

BOARDROOM CHATTER

PUBLICATION PREPARED BY ACPS PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Present Proclamation Recognizing March as Music in Our Schools Month

The school board presented a proclamation recognizing March as Music in Our Schools Month as designated by the National Association for Music Education. This year's theme is "Music: The Sound of My Heart." The study of music contributes to the development of young people through heightened skills in listening, reading, self-expression, and creativity and is basic to a complete education. The study of music provides a competitive edge for successful educational reform while engaging students in individual and group activities, which develops creativity, problem-solving, and critical and evaluative skills. Music education helps students acquire skills in the production and performance of music, as well as gives them an understanding of history and culture. Music and other arts significantly enhance the morale and quality of the school environment, and music programs should be maintained and improved for all students, regardless of their socio-economic status or their abilities.

Present Proclamation Recognizing March as Youth Art Month

The school board presented a proclamation recognizing March as Youth Art Month as designated by the National Art Education Association. This year's theme is "Art Connects Us." Art education contributes powerful educational benefits to all elementary, middle, and high school students and develops students' creative problem-solving and critical thinking abilities. Art education teaches sensitivity to beauty, order, and other expressive qualities and gives students a deeper understanding of multi-cultural values and beliefs. Art education reinforces and brings to life what students learn in other subjects and interrelates student learning in art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics. Support should be given to art teachers as they attempt to strengthen art education in their schools and communities.

Recommendation for Schools Update

Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Jeff Blank, first provided the school board with an update on vaccinations in ACPS. By Friday, March 12, 2021, 65-70% of employees will have completed the vaccination process by receiving their second dose. Mr. Blank also commended staff for implementing and adjusting to concurrent teaching. He mentioned that prior to the Governor's afternoon press conference on Tuesday, just prior to the board meeting, staff was planning for traditional graduation ceremonies with a limited number of tickets being available to students. However, now that the outdoor venue capacity has been increased to 50%, additional plans and announcements will be forthcoming to all for attendees at each high school graduation.

Finally, Mr. Blank recommended to the school board that ACPS transition students

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meeting held on February 9, 2021
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of February 1-28, 2021
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of February 1-28, 2021
4. Receive Information Technology monthly report for February 2021
5. Receive monthly financial report.

from half-days of instruction to full days beginning March 22nd. Students in Grades 2-12 will still attend school on an A/B day schedule. Additionally, after Easter break beginning the week of April 12th, A/B day students will alternate attending school on Fridays for in-person learning.

The original return to school schedule for the week of March 15th will remain unchanged, and students in Grades 7, 8, 10, 11 will return to buildings on an A/B day schedule for half days of instruction. Any parents who have previously opted their student out of in-person learning

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT CONT.

and would like to opt them back in beginning on Monday, March 22, 2021, should contact their child's school administrator no later than the end of the day on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, to ensure that there is space available.

The schedule for the remainder of March is as follows:

- 3/22 and 3/24 – full instructional days for A Day students
- 3/23 and 3/25 – full instructional days for B Day students
- 3/26 – Virtual half day instruction for all students (with the exception of students without connectivity and CTE skill area who will continue with in-person learning)
- 3/29 and 3/31 - full instructional days for A Day students
- 3/30 - full instructional day for B Day students

Easter break begins on Thursday, April 1st for ACPS students. This day will be a virtual half-day of instruction for both A and B Day students. Schools will be closed on Friday, April 2nd and Monday, April 5th. The schedule upon returning from Easter break is as follows:

- 4/6 and 4/8 - full instructional days for B Day students
- 4/7 - full instructional day for A Day students
- 4/9 - Virtual half day instruction for all students (with the exception of students without connectivity and CTE skill area who will continue with in-person learning)

Beginning the week of April 12th, ACPS students will begin an alternating schedule on Fridays for full-day in-person learning. On Friday, April 16th and Friday, April 30th, A Day students will attend school in-person, and on Friday, April 23rd, B Day students will attend school in-person. All other days in April will alternate as normal on an A/B Day schedule with full days of instruction.

Please note that students in Pre-K full-day programs, kindergarten and Grade 1, those students failing or failing to engage in virtual learning, and identified students in special programs will continue to attend school Monday through Thursday and will transition to full days of instruction the week of March 22nd as well. These student groups will also begin attending school every Friday beginning the week of April 12th. Additionally, students without connectivity and Career Center skill area students will still attend school in-person five days per week.

Also beginning on March 22nd, pre-kindergarten students currently enrolled in a half-day A.M. program should arrive at their school's scheduled start time and will dismiss at 11:30 a.m., with the exception of Mt. Savage, who will dismiss at approximately 10:50 a.m. Pre-k students currently enrolled in a half-day P.M. program should arrive at their school at 12:30 p.m. and will dismiss at the school's regularly scheduled dismissal time. All pre-k students will begin attending school every Friday for in-person learning beginning the week of April 12th.

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES

2021–2022 Academic School Calendar Process

Dr. Kim Kalbaugh, ACPS Chief Academic Officer, updated the school board on the 2021-2022 academic school calendar. ACPS is proposing a pre-Labor Day start, with the first day of school for teachers being August 18th, and the first day of school for students being August 25th. Other noteworthy dates are as follows:

- Pre-K and Kindergarten begin August 30th
- Parent Conferences October 1st (schools closed)
- Principal Staff Development/Teacher Work Time/Employee Health Fair November 12th (schools closed)

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES CONT.

- 3-hour early dismissal November 24th, schools closed through November 29th for Thanksgiving Break
- Schools closed December 23rd through January 3rd for Christmas Break
- Supervisor Staff Development/Teacher Work Time January 18th (schools closed)
- Parent Conferences February 22nd (schools closed)
- Schools closed April 13th-18th for Easter Break
- Last day of school for students (with built-in days) June 3rd
- Last day of school for students (without built-in days) June 10th

State Assessments Update

Dr. Kalbaugh provided updated information to the school board on the administration of the State Assessments for Spring 2021. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that states administer annual statewide assessments to all students in English Language Arts (ELA) and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school, as well as in science once in each grade span. In addition to these federally mandated assessments, Maryland law requires a social studies assessment once in the middle school grade band (Grade 8) and the High School Assessment in American Government.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges for classroom instruction as most students have spent the 2020-2021 school year in remote learning. To assist in minimizing the impact on the limited in-person instructional time in Spring 2021, MSDE is proposing to utilize the flexibility in the testing window as provided by the U.S. Department of Education. Based on the March 4th state board meeting, Dr. Karen Salmon announced that all Grade 3-8 ELA and math assessments would be postponed until fall. The fall assessments will be a shortened diagnostic exam instead of the full assessment. School districts received information previously of the cancellation of all levels of the Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA), the Grade 8 social studies, and the high school government assessments. High School Assessments are not cancelled, but are available for students who did not fall under the 2020 waiver. New waivers for 2021 have been requested by MSDE for the accountability of graduation requirements that pertain to the high school courses, and that information will be confirmed at an upcoming meeting.

Dr. Kalbaugh also provided an update on the recommendations by the Maryland High School Graduation Task Force. One recommendation is to delink or separate the high school assessment as an exit graduation requirement. Research shows that high stakes exit exams disproportionately and negatively impact minority and economically disadvantaged students, reducing their likelihood of graduation from high school. Research also shows that a student's course grade is a stronger predictor of college and career success than standardized assessments. MSDE has requested approval to delink the high school assessments as an exit graduation requirement and move it to an end-of-course assessment to account for 20% of the student's final grade for the respective high school course in algebra, English, science, and government. The implementation of these end-of-course assessments is tentatively scheduled to occur in the 2022-2023 school year.

Starting in the 2018-2019 school year, all teachers and students in Grades 5-11 had the opportunity to take the Maryland School Survey. The survey collects important information about relationships, engagement, the school environment, and safety. School leaders use results to learn about and improve the school community. MSDE also announced that the survey is cancelled for the 2020-2021 school year.

Dr. Kalbaugh also provided the school board with updates on AP testing and spring recovery programs. The 2021 College Board Advanced Placement (AP) exams will be administered in ACPS during the May 3-12, 14, and 17 testing window. Parents will be responsible for providing transportation to and from school for the test administration(s). The College Board has indicated that there will be specific morning and afternoon test administrations for each course. School counselors will notify students of the date and time for the test administration of a course. If a test make-up is needed, the school counselor will coordinate details for a test make-up with the student. Social distancing protocols will be in place during the AP test administration. Because of COVID-19 and shortened course schedules, ACPS final exams are

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES CONT.

waived for all of the AP courses this year. This final exam waiver will allow more time for teachers to prepare students for the College Board exams.

ACPS prioritized seniors and juniors for recovery of semester one for courses needed for graduation. ACPS is unable to offer recovery of semester one for AP courses and college courses due to their academic rigor. Dr. Kalbaugh stressed that it is critical that all ACPS students work diligently through the end of the school year to earn the minimal passing grade of D for their classes. A high school student will be required to participate in a summer school recovery session, and after school recovery session next year, or repeat the course if a recovery option is not used.

ACPS is currently offering another after school virtual credit recovery opportunity for high school students in Grades 10-12 who failed a course in prior years and plans to offer three sessions next year as well. ACPS will be offering two sessions of summer school that high school students may earn up to four credits failed during this year or previous years. In addition, staff is working on a number of summer academic programs, and more information on those programs will be provided in the near future.

Finally, Dr. Kalbaugh noted that since the tutoring grant began in October 2020, there have been nearly 5,000 hours of tutoring provided. ACPS encourages parents to take advantage of these tutoring services for their children.

FINANCIAL UPDATES

Monthly Financial Report

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, provided the school board with financial updates from February 2021. Each month he reviews eight specific measures that could swing in one direction or the other very quickly, so it is important to keep track of them to be sure that they are trending in the right direction. They are as follows:

- Legal fees are trending well and about \$9,000 under budget compared to this time last year.
- Substitutes costs are up; however, Mr. McKenzie is optimistic that these costs will come in under budget

by year's end.

- Equipment costs are overspent at the moment, but that is simply a timing issue and will likely come in under budget as well.
- Tuition costs for non-public placements are flat relative to last year.
- Transportation and utility costs are both down significantly as a result of COVID and using less fuel, electricity, and water.
- Retirement costs are up but will likely be able to be covered from other areas that are underspent at year's end.
- Healthcare costs are down by more than \$2 million; however, ACPS was reimbursed later in the year last year for stop loss payments. Mr. McKenzie noted that they are still trending well, just likely not that well.

Summary of FY2022 Superintendent's Operating Budget

Mr. McKenzie provided the school board with a summary of the FY2022 Superintendent's Operating Budget, highlighting the school board's budget priorities, budget considerations, and budget assumptions. The school board's budget priorities are as follows:

- 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 CTE programs.
- 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.
- 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 shared costs of health insurance, and give raises if possible.
- Maintain the availability of technological needs both within the classroom and at home.

The Superintendent's role, per the Maryland Code Annotated, Education Article 4-205 (K), "The County Superintendent shall: (1) take the initiative in the

FINANCIAL UPDATES CONT.

preparation and presentation for the annual school budget; and (2) seek in every way to secure the adequate funds from local authorities for the support and development of the public schools in the county.”

The local school board’s role, also per the Maryland Code Annotated, Education Article 4-205 (K), is “With the advice of local superintendent, the local board is responsible for preparing the school system budget in accordance with the state statutory and regulatory requirement for submitting its budget to the county government.” In addition, the local board sets the parameters for employee compensation and other terms of the pending collective bargaining agreements; identifies educational goals and objectives for the superintendent to implement; and engages the public in identifying budget priorities.

School system budget considerations are as follows:

- Maryland school systems do not have the authority to bond debt, levy taxes, or raise revenues on their own.
- The state provides revenues to the district based upon the district’s enrollment demographics and the district’s relative wealth.
- Local government is obligated to fund their local district annually.
- The school system must prepare and present a balanced budget. The board’s budget hearing with county government has been scheduled for April 8th at 1:55 p.m.

Personnel assumptions for the FY2022 Superintendent’s Budget are as follows:

- Allow a placeholder for good faith negotiations with the district’s four bargaining units
- Continue to fund the four mental health professionals and additional security employees hired during fiscal 2020
- Continue to provide school-based athletic trainers at the three comprehensive high schools
- Provided for curriculum writing leading up to the MSDE curriculum vetting process which will begin in 2023
- Provide additional days for P-TECH program coordinator of the program as three cohorts will be taking college courses

Non-personnel assumptions for the FY2022 Superintendent’s budget are as follows:

- Purchase 3-5 reading textbook series and 6-8 English Language Arts textbook series \$675,000
- Research World Language textbook series for high school \$200,000
- Dual enrollment and P-TECH tuition costs will increase across the district as the first and second cohort take additional college courses within the program
- Participation in Maryland Apprenticeship Program \$25,000
- Continue to provide school-based allocations at a constant level when compared to prior year appropriations
- Provide constant level of athletic transportation allocations at each school
- Appropriate funding for staff development opportunities as requested
- Prepare a budget within the parameters and priorities outlined by the board

The FY2022 Unrestricted Revenue is \$117,724,454. Negotiations have not been finalized with all bargaining units. There has also been a shift in the rank and make-up of some Title I schools that may have staffing implications within those schools. From a legislative standpoint, PSSAM and MABE are monitoring several bills that could potentially impact school system finances. The minimum wage increases continue to be impactful to the school system’s budget.

CARES Update

ACPS received five different Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act grants. They are:

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1. CARES Education Stabilization Fund Program Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund - \$2,557,898
2. CARES Education Stabilization Fund Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund - \$97,034
3. Coronavirus Relief Fund Technology - \$909,933
4. Coronavirus Relief Fund Tutoring - \$1,367,490
5. CARES Reopening Grant - \$235,592

In total, ACPS received \$5,167,947 in CARES funding and has spent \$3,791,668 of that or 73%. Spending includes the following:

- Computers and Chromebooks - \$1.6 million
- Hot spots, connectivity, communication, etc. – over \$300,000
- Schoology and training – over \$210,000
- Software and maintenance agreements – over \$569,000
- Additional custodians- \$118,000
- Tutoring and support – over \$232,000

ACPS is in the process of finalizing it's application for the next round of CARES funding called ESSER 2, which will be more than \$11 million. This money can be spent through September of 2023. Applications are due April 26th.

NEW BUSINESS

Consider Approval of the Recommendations for School Update

The school board voted in favor of the Superintendent's recommendation to transition students from half-days of instruction to full days beginning March 22nd, and beginning the week of April 12th to have A/B day students alternate attending school on Fridays for in-person learning.

Consider Approval of 2021-2022 Pre-Labor Day Academic School Calendar

The school board approved the 2021-2022 Pre-Labor Day academic school calendar as presented by Dr. Kalbaugh. Both the one-page and 12-month calendars can be found on the school system's website, www.acpsmd.org, under the Parents and Students tab.

Consider Approval of the FY2022 Superintendent's Operating Budget

The school board voted to approve the FY2022 Superintendent's Operating Budget as well as an amendment to the budget made by Mrs. Frank to transfer \$400,000 from the Fund Balance to the Operating Budget for mental health services for students.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session April 13, 2021, As Necessary

The school board voted to meet in Executive Session on April 13, 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, April 12, 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 & SMOB UPDATES

Mr. Mitchell Septoff, Student Member of the Board

Mr. Septoff updated the school board on the following:

- He returned to school for the first week of hybrid learning as a senior and said it was a mixed bag. Some students were happy to be back, while others were a bit indifferent.
- He advised the board that there is an underrepresented minority of students that really enjoy and thrive in an online learning environment, and that there seem to be extremes on both sides of the aisle.
- As a student representative, he and his classmates want to see students return to school buildings; however, he noted that it is necessary to keep options open for all situations moving forward.

Mrs. Tammy Fraley

Mrs. Fraley, along with Mr. Blank, had the opportunity to attend a Local Advisory Committee meeting and heard a presentation from Paul Smith of the Western Maryland Consortium on the opioid crisis and resources available to students. Mr. Smith noted that many students now want to pursue careers in counseling as a result of the opioid crisis, and a grant for professional services to help students earn internships and apprenticeships is available through the consortium. Additionally, opportunities exist for students and young adults ages 14-24 this summer, and eligibility is no longer based on household income.

Mrs. Fraley also noted that in her role as MABE president she is watching several house bills, specifically the Kirwin “Part II” that will have a significant impact on ACPS and the community if it passes legislation. She is also paying close attention to bills related to School Resource Officers.

CONSTITUENTS’ COMMENTS

All of the constituents listed below spoke on the need to reopen school buildings for full instructional days, five days a week as soon as possible for the health, well being, and academic success of our students.

Keith & Val Pirolozzi

Emailed comments can be found [HERE](#).

Kimberly Sloane, ACEA President

Emailed comments can be found [HERE](#).

Connie Clifton

Emailed comments can be found [HERE](#).

Erica Reddy

Live comments can be viewed [HERE](#) at the 1:12:47 minute mark.

Stephanie Furstenberg

Live comments can be viewed [HERE](#) at the 1:17:40 minute mark.

Misti Williams

Live comments can be viewed [HERE](#) at the 1:24:15 minute mark.

Jade Browning

Live comments can be viewed [HERE](#) at the 1:27:47 minute mark.

Lori Dudiak

Live comments can be viewed [HERE](#) at the 1:31:28 minute mark.

Rachael Cesnick

Live comments can be viewed [HERE](#) at the 1:36:20 minute mark.

School board member responses to constituents’ comments begin at the 1:50:25 minute mark of the [recorded video](#).