

BOARDROOM CHATTER

PUBLICATION PREPARED BY ACPS PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

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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. The study of music contributes to the development of young people through heightened skills in listening, reading, self-expression, and creativity. The study of music is basic to a complete education and 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 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 secondary students, and art develops students' creative problem-solving and critical thinking abilities. Art teaches sensitivity to beauty, order, and other expressive qualities, and art education gives students a deeper understanding of multi-cultural values and beliefs. Art reinforces and brings to life what students learn in other subjects, and it interconnects 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.

Present Proclamation Recognizing March as Women's History Month

The school board presented a proclamation recognizing March as Women's History Month and noted that they were honored to celebrate the impact and progress of women and girls. This year's theme is "Women Providing Healing, Promoting Hope". Throughout American History, women and girls have made vital contributions, often in the face of discrimination and undue hardship. Today, more women not only work outside of the home, but hold a wider variety of jobs, even making it to the top of business, technology, and science fields. Due to the persistence and tireless work of countless women, we have made significant progress in the U.S. and must reflect on the extraordinary and unequal burdens they continue to bear today. ACPS honors the accomplished and visionary women who have helped build our country and pay tribute to the trailblazers from the recent and distant past, for envisioning a future and building a Nation of endless possibilities for all women and girls.

Recognition of the NAACP Essay Contest Winners

This year, the Allegany County NAACP partnered with the Allegany Arts Council to sponsor the 2022 Alice Darr Arts Scholarship. ACPS students in Grades 9-12 were invited to submit artworks which represented local African American history along with an essay describing the event, place, individual, or family depicted in their work as well as the significance to local history. The three ACPS student winners were as follows:

- 1st Place: Lya Smith, Allegany 11th Grade, \$750
- 2nd Place: Ava Breighner, Mountain Ridge 12th Grade, \$500
- 3rd Place: Amare Kennedy, Mountain Ridge 12th Grade, \$250

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meetings held on February 8, 2022, and March 1, 2022.
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of February 1-28, 2022.
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of February 1-28, 2022.
4. Receive monthly IT report
5. Receive monthly financial report and banking resolution.

Recognition of Indoor Track Athletes

The 2022 MPSSAA Indoor Track State Championship meet was held on Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at the Baltimore Armory. Allegany County had several athletes qualify from both Fort Hill and Mountain Ridge High Schools.

Mary Delaney of Mountain Ridge placed 1st in the 800 Meter Run and 1st in the 1600 Meter Run. Mountain Ridge is coached by Mr. Doug Baker.

Hannah Custer of Fort Hill places 1st in the Pole Vault. Fort Hill is coached by Chris Morgan.

Other notable accomplishments from the meet included:

- Mountain Ridge 4x800 Relay Team placed 3rd
- Mountain Ridge girls' team finished 6th
- Fort Hill girls' team tied for 11th
- Mountain Ridge boys' team finished 13th

INSTRUCTIONAL & FINANCE UPDATES

Academic School Calendar

Dr. Kim Kalbaugh, ACPS Chief Academic Officer, presented the school board with a draft of the 2022-2023 academic school calendar. Several highlights included the following:

- The first day of school for teachers is August 17, 2022, and schools open for students on August 24, 2022. Pre-K and Kindergarten begins on August 29, 2022.
- Schools will be closed on September 30, 2022, for staff development, teacher work time, and the Employee Health Fair. Schools will also be closed on October 3, 2022, for parent conference day.
- Schools will dismiss three hours early on October 28, 2022, for teacher work time.
- Schools and offices will be closed on November 8, 2022, for General Election Day.
- Thanksgiving Break: 3-hour early dismissal on November 23, 2022, and schools will be closed November 24-November 28, 2022. Schools will reopen on November 29, 2022, with a three-hour delayed opening.
- Christmas Break: 3-hour early dismissal on December 22, 2022, and schools will be closed December 23, 2022, through January 2, 2023. Schools will reopen on January 3, 2023, with a three-hour delayed opening.
- Schools will be closed January 17, 2023, for staff development and teacher work time. Schools will also be closed on March 1, 2023, for parent conferences.
- Schools will dismiss three hours early on March 24, 2023, for teacher work time.
- Easter Break: Schools will be closed April 5-10, 2023. Schools will reopen on April 11, 2023, with a three-hour delay.
- The last day of school for seniors will be May 19, 2023. Graduation dates are still TBD.
- The last day of school for students (without 5 built-in days) is June 2, 2023, with a three-hour early dismissal. The last day of school for students (with 5 built-in days) is June 9, 2023.
- The last day of school for teachers (without 5 built-in days) is June 5, 2023, and is June 12, 2023, with 5 built-in days.

MSDE Grant – MD Leads

Dr. Kalbaugh updated the school board on Maryland Leads, which is a MSDE grant initiative designed to support school districts in utilizing federal funds to overcome the learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Maryland LEAs will have access to the state's allotment of \$133 million in ESSER funds through a non-competitive grant process. MSDE is currently providing a series of information sessions and workshops about the grant submission process.

In all, there are seven high-leverage areas available through the grant. ACPS will submit a proposal for the Science of Reading. This grant will provide opportunities for all K-3 educators, special education teachers, principals, literacy specialists, and other relevant staff to participate in rigorous professional development aligned to the science of teaching reading. There are three focus areas for the proposal: training and professional development aligned to the science of teaching reading; high-quality materials and assessment tools; and systems for progress monitoring. This also includes the use of universal screeners as required by the Maryland's Ready to Read Act.

In addition, ACPS is discussing the Grow Your Own Staff initiative. For this proposal, ACPS will focus on the potential development of a program for high school students to pursue careers in education with a central point on building a pipeline for hard-to-fill areas such as math, science, and special education. ACPS would also be encouraging first-generation college students to participate in this program. Grant submissions are due by April 7, 2022. Awards will be announced in the spring of 2022 with implementation beginning in the summer of 2022.

Superintendent's Operating Budget

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, reviewed the FY 2023 Superintendent's Operating Budget. He began by reviewing the school board's FY 2023 budget priorities, which 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 and on potential changes in regulations and policies established by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
- Utilizing appropriate CARES and Blueprint funding, maintain and enhance availability and support of technological needs both within the classroom and at home. In addition, continue to provide robust educational recovery programs throughout the school year and during the summer to include recovery of learning loss and food service availability across all grade levels.
- Maintain and enhance student safety and mental health by providing licensed mental health and/or social worker support based upon demonstrated student need and increasing school safety where possible considering local law enforcement recommendations and the Maryland Center for School Safety Policies and Regulations.
- Make every effort to provide employees with negotiated benefits, including salary and health insurance benefits that incorporates changes established by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and give raises where possible.
- Establish additional resources and programs for early childhood development (e.g., universal Pre-K) utilizing additional funding streams and re-allocation of facilities where possible.

The Superintendent's role in planning a budget includes taking the initiative in the preparation and presentation for the annual school budget and seeking in every way to secure the adequate funds from local authorities for the support and development of the public schools in the county. With the advice of the superintendent, the local school 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 school 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.

Other budget requirements or 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 will take place in early April 2022.

Personnel assumptions for the FY 2023 budget include:

- Allow a placeholder for good faith negotiations with the district's four bargaining units.
- Hire personnel to support the Blueprint's Pre-Kindergarten's initiatives.
- Continue to provide school-based athletic trainers at the three comprehensive high schools.
- Continue to fund five mental health professionals from unrestricted funds.
- Hire three and a half additional school security officers.

Non-personnel assumptions for the FY 2023 budget include:

- Transportation costs are increasing as a result of increasing fuel and supply costs (\$213,824)
- An additional bus has also been prioritized in the budget (\$103,000)
- Pre-Kindergarten supply costs for accreditation (\$160,000)
- Provide additional funding for school-based supply allocations (\$62,000)
- Capital Outlay projects have also been prioritized and the budget has increased (\$121,796)
- Provide consistent 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 total FY 2023 requested budget is \$123,779,490, which is a 4.5% increase over last year's budget. Mr. McKenzie noted that negotiations have not been finalized with all bargaining units. 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. Finally, there may be a shift in the rank and make-up of Title I schools, which may have staffing implications within those schools.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Consider Second Reading of School Board Communication (File: BH)

The school board approved the second reading of the above policy, whose purpose is "to prescribe how the Board and individual Board members communicate with the public and employees." The policy states, "The Board believes that open communication is essential for the effective operation of the school system. The Board will ensure that its members have knowledge of the communications directed to it from the public and the employees. Both the Board and individual Board members have a responsibility to communicate effectively and honestly with the public. Individual Board members have no authority except when participating in a legally convened meeting of the Board or vested in special authority by Board action."

NEW BUSINESS

Consider First Reading of Evaluation of Classified Employees (File: GDN)

The school board approved the first reading of the above policy, whose purpose is "to provide for the evaluation of classified employees." The policy states, "Classified employees are expected to perform their duties and meet their responsibilities with competence and effectiveness. They shall be evaluated at least annually to determine the extent to which their performance is satisfactory or unsatisfactory."

Consider First Reading of Support and Improve the Educational Outcome of Pregnant and Parenting Students (File: IHBCA)

The school board approved the first reading of the above policy, whose purpose states “ACPS is committed to providing equal opportunity and access for all students in a supportive school environment. Pregnant and parenting students must be allowed to participate in all aspects of the educational program, including all academic, physical, and social components. Pregnant and parenting students must have access to a range of specific activities and policies that govern activities both in and outside of the classroom. These activities include, but are not limited to, excused absences, make-up work, accommodations for instruction, lactation, and designated support staff in the school.”

Review of Regulations for Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Policy (File: JBA)

The school board reviews the regulations for the above policy, whose purpose is “to state the Board’s position regarding student harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, intimidation, or violence.”

Vote to Approve Academic School Calendar

The school board voted to approve the 2022-2023 academic school calendar as presented.

Vote to Approve Superintendent’s Operating Budget

The school board voted to approve the FY 2023 Superintendent’s Operating Budget.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session April 12, 2022, as Necessary

The school board voted to meet in Executive Session on April 12, 2022, pending any appeals or unfinished business. The time and location of the meeting is TBD.

COMMENTS

There were no updates from any school board member or the Alternate Student Member of the Board, Ms. Genevieve Batman, who attended the meeting in place of Brooklyn Noel.