

BOARDROOM CHATTER

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INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Election of Officers

Mrs. Crystal Bender was elected in a 3-2 vote to serve as the next President of the school board, and Mr. Bob Farrell was elected in a 3-2 vote to serve as the next Vice President of the school board.

Health Metrics and Vaccine Updates

Dr. Jennifer Corder, Medical Deputy Health Officer for Allegany and Garrett Counties, and Ms. Janelle Mayer, Assistant Deputy Health Officer at the Allegany County Health Department, provided the school board with county health metrics and vaccine updates. As of the school board meeting (1/12/21), the case rate in Allegany County was 50.11 per 100,000, and the positivity rate was 7.9%. Allegany County has seen a large improvement since its peak in December of 198 cases per 100,000.

The pair also spoke about the vaccine rollout, which is a phased approach due to the limited number of doses available throughout the country. The highest risk populations were targeted as the top priority and included healthcare workers, first responders, residents and staff of nursing homes, and public safety and law enforcement workers. These vaccinations are nearly complete, and the county will then move into Phase 1B of the rollout, which will include individuals 75 years of age and older followed by K-12 school staff and childcare workers.

Finally, Dr. Corder noted that the decision aid that served as guidance since the onset of the pandemic is being reviewed by MSDE and MDH and includes some notable changes related to options to exercise shorter quarantine periods in certain cases. This updated decision aid will continue to be utilized once in-person learning resumes.

Next Generation Scholars Program 2019-2020 Recap

Mrs. Carrie Pannone, Next Generation Scholar Program Coordinator for Allegany County, and Mr. Leonard Webb, Next Generation Scholar Program Coordinator at Fort Hill, updated the school board on the 2019-2020 program. The program enhances career awareness and college completion for high school students. Activities include test prep, mock interviews, help with soft skills, AFSA workshops, career and college tours, job shadowing, and other one-on-one guidance. During the 19-20 school year, ACPS students at Fort Hill participated in 76 college visits, 159 mock interviews, and 32 summer learning opportunities.

Mrs. Pannone also shared with the school board several virtual classroom resources, a senior data snapshot, and the results of both a parent and student pre- and post-program survey. In all, students indicated that they now have a good understanding

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meeting held on December 8, 2020
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of December 1-31, 2020
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of December 1-31, 2021
4. Receive Information Technology monthly report for December 2020.
5. Receive monthly financial report.

of the college admissions process, realizes that there is a direct correlation between high school grades and college acceptances; and found meaningful connections between their skills and interests and their future career goals.

Finally, Mrs. Pannone shared 2020-2021 updates and scheduled upcoming events. She announced that she has accepted a position as the Maryland Business Roundtable State Program Director, and that Mr. Webb will assume her position as NGS Coordinator for Allegany County.

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT CONT.

Athletics Update

Mrs. Tracey Leonard, ACPS Assistant Supervisor of Health, PE, Athletics, and Mental Health, provided the school board with an update on athletics. Mrs. Leonard advised board members that they had several things to consider when making decisions about athletics in ACPS including the following: MPSSAA issued sport-specific modifications that will be implemented; Some counties have decided that face coverings will be worn during competition; If practices were allowed to start, they could begin with sports skills/drills, and after a specified time, closer contact drills/scrimmages could be added; and athletes can be engaged but not have competitions or intermural games at each school could be allowed.

Mrs. Leonard laid out several sample seasons for wrestling, and girls' and boys' basketball for the school board to examine explaining that for basketball, no more than two games could be played per week and three games in one week could be scheduled twice during the season, and no more than two wrestling matches per week could be scheduled including a maximum of one tournament. Also, according to MPSSAA's bylaws, "a member MPSSAA school may not participate in a regularly scheduled game until at least 20 calendar days have elapsed after and including the first day of practice. Golf is the only exception to this regulation."

After outlining an ACPS timeline for practices, play dates, and the number of days available for competition, and after reviewing the MPSSAA Two-Semester Plan for winter, fall and spring sports, the school board voted 4-1 to forego playing winter sports and proceed with fall sports, pending appropriate county health metrics, with the first available practice date being February 13, 2021. This decision was made as a result of the limited number of play dates available for winter sports after mandatory practices concluded as well as current county health metrics.

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES

Concurrent Teaching

Dr. George Brown, ACPS Coordinator of Professional Learning, provided the school board with information on how to use available technology to teach in a concurrent classroom, which is defined as a simultaneous synchronous face-to-face and virtual learning environment. Dr. Brown explained that ACPS technicians from the IT department will begin to provide teachers with guidance as to how to rearrange the technology in their classrooms as a means to provide high-quality instruction in a concurrent classroom.

Challenges of teaching in a concurrent classroom may include engaging students who are learning face-to-face while managing the face-to-face classroom while providing required accommodations for students with IEPs in the face-to-face classroom, while also engaging students who are virtual, managing the virtual classroom, and providing required accommodations for students with IEPs in the virtual classroom.

The concurrent classroom is very new to education, and there is very little information on the topic; however, moving in this direction is imperative as ACPS works to accommodate the needs of students and educators.

Prior to going back to 100% virtual learning, five elementary teachers, among others, set-up and implemented concurrent classrooms. Much has been learned from their shared experiences:

- The students enjoy seeing each other, even if half of the students are online each day. The A/B day allows for the students to see only half of their class most of the time, while concurrent teaching allows for interactions among all the students. With a second screen (Smartboard), teachers can allow the entire class to see each other at least part of the time.
- The hybrid model allows teachers to work in person with a smaller group of students, and it also allows for the

monitoring of computer usage. Breakout rooms can be utilized by pairing in-school students with at-home students, and their interactions can be checked easily in class from the student computers.

- There is more accountability with this concurrent teaching model. Assignments that are given for asynchronous time can be checked at school. If they are not completed, they can do it under supervision during break time. The children in class can also check on the participation of the virtual students. Then at-home students can be enlarged on the Smartboard to share their ideas and work with the in-person group.
- If students are unable to attend class in-person due to illness or travel, they can join virtually and stay current with instruction.
- Once teachers are accustomed to teaching virtually, it is not a huge leap to teach concurrently.

Later in the month, Dr. Brown and a representative from IT will co-present information on the concurrent classroom in 45-minute intervals. Teachers will be given an opportunity to attend a session that best meets their schedule and will have the opportunity to ask questions during the presentation.

Return to School Schedule and Tutoring Updates

Dr. Kim Kalbaugh, ACPS Chief Academic Officer, provided the school board with an update on a return to school schedule. Though there is not a definite date for the students to return to school, as that will be based on the health metrics and guidance from the Health Department, the following is a tentative roll out for the return to hybrid learning:

- Teachers will return to school first. Rooms are currently being prepared for concurrent teaching; professional development is being created; and resources are being provided to ensure that teachers are able to teach concurrently.
- Secondly, small groups will return (CCTE students, students without connectivity, high school students failing to attend virtual classes/failing, students with disabilities in specialized programs).
- Next, elementary students in Grades Pre-K-5 will return. This may happen as one return or may happen in increments depending on the health metrics, transportation coordination, and continued guidance.
- Grades 6, 9, and 12 will return to school for hybrid learning after that. Grades 6 and 9 were selected because they have not been in school since they accelerated to the next grade level, which meant a new school for them. Grade 12 was selected due to graduation expectations and demands.
- Finally, Grades 7-8 and Grades 10-11 will return to hybrid learning.

Dr. Kalbaugh reiterated that there are not set dates for the roll out of the hybrid/in-person learning to resume; however, staff is preparing for the return as soon as health metrics allow. Parents may still opt-out of in-person learning, and information on how and when to do this will be provided to parents.

ACPS will also continue to offer tutoring opportunities for the remainder of the school year, so any parent or student interested in tutoring should contact their school.

NEW BUSINESS

FY 2022 Budget Development Priorities

In order to provide guidance and direction to the Superintendent in the preparation of his FY 2022 Proposed Superintendent's Operating Budget, the school board compiled the following budget priorities, in no certain order or significance, for consideration, discussion, and approval:

- Make every effort to modernize current student programs and associated equipment and curriculum needs based on student interest and enrollment with a focus on current and future Center for Career and Technical Education programs.
- Maintain and enhance licensed mental health service providers and/or social workers based on demonstrated need.
- Make every effort to provide employees with negotiated benefits, including salary and health insurance benefits, such that their take-home pay would not be less due to increased employee share costs of health insurance, and give raises if possible.
- Maintain the availability of technological needs both within the classroom and at home.
- Make every effort to provide funding for educational recovery programs throughout the school year to include recovery of learning loss and food service availability across all grade levels.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session February 9, 2021, As Necessary

The school board voted to meet in Executive Session on Tuesday, February 9, 2021, 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, February 8, 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.

CONSTITUENTS' COMMENTS

Mrs. Kim Sloane, President of ACEA

Mrs. Sloane submitted the following for public comment:

I would like to begin by welcoming Mrs. Bender, and congratulate Mrs. Fraley and Dr. Bohn on your re-election. As an educator, I have had the privilege to teach our students about the importance of civic duty, and thank you for your willingness to serve your community in this manner. It is never easy, but it is always the right thing to do.

By now, you have probably realized that we have asked our ACEA members to communicate directly with the members of the board concerning the reopening issues that you will be considering, and how it will impact them not only as employees, but for many, also as parents of ACPS students, as well as on behalf of the students in their classrooms. They have shared many of the communications with me, which I found to be poignant and detailed in many aspects that you don't often have the opportunity to consider in your position. However, I would also like to thank Mrs. Fraley and Mrs. Bender for seeking to further understand and attending a virtual classroom of one of our members.

While our members have done an excellent job in their communications, I want to be certain that I communicate our collective voice on this clearly. First and foremost, ACEA supports the December 8, 2020, decision of the board to remain in virtual learning until the target positivity rate is to be 5% or less and the target cases per 100,000 is to be 15 or less. This was prudent and has proven to help reduce the overall spread in the community, and more importantly, in the school buildings among students and staff.

To possibly reconsider this position at this juncture, when the positivity rate is still nearly double that, the full holiday affect is not yet realized, and vaccines are so close to being available to our staff, would be a grave mistake. Instead, ACPS should focus efforts on quickly and effectively vaccinating staff and their families, so schools can reopen as close to normal as possible. I am aware that the plan of our neighboring WCPS has already been rolled out, and includes vaccinations for both the employee and their family. We are currently surveying our members, and to date, 83% of them have indicated that they are indeed willing to get the vaccine. There should be no doubt that we want to return to our schools and are willing to do it as soon as it is safe for all to do so.

In addition, the FFCRA expired on December 31, 2020, and along with it the guaranteed paid leave while quarantined or infected. The board should consider the consequences of any potential premature return and the financial and staffing repercussions it may have on the system. I am reminded of the fable of the Tortoise and the Hare, and how steady perseverance leads to victory. It may not be the speed we would like to see this crisis resolved, but it is the winning one.