

BOARDROOM CHATTER

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BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Present Proclamation Recognizing February as African-American History Month

The school board presented a proclamation recognizing February 2021 as African-American History Month to the Allegany Chapter 7007 of the NAACP. They are committed to honoring African-Americans and recognizing their contributions to the history and culture of the U.S., and the school board believes that it is appropriate to reflect this commitment in a proper way.

Present Proclamation Recognizing National School Counselor Week February 1-5, 2021

The school board read a proclamation recognizing National School Counselor Week, which is designated by the American School Counselor Association. School counselors are employed in public schools to help students reach their full potential and are actively committed to helping students explore their abilities, strengths, interests, and talents as these traits relate to career awareness and development. School counselors help parents focus on ways to further the educational, personal, and social growth of their children, and they work with teachers and other educators to help students explore their potential and set realistic goals for themselves. School counselors seek to identify and utilize community resources that can enhance and complement comprehensive school counseling programs and help students become productive members of society. Finally, comprehensive developmental school counseling programs are considered an integral part of the educational process and enable all students to achieve success in school.

Present Proclamation Recognizing February as Career and Technology Education Month

The school board presented a proclamation recognizing February 2021 as Career and Technical Education Month as designated by the Association for Career and Technical Education. CTE offers students the opportunity to gain the academic, technical, and employability skills necessary for true career readiness, and students in CTE programs participate in authentic meaningful experiences that improve the quality of their education and increase their engagement and achievement. CTE provides students with career exploration opportunities earlier in their educational experience, which enables them to make informed and beneficial decisions about their academic coursework and pursue established programs of study and career pathways. Leaders from business and industry nationwide report increasing challenges related to addressing the skills gap and connecting qualified professionals with available careers in critical and growing CTE-related fields, including healthcare, energy, advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, and information technology. CTE prepares students for these and other fulfilling careers by offering integrated programs of study that link secondary and postsecondary education and

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meeting held on January 12, 2021, and January 25, 2021
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of January 1-31, 2021
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of January 1-31, 2021
4. Receive Information Technology monthly report for January 2021
5. Receive monthly financial report.

lead to attainment of industry-recognized credentials. Finally, CTE programs ensure that employers have access to a qualified and thriving workforce, ensuring America is a strong and competitive economy.

Review of COVID Classroom and Breakout Guidelines

Mrs. Debbie Metheny, ACPS Director of Special Education and Student Services, reviewed with the school board ACPS's COVID-19 Student Protocol. All parents will be provided with a symptom checklist and are being asked to evaluate the health of their child each morning. Parents are expected

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT CONT.

to contact their child's school as soon as they are made aware that their child has tested positive for COVID-19, if their child has been in close contact with a person who is confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19, or if their child is exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms. The local health department will lead the process of contact tracing, in cooperation with school administration. The ACHD will also determine the quarantine length and date and will issue a letter to the school to give to parents of students identified as close contacts. Parents will also be notified if a student becomes ill while at school, and must be picked up from school within 30 minutes unless there are extenuating circumstances. Students who are in quarantine will participate in remote learning.

Mrs. Metheny also reviewed with the school board COVID-19 classroom and breakout guidelines. The definition of a classroom/cohort outbreak is "at least two confirmed COVID-19 cases among students/teachers/staff within a 14-day period and who are epidemiologically linked, but not household contacts." A school-wide outbreak is defined as "three or more classrooms or cohorts with cases from separate households that meet the classroom/cohort outbreak definition that occurs within 14 days, or 5% or more unrelated students/teachers/staff have confirmed COVID-19 within a 14-day period (minimum of 10 unrelated students/teachers/staff."

Athletics Update and Schedule

Mrs. Tracey Leonard, ACPS Assistant Supervisor of Health, PE, Athletics, and Mental Health, updated the school board on athletics and schedules. In collaboration with principals, athletic directors, and central office staff, ACPS will utilize a staggered back to school model for athletics. Schedules are posted on the school system's website calendar.

Student athletes will be engaged in football and volleyball first, followed by soccer and cross-country. Football and volleyball will begin on February 13, 2021; with the first play date being March 5th and the last play date being April 17th. The football season will last six weeks in order to play both home and away games. The season will conclude on April 10th. JV football games will be played on Wednesday nights. Volleyball will last for three weeks in order to play both home and away game, with two games being played per week.

Soccer and cross-country will begin on March 1, 2021, because of field and safety issues. The first play date is March 22nd and the last play date will be April 17th. Soccer and cross-country seasons will last three weeks in order to play both home and away games/matches, with two being held per week. Both seasons will conclude on April 12th.

All athletes must have a current physical, COVID-19 acknowledgement, and participation forms on file. All COVID-19 protocols that were in effect in the fall remain in effect (i.e. face coverings, maintaining social distancing, attendance tracking for athletes at practice, etc.). Additionally, the Governor issued an order in October stating that the total number of spectators permitted at an outdoor venue shall not exceed 10% of the venue's maximum capacity. The maximum capacity is set forth by the fire code issued at that venue. This order is still in effect as of February 9, 2021. As a result of that order, every participant (player, band member, cheerleader, drill team member, color guard member) can purchase two tickets for all home events in which they are performing/participating. All visiting teams will be allocated two tickets per player for purchase. Although the Governor's order did not increase the capacity of indoor venues, it did clarify that players and those associated with the customary operations of the game do not need to be added to the 100-person capacity. Therefore, all volleyball players, home and visiting teams will be able to purchase two tickets to each game. Ticket prices remain \$6.00 for adults and \$3.00 for students. At all events, bleacher seating is required of all spectators. Social distancing and masks are also required.

INSTRUCTIONAL & FINANCIAL UPDATES

High School Programs of Study Update

Dr. Kim Kalbaugh, ACPS Chief Academic Officer, updated the school board on the High School Programs of Study. The High School POS booklet has been completed and an electronic copy along with course selection sheets have been placed on the ACPS website under the Parents/Students Resources section. School counselors will begin to schedule virtual meetings to discuss the high school programs of study with students in Grades 8-11 in February with students selecting their courses online in Aspen in early March.

The Curriculum Committee approved two recommendations, which are noted in the POS – Jazz Ensemble and Show Choir were elevated to Honors Level status. There are some anticipated MSDE changes that were discussed at the last state board meeting, which are now out for public comment. For Health, it is anticipated that for incoming freshman, the class will increase to one credit. The plan is for students to take ½ credit in Grades 9 or 10 and the second ½ credit in Grade 11 or 12.

ACPS plans to pilot a 1-year Cybersecurity Certificate through ACM in order to increase opportunities for seniors on an abbreviated schedule to participate in career and technology areas and earn college credits. This particular certificate program can transfer to the 2-year cybersecurity program at ACM as well. The pilot program will take place in the comprehensive high schools with two pathways being offered. An Accelerated Pathway (6 credits) will begin in the summer of 2021. The total number of college credits for this certificate program is 31. For the regular pathway (fall of 2021 through fall of 2022), to finish the coursework for the 1-year certificate, students must take the final courses in the summer and/or fall of 2022. Principals and school counselors have received the information regarding the pilot for seniors who are on an abbreviated schedule. Dr. Kalbaugh noted that this will not be grant funded and will not be free as P-TECH is, but will be offered with reduced tuition costs. ACPS will also follow the requirements of SB 740, and there will be an online application that must be completed for consideration in March.

ACPS is working on a number of recovery programs for the summer of 2021. Currently, there are two spring recovery options for high school students. For Grades 11 and 12, one spring recovery program targets students who failed semester one using online recovery programs. There will also be a third session of after school credit recovery for students in Grades 9-12 who failed courses necessary for graduation in previous school years. Information for both of these programs has been given to principals and school counselors.

The draft middle school programs of study has also been completed, and timelines have been shared with principals, supervisors, and school counselors for feedback. Counselors will hold virtual meetings and/or visit classrooms to speak with students beginning in March. At the end of March, students will be asked to select their creative arts classes online via Aspen.

In the fall of 2021, students who successfully pass Chinese 3 in the current Grade 8 Chinese Immersion Program will have the opportunity to enroll in a Chinese 4 cohort in Grade 9. The high school CHIP program will be housed at Allegany High School. Additional information and an upcoming virtual meeting will be held for Grade 8 CHIP parents. Information will also be provided to the CHIP parents in other grade levels in the near future. During the 2021-2022 school year, ACPS will have a CHIP cohort in Grades K-9.

CARES ESSER II Grant

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, updated the school board on the CARES ESSER II Grant. ACPS had previously been the recipient of several CARES grants that have been utilized to help purchase technology, hotspots, and provide tutoring and online resources over the course of the pandemic. In January, ACPS was informed that they could apply for the CARES ESSER Fund II. The district's grant will total \$11,278,218, which is more than four times the original CARES ESSER Fund of \$2,557,898. This grant will be available from this fiscal year, once approved, to September 30, 2023. Applications are due to the state for this funding by February 26, 2021.

INSTRUCTIONAL & FINANCIAL UPDATES CONT.

Draft State Aid

Mr. McKenzie also updated the school board on the Fiscal 2022 Draft State Aid and Fiscal 2022 budget considerations. Direct State Aid is broken down into the following segments:

- Foundation Programs: the regular appropriation for all students
- Transportation Grants: enrollment-based funding the district receives for transportation
- Compensatory Education: those eligible for free and reduced meals
- Limited English Proficiency: an appropriation for students who utilize English as a second language
- Special Education: an appropriation for our student population with special needs
- Guaranteed Tax Base: additional funding for the poorest districts; ACPS is one of eight to receive this
- Supplemental Grants: a “catch all”
- Net Taxable Income Adjusted: the difference between aid if wealth is measured in September vs. November.

Mr. McKenzie noted that it is important to understand that each student in the district generates a different amount of aid based on that student’s own situation. Overall, the average per student is \$10,152.09 per student. However, a student that utilize English as a second language and who’s family lives near the poverty line would get more money for services than a student with no special requirements.

Wealth is used to gauge a county’s ability to fund school activities based upon its own resources. The formula is intended to be a wealth equalizer between state and local resources for education. School district wealth is formula-driven and takes into account the following: 50% of the personal property base; 100% of the net taxable income base; and 40% of the real property base. Allegany County currently ranks 21st in terms of per pupil wealth, so the majority of its educational aid comes from state sources. District wealth impacts all aid categories with the exception of Transportation.

District wealth is computed on a per pupil basis and compared to the state average, so enrollment has a direct impact on state aid. ACPS had a K-12 enrollment decline

of 239.5 students. The number of students who qualify for free and reduced meals dropped by 6.15%, and the number of special education students decreased by 146 students. The state’s overall enrollment decreased by 2/25% from last year, which is the first time that has happened since 2010. Overall, based on the funding formulas and prior to any hold harmless considerations, ACPS would have lost \$2,723,287 this year compared to last year.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future funds are broken down into the following categories:

- Concentration of Poverty Grant: funds for schools with FARMs percentages greater than 80%. ACPS has four schools that receive these funds (SP, JD, WT, GC).
- Supplemental Pre-Kindergarten Grant: funds used to increase the availability of full-day pre-k opportunities within the county.
- Teacher Incentive Grant: a program used to help increase teachers’ pay across the state
- Students with Disabilities Grant: used to assist students with special needs
- Traditional Supplemental Instruction: used for additional opportunities for students. ACPS focused on K-3 reading and providing materials and resources and programs to enhance reading instruction and interventions as required by the grant.
- Mental Health Coordinator: this position is mandated by the state
- Supplemental Instruction/Tutoring: added this year and is still being defined at the state level by the legislature
- Hold Harmless Grants: where the state put this component of mandated state aid

Overall, Draft State Aid will increase by \$1,329,882 compared to last year. The additional funding for tutoring and the Hold Harmless components drives this increase.

Mr. McKenzie reviewed the following Fiscal 2022 budget considerations:

- Impact of COVID-19 on learning and reduction of learning gaps from COVID-19
- Pending negotiations with bargaining units

INSTRUCTIONAL & FINANCIAL UPDATES CONT.

- There may still be a shift in the rank and make-up of some Title I schools that may have staffing implications within those schools as enrollment is anticipated to increase when schools resume a traditional schedule.
- From a legislative standpoint, PSSAM and MABE are monitoring several bills that could potentially impact school system finances. Kirwan Commission recommendations and Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation will dominate education discussions this session while COVID-19 relief bills will dominate the session as a whole.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent Vacancy

The school board voted 3-2, with the 2 abstaining from the vote, to appoint current Interim Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Jeffrey Blank, to a four-year contract as the permanent Superintendent of Schools. Mrs. Fraley and Mrs. Frank abstained from the vote due to the fact that the position was not posted which did not allow for anyone from the local area to apply for a position that they qualify for and may be interested in. Both Frank and Fraley also noted that not posting the position locally prevented community members, business owners, educators, and administrators from being able to be part of the selection process.

This recommended appointment will now be sent to the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools for final approval. Mr. Blank has served as the Interim Superintendent of Schools in Allegany County for the past two years.

Review of Evaluation of Students Policy Regulations (File: IKA-R1)

The school board reviewed the regulations for the above policy, whose purpose is "to identify the Board's position regarding the evaluation of student academic progress."

The policy states, "It is the philosophy of ACPS that grading promotes learning, achievement, and academic growth in a climate of encouragement and high expectations. ACPS strives for all students to be prepared for college and/or careers. Learning experiences, assignments, and assessments provide challenge, growth, and feedback for improvement in order to foster opportunities for students to

CONSTITUENTS' COMMENTS

Mrs. Kim Sloane, President ACEA

Mrs. Sloan addressed the school board via email. Direct quotes are as follows: "Over the last year, ACEA members have trained and adapted to two Learning Management Systems, incorporated numerous digital learning tools, made hundreds of contacts with students and parents, spent countless hours preparing both digital and packet lessons for students, went virtual, then hybrid, then back to virtual, and now back to hybrid with the new concurrent teaching model. And they have done this under the duress of observations and worrying about their health and welfare, that of their families, as well as that of their students and their families."

"While your decision at the January 25th meeting deviated from the original parameters you set in November, the metrics appear to be aligning with the new phase-in, and provided crucial time for staff to have the opportunity to get vaccinated. Even so, there remains intense concerns over the number of variant strains of the virus, which clinical data suggest are not only more easily transmitted, but also infect both adults and children more easily and more intensely. This very real threat of transmitting any strain of COVID-19 from the home to school, and furthermore, from school to home remains a dark cloud over the return to hybrid."

"This is among the health and safety issues that have not been clearly or fully addressed yet. What is the plan when this happens? Or better yet, how can ACPS keep this from happening? Has the investment been made into ventilation upgrades, as many staff work in small spaces with no windows? We also have an inadequate system of communicating potential exposure to staff and parents, and which hinders contact tracing and increases the risk of contracting this virus. Many other school systems in Maryland have created "dashboards" by which to accomplish this most efficiently. ACEA also continues to advocate for self-reporting by our members as one of the most important ways to help stop the spread. Any means to make this easier and less stigmatizing is highly encouraged."

NEW BUSINESS

demonstrate mastery of curricular expectations. Grades reflect the extent to which the student has achieved the learning outcomes specified by ACPS and the Maryland Common Core State Curriculum. The grading and reporting system will support the learning process and student success.”

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

The school board voted to meet in Executive Session on Tuesday, March 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, March 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.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS & UPDATES

Mr. Mitchell Septoff, Student Member of the Board

Mr. Septoff updated the school board on the following:

- 15 ACPS students participated in the Maryland Leadership Workshop's 2-day virtual sessions.
- It is anticipated that a number of ACPS students will attend the Maryland Association of Student Councils' virtual legislative session scheduled for February 20th.
- Overall, students are excited to return to hybrid/in-person concurrent learning in the coming weeks.

Mr. Robert Farrell

Mr. Farrell asked that the ACPS community keep maintenance staff member, Randy Miller, in their thoughts and prayers as he recovers from major surgery.

Mrs. Tammy Fraley

Mrs. Fraley, as part of her duties as the current president of MABE, serves on the legislative committee along with fellow board member, Mrs. Debra Frank. There are a number of bills going through legislation that Mrs. Fraley encourages the community and the school board as a whole to be actively involve in as their passage could directly impact ACPS. One of those bills is in regards to the removal of any security and/or law enforcement officer from school buildings. This bill, entitled Police Free Schools (formerly Counselors not Cops), is currently in the Ways and Means Committee. Mrs. Fraley had the opportunity to testify against this bill as a parent and community member. One other bill Mrs. Fraley is keeping

an eye on relates to special education. Finally, Mrs. Fraley also serves on the Chamber of Commerce's Education Committee, and she informed the school board that the Chamber is actively trying to get the business community involved in providing opportunities to ACPS students.

Mrs. Crystal Bender

Mrs. Bender announced that she completed the Open Meetings Act course through MABE on February 3rd.