

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
Ms. Brooklyne Noel, SMOB

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Health Department Update

Ms. Jenelle Mayer, Health Officer for the Allegany County Health Department, and Dr. Jennifer Corder, ACHD, provided the school board with an update on COVID-19 statistics in Allegany County as well as information on vaccinations for children 5-11 years old. The case rate in Allegany County is 18.87 cases per 100,000 population compared to 11.54 in Maryland; the percent positivity in Allegany County is 4.6% compared to 3.1% in Maryland; 46.9% of Allegany County's population is fully vaccinated compared to 67% in Maryland; 33.4% of children ages 12-17 in Allegany County are fully vaccinated compared to 66.6% in Maryland; and 38.1% of children ages 12-17 in Allegany County have received one dose of vaccination compared to 75.6% in Maryland. Allegany County remains in the HIGH category for community transmission along with all of Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore.

Dr. Corder spoke to the school board about vaccinations for children ages 5-11, and stressed that the effects of COVID-19 on children should not be minimized. Common symptoms include breathing problems, cardiac issues, loss of smell and taste, effects on the brain, mental and physical fatigue, headaches, mental or behavioral health impacts, and long haul COVID symptoms. There are more than 1.9 million cases of COVID-19 documented in children in this age group. Of those, 8,300 have been hospitalized, and more than half of them have been admitted to the ICU. There have been 94 deaths in children ages 5-11 from COVID-19.

Dr. Corder noted that the benefits of being fully vaccinated by a safe and effective vaccine are great. In that age group, if children are fully vaccinated, they are 90% less likely to acquire symptomatic COVID-19, have a reduced chance of spreading the virus, and will not have to quarantine if they are not symptomatic. The safest way to get immunity to COVID-19 is through vaccination. The ACHD in cooperation with ACPS is offering after school vaccination clinics for children ages 5-11 as well as booster shots for school staff. Parents can also check with their child's pediatrician to receive the vaccine as well as local pharmacies.

Present Proclamation Recognizing American Education Week and Educational Support Professionals Day

The school board presented a proclamation to Mrs. Kimberly Sloane, President of ACEA, recognizing November 15-19, 2021 as the 100th annual observance of American Education Week and November 17, 2021, as Educational Support Professionals Day.

Public schools are the backbone of our democracy, providing young people with the tools they need to maintain our nation's precious values of freedom, civility, and equality. By equipping young Americans with both practice skills and broader intellectual abilities, schools give them hope for, and access to, a productive future. Educational employees work tirelessly to serve our children and communities with care and professionalism, and schools are community linchpins that bring together adults and children, educators and volunteers, business leaders and elected officials in a common enterprise.

Recognize ACEA Educational Support Professional of the Year

Mrs. Kim Sloane recognized Shelly Fitzgerald, secretary at Westernport Elementary School, as ACEA's Educational Support Professional of the Year.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meetings held on October 12, 2021
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of October 1-31, 2021.
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of October 1-31, 2021.
4. Receive monthly IT report for October
5. Receive monthly financial report



UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Consider Second Reading of Code of Ethics Policy (File: BCA)

The school board approved the second reading of the above policy, whose purpose is “to identify a code of ethics for board members and applicable employees.” The policy states, “The Board of Education of Allegany County, recognizing that the system or representative government is dependent in part upon the people maintaining the highest trust in their public officials and employees finds and declares that the people have a right to be assured that the impartiality and independent judgment of public officials and employees will be maintained.”

Consider Second Reading of Nepotism Policy (File: BCC)

The school board approved the second 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 immediate qualified relatives of an employee, whether permanent or temporary, or a member of the Board of Education.”

Consider Second Reading of Staff Ethics Policy (File: GBEA)

The school board approved the second reading of the above policy, whose purpose is “to identify ethical principles to guide the behavior of employees.” The policy states, “In recognition that the conduct of its employees is viewed and appraised by colleagues, students, and the community, the Board of Education of Allegany County acknowledges the need for each person in the school system to accept responsibility for maintaining exemplary standards of professional conduct.”

NEW BUSINESS

Reopening Plan Recommendations

Mrs. Tracey Leonard, ACPS Supervisor of Athletics, provided a fall and winter sports update to the school board. MPSSAA state playoffs are currently underway:

- Both Allegany boys’ and Mountain Ridge girls’ soccer teams are in the state semifinal round, which will be played on Saturday, November 13, 2021.
- Fort Hill, Mountain Ridge, and Allegany football teams will play in the region round 2 games on Friday, November 12, 2021. The winners of these games will advance to the state quarterfinal round.
- Fort Hill and Mountain Ridge volleyball teams will play each other in the region finals on Wednesday, November 10, 2021.
- Cross country state meet will be held on Saturday, November 13, 2021. One team has qualified, and two individual runners have qualified.
- Allegany’s Darian Bauer finished 13th in the state golf championship.

Mrs. Leonard noted that tickets for volleyball regional games and state quarterfinals will be available for purchase at the gate. Tickets for region round 2, state quarterfinals, state semifinals, and state finals in football, soccer and volleyball will only be available for purchase online. No tickets will be sold at the gates for those games. Visit www.tickets.mpssaa.org for information.

Of the 258 games that have been scheduled to date, 225 were played as scheduled, and another 17 games were able to be rescheduled. 93.8% of games scheduled have been played this fall. Mrs. Leonard thanked ACPS athletic directors, school administrators, and coaches for their hard work and flexibility regarding rescheduling athletic contests.

Approximately 292 games are scheduled for the upcoming winter sports season. The first practice date is Monday, November 15, 2021, and the first play date is December 6, 2021.

Mr. Blank made the following recommendations to the school board for their consideration regarding winter sports and extracurricular activities:

- School buses will be treated the same as classrooms – students will only be required to quarantine if they are close contact of a COVID positive person if they are within 3 feet of that individual.
- Face coverings can be removed while a student-athlete is actively participating in a sport.
- Face coverings are required for athletes and coaches in the locker rooms and while on the bench.
- All spectators must wear a face covering.
- Officials are permitted to remove face coverings while actively officiating the game.
- No food or drinks inside.
- 50% gymnasium capacity in place.
- Students will be permitted to remove face coverings while participating in shows or concerts.
- All venues for shows and concerts will be at 50% capacity.

The school board approved Mr. Blank’s recommendation for updates to the ACPS Reopening Plan. These changes take effect immediately.

NEW BUSINESS CONT.

School Calendar Adjustment

The school board voted on two adjustments to the 2021-2022 school calendar. Monday, December 6, 2021, and Monday, March 21, 2022, will now be a 3-hour delayed opening to allow for supervisor staff development and teacher planning time. This extra time will help with the implementation of new textbook series, strategies and review of diagnostic data, and how to address instructional gaps. It will also give teachers an additional hour of planning on both dates.

Consider First Reading of Parent / Guardian Observation of Students Policy (File: KB)

The school board approved the first reading of the above policy, whose purpose is “to present guidelines for parent/guardian observations.” The policy states, “The Board of Education of Allegany County encourages parent/guardian observation in the education process. Observations by parents and guardians are permitted, so long as the observations do not interfere with the learning environment or the privacy of other students.”

Review of Regulations for Parent / Guardian Observation of Students Policy (File: KB-1)

The school board attorney, Mr. Michael Llewellyn, reviewed the regulations for the above policy.

Review of Regulations for Evaluation of Students Policy (File: IKA-R2)

The school board agreed to table this policy review until their December meeting.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session December 7, 2021, as Necessary (PLEASE NOT DATE CHANGE)

The school board voted to meet in Executive Session on December 7, 2021, pending any appeals or unfinished business. The time and location of the meeting is TBD.

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER UPDATES & SMOB COMMENTS

Ms. Brooklyne Noel, Student Member of the Board

Ms. Noel provided the school board with the following updates:

- The Allegany County Association of Student Councils held elections for its Executive Board, and all positions have been established. This group met on November 2nd to discuss individual school issues and to begin planning the first General Assembly, which will take place this winter. They also discussed the MASC Fall Leadership Conference.
- ACASC is looking into a possible partnership with ACM’s Civic Education Coalition to host a future youth summit.
- Ms. Noel also noted that the Fort Hill community suffered a tragic loss with the death of Saiquan Jenkins. She thanked those who supported Fort Hill during that trying time, especially other schools and the community at large.

Mrs. Deb Frank

Mrs. Frank noted that she forgot to mention at the October meeting that herself, along with Mr. Blank, Mrs. Bender, Mrs. Fraley, and Mr. Llewellyn, had the opportunity to attend the MABE fall conference, which she found to be a very valuable experience. She also thanked Mrs. Fraley for her service as the MABE president, a role never filled by someone from Allegany County, and said that she served Allegany County well.

Mrs. Tammy Fraley

Mrs. Fraley noted that the State Board of Education meetings are available via livestream and are worth paying attention to as they plan to revisit the regulations put in place at the state level at their next meeting, which is scheduled for December 7th.

Mr. Jeff Blank

Mr. Blank took a moment to thank Cumberland City Police Chief, Chuck Ternent, and his staff for their assistance during the recent tragedy at Fort Hill High School. Their support and guidance was invaluable as ACPS worked its way through a terrible event.