan West, ACEA UniServe Director

Mr. West addressed the school board to thank them for their work on the Teaching Controversial Issues topic and noted that ACEA is satisfied with the outcome. Mr. West also cautioned that while Mr. Blank has been doing a good job as interim superintendent to not assume that all the issues facing the school system are resolved. He noted that the reality is that teachers are still facing many of the same concerns as they did when Dr. Cox was here. He cited a Yahoo article that claimed that 2018 was the worst year on file for retaining teachers and noted that that was an accurate reflection of ACPS and how ACEA members feel. Mr. West did, however, indicate that there are ways to collaborate in an effort to dial back the pressures that teachers are facing in order to improve the climate in ACPS.