

BOARDROOM CHATTER

PUBLICATION PREPARED BY ACPS PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mrs. Tammy Fraley, President
Mrs. Debra Frank, Vice President
Dr. Edward Root
Mr. Robert Farrell
Dr. David Bohn
Mr. Jeff Blank, Interim
Superintendent

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Recognizing Mr. Robert Stevenson

Mr. Blank took a moment at the beginning of his report to recognizing Mr. Robert Stevenson on his recent retirement from the school system. Mr. Stevenson was most recently the principal at Beall Elementary School, a position he held for fifteen years and three months. Other positions he held within ACPS included a teacher at Northeast, Oldtown, Barton, Westernport, Cash Valley, and Beall, a coordinating teacher at John Humbird, and also the principal at Bel Air. Mr. Blank congratulated Mr. Stevenson on his retirement, wished him well, and thanked him for his many years of dedication and service to the students in the Allegany County Public School System.

Finance Summary of CARES Money

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, updated the school board on the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. ACPS is currently administering four grants as part of this act and have applied for a fifth through MSDE. The first and largest grant, the Education Stabilization Fund Program Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, in the amount of \$2,557,898, runs from March 13, 2020, to September 30, 2022, and focused on the purchase of technology for distance learning and setting up the district's remote learning platform, Schoology. Of these funds, \$204,158 will be allocated to non-public schools. This grant will be amended to reflect the movement of some resources previously purchased from this grant to other CARES grants with more restrictive grant ending periods.

The second grant, the Education Stabilization Fund Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, in the amount of \$97,034, also runs from March 13, 2020, to September 30, 2022, and focuses on the purchase of technology for distance learning for teachers. There were teachers within the district whose computers did not have webcams and microphones, which have now become critical in order to provide remote online learning and instruction. Of this amount, \$1,165 has been allocated to non-public schools.

The third grant, the Coronavirus Relief Fund – Technology, in the amount of \$909,933, runs from March 26, 2020, to December 30, 2020, and is being used to provide the most robust distance-learning program available by purchasing technology for staff and students. The districts previously purchased Schoology as its main online platform and now the focus will be on providing technology to best utilize that platform. Chromebooks will be purchased for students, while laptops will be purchased for some teachers to assist with distance-learning instruction. As a result of the short time period of this grant, some items initially purchased with the ESSER grant will be moved to this grant to allow for the most efficient utilization of grant resources.

The Coronavirus Relief Fund – Tutoring, in the amount of \$1,367,490, also runs from March 26, 2020, to December 30, 2020, and will focus on the tutoring program for students with significant reading and math deficiencies. As a result of the short time period of this grant, some items initially purchased with the ESSER grant will be moved

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meeting held on September 8 and 28, 2020.
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of September 1-30, 2020.
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of September 1-30, 2020.
4. Approve Comprehensive Maintenance Plan for educational facilities FY 2021.
5. Receive Information Technology monthly report for August and September 2020.
6. Receive monthly financial report.
7. Approve the selected (below) representatives for the Local Advisory Council (LAC) for Career and Technology in Allegany County:
 - a. Jane A. Belt, Quarry Ridge Asphalt
 - b. Stu Czapski, Chamber of Commerce
 - c. Cecelia Schartiger, IBM

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT CONT.

to this grant to allow for the most efficient utilization of grant resources. These items will include the initial year of the Schoology contract, the cost of the summer learning program from Summer 2020, and costs associated with online learning programs.

Finally, ACPS has applied for the CARES Reopening Grant, in the amount of \$235,592, will run from March 13, 2020, to September 30, 2022. This grant focuses on the additional costs of transportation in initially bringing back children relative to social distancing requirements. There is also a request for additional computer supplies to support in-person learning, such as additional power supplies, cables, etc. The majority of this grant focuses on the additional cost requirements of additional custodial staff to provide additional daily cleaning and sanitation requirements.

Information Technology Devices and Help Desk

Mrs. Nil Grove, ACPS Chief Information Technology Officer, updated the school board on the distribution of technology to staff and students as of October 5, 2020. These statistics are as follows:

- AT&T Hotspots: Students (1,254); Staff (81)
- Computer Devices (Chromebooks and Laptops): Students (8,100); Staff (812 – 500 of which are new units)

Additionally, the ACPS IT Helpdesk provides services daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. to support parents, students, and teachers with instructional resources and with device and hotspot support. ACPS has also installed between 2-4 WiFi access points on our school buildings for drive-up parking lot access, and four local fire departments/churches have community hotspots as a result of ACPS installing pep wave devices in those locations. Finally, ACPS has worked with Atlantic Broadband and the county government to install wireless access at the local YMCA for students in daycare settings.

Return to School and Classroom Update

Mr. Blank provided the school board with an update on the gradual reopening of schools. September 8, 2020, was the first day of school for the 20-21 school year, and the first two weeks were fully virtual for all students utilizing the learning platform, Schoology. On September 21, 2020, Career Center students returned to their skill areas, with seniors attending one week, and then juniors attending the next week, on alternating days M-F. September 23, 2020, was the return of some special education students, who attended in small groups on alternating days M-Th and virtual learning on Friday. September 28, 2020, allowed students with connectivity issues to be bussed to schools five days a week. October 5, 2020, was the return of all pre-k and kindergarten students, four days a week M-Th and virtual learning on Friday. October 12, 2020, all first graders began attending M-Th and virtual learning on Friday.

Of all pre-k, kindergarten and first grade students, only 17% have elected to remain fully virtual. Any parent with questions about schools or scheduling should contact their child's principal for information. Per the document, "COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools" issued on August 27, 2020, Mr. Blank noted that ACPS "will make all reasonable efforts to implement the 6 ft. distancing rule to the greatest extent possible during in-person learning days.

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES

Return to School Update – Hybrid Model and Next Steps

Dr. Kim Kalbaugh, ACPS Chief Academic Officer, provided the school board with an update on the Learn In School Phased in Approach. ACPS is currently in Phase 4, where elementary students are being phased in by grade level where feasible. A date for a fully phased into hybrid model will be determined based on key metrics and CDC and health department guidance.

Key considerations of this phased in approach include the

following:

- Maintain 6 ft. of physical distance while in the school building, on school grounds, and on the school busses to the greatest extent possible
- Create 6 ft. of distance between desks in the classroom and structure teaching so that teachers can maintain a distance of 6 ft. between the children to the greatest extent possible
- Create social distancing strategies that include schedules that create and maintain student cohorts and procedures to limit mixing of students, staff, and cohorts to the greatest

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES CONT.

extent possible

- Enforce that students and staff wear face coverings while on a school bus, in the school building, and on school grounds to the greatest extent possible
- Limit the use of the cafeteria by having meals in the classrooms
- Follow guidance from the CDC regarding children and adults who have medical conditions that make them at-risk for severe COVID-19 infection

According to Dr. Kalbaugh, she has received positive feedback from parents and grandparents of students in pre-k through grade one regarding a return to in-person learning.

Grade 2 students are scheduled to return to school on October 19, 2020, on alternating A B A B V days. Students with last names A-L will attend on A days, and students with last names M-Z will attend on B days, with all students continuing with virtual learning on Fridays. Parents who opt-out of sending their child to school will attend a virtual school taught by certified teachers. Parents may opt-in for the hybrid schedule for the second nine weeks with a start date of November 16, 2020. Parents who opted out of the first nine weeks will receive an opt-in letter to complete. All opt-ins will occur at the beginning of each nine weeks. Prior to the end of marking period two and/or three, any parent who wants to opt-in for hybrid learning must contact their child's school principal to initiate that change.

The return to hybrid learning for students in grades 3-5 is tentatively scheduled to be phased in prior to the end of the first marking period on November 12, 2020. These students will follow the same A B A B V schedule as grade 2.

Beginning on October 19, 2020, schools will focus on providing in-school resource classes (i.e. art, music, PE, media, computers) to students on the hybrid schedule. Students on the virtual schedule (grades 3-5) may have their resource assignment posted until they are phased in to their hybrid schedule. Students in grades pre-k through 2 who are attending virtual school will have their lessons provided asynchronously by resource teachers.

Phase five is a full hybrid model of learning which is tentatively set to begin by phasing in grade levels where feasible at the beginning of the second nine weeks on November 16, 2020. Grades 6-8 and grades 9-12 will attend using the following schedule: M (A), T (B), W (A), Th (B), and Friday virtual.

In this phase, students will receive in-school instruction as well

as distance learning instruction. Students not attending school on specific days will receive synchronous and asynchronous instruction and assignments. Instruction and assignments will follow the scope and sequence of the ACPS curriculum that is aligned to the Maryland CCR standards.

NEW BUSINESS

Vote to Appoint / Approve New Ethics Panel Members

There are currently three vacancies on the Ethics Panel. The school board voted unanimously to approve two of individuals to the Ethics Panel, including Marsha Spain Bell and Robert Godfrey. The Ethics Panel will review applications in the near future to fill the final vacancy.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session November 10, 2020, as Necessary

The school board voted to meet in Executive Session on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, pending any appeals or unfinished business. All meetings will continue to be held virtually until further notice. 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, November 9, 2020. 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.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Dr. David Bohn

Dr. Bohn questioned whether or not at some point during the school year staff may be able to look into mixing up the way the students attend school on A B days (i.e. last names A-L and M-Z) in an effort to allow students to interact with other groups of friends that they may only have the opportunity to see virtually.

Dr. Ed Root

Dr. Root commented that he is concerned how staff is working on areas of extra curricular activities, other than athletics, such as band, chorus, student council, etc. consider that it seems necessary to have those entire groups together to function effectively. Dr. Kalbaugh noted that advisors are already working on ways to creatively organize these clubs and groups and that instructional modifications will need to be made as well. But regardless, when these groups meet at the secondary level, they will all be learning/working together simultaneously, with half of the class participating in person and the other half engaged virtually.

Mrs. Deb Frank

Mrs. Frank asked what the rationale for in-person school days ending at 1:30 p.m. as opposed to their regular times. Both Mr. Blank and Dr. Kalbaugh noted that it was an equity issue explaining that elementary students who are virtually learning can't be asked to sit in front of a computer screen for that amount of time. Students as well as staff need to have breaks from having to wear a mask that long, and it is also important for students who are in school to have the opportunity to eat breakfast and lunch while there. Finally, ending at 1:30 p.m. is easier to accommodate transportation schedules.

Mrs. Tammy Fraley

Mrs. Fraley briefly reminded the public that ACPS follows a decision aid to guide them when there is a positive or suspected case of COVID-19 in a building. That decision aid can be found on the school system's website here:

<https://www.acpsmd.org/Page/3384>. Additionally, Mrs. Fraley asked for more information regarding ACPS's new tutoring program. ACPS has been awarded, as part of the CARES Act, a grant to implement after school tutoring open to all students. Tutoring sessions are designed to address intervention, remediation, or acceleration needs of students. The focus of the grant is on reducing achievement gaps in the areas of reading, ELA and math. Sessions are 30-minutes in length and can be done by phone or through a video conferencing tool used with Schoology or Google Meet. Parents/guardians should contact their child's school to fill out a permission form. The teacher tutor will coordinate the date/time of all sessions. Teacher tutors will keep a log of all students who utilize this service to help assess the success of the program and to help guide decisions on future needs for expansion.

Mrs. Fraley also reminded parents that may still be having difficulty with Schoology or virtual learning should reach out to their child's teacher for assistance.

Finally, Mrs. Fraley announced that due to COVID-19 restrictions last school year, the Allegany County Association of Student Councils was unable to hold elections for officers, including the non-voting Student Member of the Board. Mr. Blank and staff are currently working on a plan to have a SMOB at meetings in the near future.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) will hold it's annual conference October 14-15, virtually. Many of ACPS's board members plan to attend these virtual sessions to learn more from other counties on how they are handling the pandemic.

Finally, with high school football games set to begin in two weeks, the school board is still awaiting clarification from the state regarding exactly how many people will be permitted to attend games. Under the current guidelines for outdoor events in Maryland, only 250 are permitted. Given that that number could include players, personnel, staff, officials, and others, there needs to be some clarity in terms of how many spectators would be allowed inside stadiums. ACPS staff and administrators are actively working on the possibilities available by game and by sport.

CONSTITUENTS' COMMENTS

C. Miller II

This individual emailed the following comment for discussion at the board meeting: "I keep hearing rumors of classes in ACPS schools being in quarantine. Is the board of education going to make any quarantine and positive cases known to the public?"

In the event of a positive Covid-19 case within the Allegany County Public Schools, ACPS in collaboration with the Allegany County Health Department, will directly notify the parents/guardians of those students who have had close contact with the ill person while at school. Close contact is defined as being fewer than 6 feet apart for longer than 15 minutes, with or without a face covering.

The school will also notify parents/guardians if the Covid-19 positive case was within their child's school, even if their child was not a close contact. This notification will be done through the ACPS Blackboard Notification System.

Every Friday, ACPS will release to the public the total number of positive cases within the county school buildings. For the week of October 12 - October 16, ACPS reports two individuals who have tested positive for Covid-19 who were within an Allegany County Public School(s). These two individuals are currently out of the school building(s) and will continue to isolate. In both cases it was determined that there were no close contacts within the school(s), and no students or staff were quarantined as a result of these positive cases. Parents who have children attending these schools were notified through the ACPS Blackboard Notification System.