

# 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, Superintendent  
Ms. Brooklyne Noel, SMOB

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

### *Participants and Winner of Middle School Entrepreneurial Showcase*

School board members recognized several student participants and the winner of the middle school Entrepreneurial Showcase. This year's showcase was held virtually due to COVID, and students were asked to prepare a video proposal which was then judged by a panel from ACPS to decide the winning business idea. Student participants included Kain Andrick, Cailyn Broadwater, Dawn Cook, Tess Crawford, Ben Dixon, Lucas Orndorff, Lillian Rase, Gabe Silver, and Gage Stafford. Lucas Orndorff, who was an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Mt. Savage Middle School, won the competition.

ACPS partners with EverFi, a company that supplies the financial literacy programs at the middle school level, as well as PNC Bank, who sponsors the EverFi programs.

### *Health Department Update*

Ms. Jenelle Mayer, Health Officer for the Allegany County Health Department, provided the school board with an update on COVID numbers and quarantine options for unvaccinated students. As of the time of the meeting, Allegany County's case rate was 53.76 cases per 100,000 population, compared to Maryland's case rate of 17.56 cases per 100,000 population. The percent positivity in Allegany County was 10.41% compared to 3.88% in Maryland. The CDC's COVID transmission category for Allegany County remains HIGH. The percent of the population in Allegany County that is fully vaccinated is 45.2% compared to 65.2% in Maryland. The percent of students age 12-17 who are fully vaccinated in Allegany County is 29.9% compared to 63.7% in Maryland. In that same age group, 36% of students in Allegany County have received at least one dose of vaccine compared to 73.2% in Maryland. Ms. Mayer noted that Allegany County remains significantly behind the state in vaccination rates, and case rates remain well above the state average. This is true in other counties in Maryland with low vaccination rates. Looking at recent trend data, however, shows that Allegany County may be headed down in case rates.

Ms. Mayer also provided the school board with information on quarantine options for unvaccinated students and staff who are a close contact to a known or suspected positive case of COVID and who are showing no symptoms. The individual who is a close contact may take a COVID test on or after the 5<sup>th</sup> day of quarantine, and if negative, may return to school on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, as long as they continue to be symptom free. Proof of a negative test will be required. If an individual chooses not to get a COVID test, then they will be quarantined for 10 days and return to school/work on the 11<sup>th</sup> day. These guidelines went into effect on Monday, October 18, 2021.

## CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meetings held on September 14, 2021.
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of September 1-30, 2021.
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of September 1-30, 2021.
4. Receive monthly IT report for September
5. Receive monthly financial report.
6. FY 2022 Comprehensive Maintenance Plan

## INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATE

### *Tutoring Update*

Dr. Kim Kalbaugh, ACPS Chief Academic Officer, provided the school board with an update on tutoring. Just under 200 students are currently participating in tutoring, with the majority at the elementary level (111 students). ACPS has offered nearly 140 hours of tutoring services since the beginning of this school year, and are now offering services on Friday evenings as another option for those that need it. There is currently a wait list for elementary requests, and ACPS is reviewing other ways to increase tutoring support for students.



### *Quarantine Process*

Dr. Kalbaugh provided the school board with an update on virtual learning options and the quarantine process. At the September school board meeting, it was recommended that increased instructional support is provided to students who are absent due to COVID quarantine. ACPS teachers are currently working with school-based administrators to support students in a number of ways (i.e., posting segments of lessons, supplementary resources, step-by-step instructions, and/or links to instructional videos on Schoology) to support student learning, particularly for those absent due to quarantine. Dr. Kalbaugh noted that prior to the school board's recommendation last month, all ACPS teachers were required to post assignments on Schoology. If a student doesn't have connectivity and a hotspot cannot solve the issue, then hard copies of the assignments are provided to students absent due to quarantine.

In addition to that, ACPS is piloting the following - If a teacher has a student(s) absent due to quarantine, the teacher should also complete the following:

- At the elementary level (K-5), the teacher will record, at a minimum, the focused or direct instruction of his/her lesson for ELA and math or provide a video link for students that correlates with the lesson and/or assignments or a teacher may provide step-by-step instructions that would replicate what a recording or video link would show.
- At the middle and high school levels, the teacher will record, at a minimum, the focused or direct instruction of his/her lesson for the four content areas or provide a video link for students that correlates with the lesson and/or assignment or a teacher may provide step-by-step instructions that would replicate what a recording or video link would show.
  - In creative arts classes, fine arts, and electives, the teacher will record the focused instruction or provide a video link to assist students when they are completing assignments or projects where additional student support is necessary to successfully complete the assignment or project.

School-based administrators were provided with the rationale and guidelines and were tasked with sharing this information with their faculty and staff. The pilot will be implemented from Monday, October 11, 2021, through Friday, October 22, 2021. By Friday, October 29, 2021, principals will have met with their faculty and staff to garner input and feedback regarding challenges and successes of this pilot. ACPS will use that information to evaluate any additional actions or changes that need to take place.

### *Virtual Learning Options*

ACPS has investigated the potential of offering a virtual program for Grades 7-12. Dr. Kalbaugh noted that it is crucial for the school board and parents to understand is that ACPS does not have the staffing capacity to offer a virtual program locally with its own teachers. It is not the plan of ACPS to require concurrent teaching because of the difficulties it presents for students and teachers.

ACPS administrators had a recent phone conference with MSDE about virtual programming options and reviewed two companies that other districts in Maryland are using. These companies, however, are also having staffing problems as a result of trying to meet the high demand for virtual learning across the country. One company that has potential for ACPS is called Apex, which is currently utilized by the system to offer online courses for recovery programs or individual courses. Apex offers a virtual academy, but this academy comes with a list of challenges and restrictions to consider in determining if a secondary virtual program is feasible in ACPS.

After hearing Dr. Kalbaugh's presentation, school board members agreed that Apex's virtual academy was not a good fit for ACPS and would likely not garner much interest as a result of the many challenges and restrictions that come along with that program option.

## FINANCE UPDATE

### ESSER Grant Update

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, provided the school board with an update and summary of COVID aid relief spending as of September 30, 2021. This report outlines the grant name, status, award amount, spending to date, and the balance to be spent. There are fifteen grants listed.

### Allegany County Public Schools Summary of COVID Aid Relief Spending at 9/30/21

Grant Name	Grant Status	Grant Period	Grant Award	Spending to Date	Balance
CARES ESSER I	Approved	3/13/20 - 9/30/22	\$ 2,557,898	\$ (2,550,381)	\$ 7,517
GEER Grant	Approved	3/13/20 - 9/30/22	\$ 97,034	\$ (95,869)	\$ 1,165
CARES Technology Grant	Approved	3/26/20 - 12/30/20	\$ 909,933	\$ (909,933)	\$ -
CARES Tutoring Grant	Approved	3/26/20 - 12/30/20	\$ 1,367,490	\$ (1,367,490)	\$ -
CARES Reopening Grant	Approved	3/13/20 - 9/30/22	\$ 261,372	\$ (214,669)	\$ 46,703
Broadband for Unserved Students	Approved	8/14/20 - 12/30/20	\$ 70,000	\$ (70,000)	\$ -
CARES ESSER II	Approved	3/13/20 - 9/30/23	\$ 11,278,218	\$ (4,047,984)	\$ 7,230,234
CARES ARP III	Pending	3/13/20 - 9/30/24	\$ 25,347,480	\$ (892,682)	\$ 24,454,798
Supplemental ARP Summer School - 21	Approved	3/3/21 - 12/30/24	\$ 404,180	\$ (385,862)	\$ 18,318
Supplemental ARP School Reopening - 21	Approved	3/3/21 - 12/30/24	\$ 127,280	\$ -	\$ 127,280
Supplemental ARP Trauma & Behavioral Health - 21	Approved	3/3/21 - 12/30/24	\$ 127,280	\$ -	\$ 127,280
Supplemental ARP School Tutoring Grant - 22	Pending	3/3/21 - 12/30/24	\$ 2,276,788	\$ -	\$ 2,276,788
Supplemental ARP Summer School - 22	Pending	3/3/21 - 12/30/24	\$ 404,180	\$ -	\$ 404,180
Supplemental ARP Trauma & Behavioral Health - 22	Pending	3/3/21 - 12/30/24	\$ 190,920	\$ -	\$ 190,920
Supplemental ARP Transitional Instruction Grant - 22	Pending	3/3/21 - 12/30/24	\$ 221,409	\$ -	\$ 221,409
			<u>\$ 45,641,462</u>	<u>\$ (10,534,871)</u>	<u>\$ 35,106,591</u>

Mr. McKenzie explained that some of the grants listed on this chart are expired, with all funds being spent; some are due to expire in 2022; and some are pending approval from MSDE. Of the \$45,641,462 anticipated to be received in COVID aid relief, ACPS has spent \$10,534,871.

Mr. McKenzie also noted that staff is currently working on the FY 2021 audit. They have been in communication with Huber Michaels as well as county government about the progress and hope to have this audit completed in the near future.

### CONSTITUENT COMMENTS

Ms. Lori Lepley spoke to the school board as a concerned parent. Her comments can be heard on the recorded meeting video at the 41:45-minute mark.

***Consider First Reading of Code of Ethics Policy (File: BCA)***

The school board approved the first reading of the above policy, whose purpose is “to identify a code of ethics for Board members and applicable employees.” The vote passed 4-1. The policy will go back to the policy committee for some language clarification before coming back to the board for a second reading.

***Consider First Reading of Nepotism Policy (File: BCC)***

The school board approved the first reading of the above policy, whose purpose is “to avoid the harmful impact of conflicts of interest on the school system and to provide guidance with regard to the employment, transfer, supervision, evaluation, or promotion of an immediate qualified relative of an employee, whether permanent or temporary, or a member of the Board of Education.” The vote passed unanimously. The policy will go back to the policy committee for clarification of a strike through before coming back to the board for a second reading.

***Consider First Reading of Staff Ethics Policy (File: GBEA)***

The school board approved the first reading of the above policy, whose purpose is “to identify ethical principles to guide the behavior of employees.” The vote passed unanimously.

***Regulations Review for Staff Ethics Policy (File: GBEA-R)***

The school board reviewed the regulations for the above policy.

***Consider First Reading of Board Communication Policy (File: BH)***

This was tabled.

***Approval of Amendments to Board Handbook***

This was tabled.

***MOU Between Board of Education and ACEA***

Mr. Steve Wilson, ACPS Director of Human Resources, asked the school board to approve a Memorandum of Understanding between the Board of Education and the Allegany County Education Association. Last year, the Family First Coronavirus Act provided COVID leave for any employee affected by COVID. That law ended in December 2020, and since then, ACPS employees were required to use accrued sick leave if they were affected by COVID. After much review, it was determined that employees could still become infected by the virus by no fault of their own, even if they were fully vaccinated and adhered to social distancing and mask requirements. This MOU now allows any vaccinated ACEA bargaining unit member who is directed by the BOE to quarantine due to a work-related positive COVID test result, the presence of suspected COVID symptoms, or a potential workplace exposure to COVID through work-related contact tracing will be provided up to a maximum of ten days paid administrative leave for the duration of the quarantine period. This MOU does not apply to any employee who is not fully vaccinated. This includes obtaining any COVID booster vaccine that the employee is eligible to receive. The school board unanimously approved the MOU, which is valid during the 2021-2022 school year only.

***Vote to Meet in Executive Session November 9, 2021, as Necessary***

The school board voted to meet in Executive Session on November 9, 2021, pending any appeals or unfinished business. 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](mailto:comments@acpsmd.org). Emails must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, November 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. The meeting time and location will be TBD.

## SMOB UPDATE

Ms. Brooklyne Noel, the ACPS Student Member of the Board, updated the school board on ACASC. The Allegany County Association of Student Councils has begun the election process for Executive Board members to include President, Vice President, Parliamentarian, Public Relations, and Secretary. Each middle and high school is allotted a certain number of votes based on their respective school populations. Once this Executive Board is established, the group can begin to hold meetings, plan general assemblies, and organize community service projects. Ms. Noel noted that she was pleased to hear about the pilot program surrounding students in quarantine because she has heard from many different students who have struggled to complete assignments, especially in upper-level courses, without adequate teacher instruction. Additionally, she has also heard discussion among her peers about more students considering getting vaccinated to help students return to a more normal school experience.