

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. Carley Clise, SMOB

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC) Update

Mr. Sean Fradiska provided the school board with an update on the Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee. The mission of the committee is to “provide information to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed by families, educators, other professionals and community members to enable individuals with disabilities to have the maximum opportunity to become fully participating members of their home, school, work, and community.” The committee’s vision is to “facilitate communication and collaboration between families, educators, administrators, and community leaders to enhance services available for students with disabilities and advocate for positive changes in special education services within ACPS.”

In order to be a member of the SECAC, an individual must live or work in Allegany County and can include parents or guardians of students with special needs and requirements; people with special knowledge or interest concerning special education; students with special education needs and requirements; local special education support or advocacy groups; or teachers, staff, and administrators with an interest in special education. The committee meets virtually once a quarter. Tentative dates for the remainder of the 2022-2023 school year are December 12, 2022; March 13, 2023; and June 12, 2023.

Present Proclamation Recognizing October 17-21, 2022, as School Bus Safety Week

The school board presented a proclamation to ACPS Supervisor of Transportation, Mr. HB Martz, recognizing October 17-21, 2022, as School Bus Safety Week. Maryland’s student transportation administrators and operators remain diligent and committed to ensuring the safe transportation of nearly 700,000 students on a daily basis, and their efforts are critical to the operation and safety of schools. All school bus drivers and attendants employed or contracted by local education agencies must achieve rigorous and specialized training as well as adhere to the highest standards of school bus safety. During the school year, these fleets cover millions of miles, operate in a variety of weather conditions, and have an outstanding safety record despite the ever-present challenges they face. National School Bus Safety Week is an opportunity to recognize school bus drivers and attendants who connect children to their school communities and keep them safe every day.

Environmental Literacy and Middle School Outdoor School Update

Dr. Eric Van Slyke, ACPS Supervisor of Secondary Science and STEM, provided the school board with an update on environmental literacy in ACPS. This school year, sixth graders have the opportunity to spend one day at Evergreen Heritage Center; seventh graders spend two half-days at Rocky Gap; and eighth graders also spend one day at Evergreen Heritage Center. At the high school level, earth science students spend one day at EHC; AP environmental science students spend one day at Rocky Gap; and chemistry and matter and energy students spend two days in their schools testing fertilizers and water. Additionally, high school students can participate in Envirothon where they compete on teams in the areas of aquatics, soils, forestry, and wildlife.

Dr. Van Slyke shared with the school board a chart outlining the number of students involved in the environmental literacy program. They are as follows:

- 6th Grade – 587 students
- 7th Grade – 624 students
- 8th Grade – 597 students
- Earth Space Science classes – 486 students
- Chemistry/Matter and Energy classes – 564 student
- Envirothon – 9 or 10 teams of 45-50 students

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meeting held on September 13, 2022.
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of September 1-30, 2022.
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of September 1-30, 2022.
4. Receive monthly financial report.

In closing, Dr. Van Slyke noted that all secondary schools in ACPS are Green Schools, and all middle schools will be recertified as such this year.

Blueprint Update

Dr. Wendy Main, ACPS Blueprint Coordinator, provided the school board with a quarterly update. The Commission began under the leadership of Dr. William E. Kirwan in 2016, and their work became the basis for the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.

HB 1300 was approved by the Maryland General Assembly in 2020, vetoed by the Governor in 2020, and overridden by the Maryland General Assembly in 2021. HB 1372 was approved by the Maryland General Assembly 2021, and served to amend the timelines originally found in HB 1300 as well as add legislation regarding student learning loss due to COVID-19. HB 1450 extended the deadline for the AIB to develop the state comprehensive implementation plan from February 15, 2022, to December 1, 2022. HB 1450 also extends the deadline for LEAs to develop local implementation plans from

Blueprint Update Continued from Page 1

June 15, 2022, to March 15, 2023. The goals of the Blueprint are to transform Maryland's early childhood, primary, and secondary education system to the levels of high performing systems around the world and to establish a career ladder system for educators composed of levels through which teachers may progress and gain certain authority, status, and compensation as they gain certain expertise.

The pillars for the Blueprint include Early Childhood Education, High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders, College and Career Readiness, More Resources for Students to be Successful, and Governance and Accountability. Pillar 1 (Early Childhood Education) significantly expands publicly-funded full-day pre-k for all 4-year-olds and low income 3-year-olds through a public-private delivery system; increases the number of high-quality early childhood education providers and educators; expands supports for young children and their families; fully funds the Maryland Infant and Toddlers Program; and improves student readiness for kindergarten.

Pillar 2 (High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders) increases the rigor of educator licensure and prep programs; improves educator compensation and working conditions; institutes new recruitment and professional development efforts to create a more diverse educator workforce; establishes a new statewide educator career ladder to continually improve professional practice and student performance; and implements a more comprehensive in-service educator training and professional development.

Pillar 3 (College and Career Readiness) implements pre-k through 12 curriculum for students to be college and career ready by the end of 10th grade; develops an aligned instructional system with resources and supports necessary to keep students on track to be college and career ready; provides students with resources necessary to achieve reading proficiency by the end of grade 3; creates a statewide framework for rigorous CTE programs and skills standards; and establishes pathways for CCR and non-CCR students in grades 11 and 12.

Pillar 4 (More Resources for Students to be Successful) provides more support for students and schools who need it most, specifically, additional supports for English learners, low-income, and special education students; provides new Concentration of Poverty grants directly to eligible schools to support community schools and enhance wraparound services; and coordinates community supports to meet student behavioral health needs and provide technical assistance to school systems.

Pillar 5 (Governance and Accountability) establishes the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) to oversee and monitor state and local agencies' progress in implementing Blueprint policies; develops state and local Blueprint implementation plans; and creates expert review teams to visit schools and make recommendations for improving student achievement.

ACPS Blueprint for Maryland's Future next steps are as follows:

- Form the Blueprint Implementation Team comprised of the Superintendent, the Blueprint Coordinator, district-level leaders, teachers, and administrators to provide oversight for the development and implementation of the Blueprint plan
- Meet with Blueprint committee chairs to disseminate information supporting each Blueprint pillar
- ACPS Blueprint committee members to review Blueprint implementation planning materials and participate in introductory sessions, information sessions, and workshops and collaboration sessions by pillar as made available by the MSDE or the AIB
- Engage community stakeholders to gather feedback regarding the Blueprint Implementation Plan specifically related to ACPS
- Develop draft Blueprint plan based on the final publication of the Blueprint Implementation Plan after the December 1, 2022, release
- Submit the final Blueprint Implementation Plan on or before March 15, 2023, for feedback

ACPS Blueprint committee chairs include: (Pillar 1) Mrs. Jackie Enright; (Pillar 2) Mr. Steve Wilson; (Pillar 3) Dr. Kim Kalbaugh; (Pillar 4) Mrs. Debbie Metheny; and (Pillar 5) Dr. Wendy Main. The ACPS Blueprint Implementation team will provide regular updates on Blueprint plan development and meet with the appropriate community stakeholders on an as-needed basis to inform the development of the final plan.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Consider Second Reading of Volunteer Policy (File: IJOC)

The school board approved the second reading of the above policy, whose purpose is "to state the Board's policy for providing background checks on certain volunteers." The policy states, "The BOE encourages volunteers to assist with curricular and extracurricular activities. Chaperones for overnight field trips or foreign travel, as defined in Policy IHOA, or any school-sanctioned overnight activities may not begin service with ACPS until after they have successfully passed a background check. Chaperones are not required to pass a background check with assisting with day field trips or extended-day field trips, as those terms are defined in Policy IHOA. Background checks shall be administered by the Department of Human Resources. Supervised volunteers are not required to undergo a background check."

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATE

Testing and Accountability Update

Mrs. Trina Simpson, ACPS Supervisor of Assessment and Accountability, provided a testing update for the school board. Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, MSDE now tracks students at the 9th grade level that are on track to graduate in four years. This data component is reported to MSDE and included in the annual High School Data Collection. ACPS reported that 88.9%, or 531 out of 597 students, are on track for graduation. This number only includes students that are on track for a high school diploma and not those on a certificate track. The 66 ACPS students not on track have been contacted and encouraged to participate in After School Credit Recovery to regain credits. Most students that are not on track to graduate also fall into the category of habitually absent.

ACPS offers three after-school sessions at all three high schools, as well as summer school to recover credits. Students recovered 166 credits during summer school 2022. Students have 20 days (two hours per day) to show a competency of at least 60%. To be eligible for Credit Recovery, students must have failed a course at a minimum of 50%. To be eligible for Extended Credit Recovery, students must have failed a course with a final grade between 40-49%. A knowledge base of less than 40% in a course will need to be retaken. 70 ACPS students registered during session one of Credit Recovery.

MSDE indicates that students are college and career ready by assessing them in English and math by the end of tenth grade. Students meeting CCR requirements will have access to three pathways to complete post-CCR requirements. These pathways include a competitive entry college prep program, early college or dual enrollment, or a career and technical education program. Counties will receive \$517 per student that meets CCR in both English and math. This money is used to pay for or supplement the post pathway expense. CCR status is an indicator that creates a plan and pathways of readiness for students not meeting CCR.

English and math results will not be available to LEAs until the end of the calendar year or early January 2023. Pre-pandemic, ACPS was above the state average in 14 of 17 tested areas. In the fall of 2021, results showed ACPS below the state average in 16 of 17 tested areas. These results are consistent with other counties across the state with high poverty and special needs populations. Schools continue to focus on opportunities such as tutoring, summer school, small group instruction, and remediation programs to regain the loss of learning that occurred during COVID-19.

School improvement plans will resume this school year including Spring 2022 results. Additionally, schools have been consistently working towards improvements, and content diagnostics have been administered to students to determine the areas of strength and areas that need additional focus.

NEW BUSINESS

Vote to Approve Fort Hill High School Boiler Replacement Bid

Bids for the replacement of the boilers and gym wing HVAC equipment at Fort Hill High School were received on October 4, 2022. The project will include the replacement of the three existing boilers and the existing heating and ventilation equipment serving the gym wing. New natural gas-fired hot water boilers will be installed and the gym wing will receive the new HVAC equipment. The funding for this project is made by Capital Improvements Programs of the State of Maryland Interagency Commission on School Construction, the Allegany County Department of Public Works, and the ACPS capital budget.

Two bids were received for this project, and Mr. Jay Marley, ACPS Supervisor of Maintenance and Construction, recommended to the school board that they accept the low bid as submitted by Carl Belt, Inc. of Cumberland for a total cost of \$4,689,000. The school board voted to approved this bid.

Vote to Approve Request for Budget

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, asked the school board to approve moving up to \$1.3 million from the fund balance to help cover the costs of the improvements at Fort Hill High School. The board unanimously approved the request, allowing the replacement projects to proceed.

Consider Approval to Move November Meeting Date Due to Election Day

The school board voted to move their originally scheduled November 8th meeting to the following week on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, as schools and offices will be closed on the 8th for Election Day.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session November 15, 2022, as Necessary

The school voted to meet in Executive Session on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, pending any appeals or unfinished business. The time and location of the meeting is TBD. Please note the new meeting date.

CONSTITUENTS' COMMENTS

Mr. Zachary Barbe, Parent

Mr. Barbe addressed the school board regarding concerns he had with his student's school bus and driver. At the advice of legal counsel, the school board asked Mr. Barbe to bring his concerns to the ACPS Supervisor of Transportation as it was a personal issue that shouldn't be discussed in a public meeting.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS AND UPDATES

Student Member of the Board, Carley Clise

Carley informed the school board that ACASC was able to hold their first in-person meeting recently and are currently in the process of planning the next one to take place in mid-November.

Mrs. Deb Frank

Mrs. Frank recently had the opportunity to attend the MABE conference in Annapolis, and the majority of the gathering focused on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, so she thanked Dr. Main for her presentation. She also noted that this would be the last public meeting before the election in November, in which three seats on the school board are up for election. Mrs. Frank encouraged voters to research each candidate's platform and to choose the individuals that will best serve ACPS.

Mrs. Tammy Fraley

Mrs. Fraley also had the opportunity to attend the MABE conference and was especially impressed with the panel discussion with other Student Members of the Board focused on giving students more input. She noted that it was great to hear their ideas on how to handle similar issues facing many of the counties in Maryland. During the conference, there was also a presentation on therapy dogs, and she feels that this program is a great opportunity to create connections with students. Additionally, Mrs. Fraley serves on the Consortium for Coordinated Community Supports, which has been charged with working to provide students with wrap-around services to help make a difference.