

Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)
Unofficial Notes on Dorchester County Board of Education
Meeting, Thursday, May 18, 2023 - Dorchester Career & Technology Center

Submitted by Tom Puglisi

Note: Supporting documents may be found on the DCPS Board Docs website at <https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/dcps/Board.nsf/Public>

The Board went into closed Executive Session at 5:00 pm to discuss personnel, negotiations, legal matters, and administrative functions. Board President Susan Morgan opened the Public Meeting at 6:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance and review of the Board Calendar (see below).

The Board recognized the following Middle School STEM Festival First Place and Project of the Year* winners: Grade 6 - Cincere Candy and Trinity Frazier (Model of the Gastrointestinal Tract – MLMS) and Grant Neild and Nicolas Paterra (* Model of the Heart - NDMS); Grade 7 - Amber Dayton (* Bridge - SDS) and Sophia Diaz and Lillian Moxey (Tower of Power - SDS); Grade 8 - Kinsley Peters and Shelby Seese (Egg-O-Naut - NDMS).

The Board recognized Juanita and Lynn Darby of Dorchester County Emergency Services who received a grant to purchase Bleed Out kits for all DCPS school buses and trained all school bus drivers on how to use these kits along with providing a first aid class.

The Board received a presentation from the Maryland Coalition of Families representative Ann Marie Dembry about their many and varied family support programs offered to students, teachers, and their families.

Student Board Members from North Dorchester High School (Avlynn Bennett), Cambridge South Dorchester High School (alternate Trinity Murray), and the Dorchester Career and Technology Center (alternate Andre Callahan) presented their activity reports and recognized their successors for the 2023-2024 school year: Cambridge-South Dorchester High School (Wilhelm Reinbold and alternate Trinity Murray); North Dorchester High School (Dylan Ruppert and alternate Nuvia Cristina Lopez Menjivar); and Dorchester Career and Technology Center (Andre Callahan).

Public Comments.

Speaker #1, who had been a Harvesting Hope outside provider of school-based services for several years , stated that she was banned from school property after reporting that she witnessed an administrator push a student, which she considered a reportable event under State law. Speaker #1 noted that several students have missed their needed therapy because of this ban, which constituted inappropriate retaliation against her by DCPS.

Speaker #2, who is the Director of the Harvesting Hope Youth and Family Wellness, reiterated the events described by Speaker #1 and indicated that the DCPS retaliation against Speaker #1 was unacceptable and sent the wrong message to staff and students about appropriate behavior. Speaker #2 strongly requested that DCPS staff be trained on de-escalation techniques so that such events can be handled properly in the future

Speaker #3, who had been a Certified Nursing Aide in DCPS for a number of years, stated that she was retaliated against and lost her job for maintaining that students needed to be evacuated after she reported that she smelled smoke and saw smoke spread in the building. She noted that students were eventually

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evacuated as she had suggested, and that teachers and staff have indicated that they are afraid to speak out about dangerous situations for fear of retaliation.

Speaker #4, who is a school bus contractor, requested that the Board provide adequate funding in SY2023-2024 for bus contractors and inform contractors of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner so they plan for next year. The speaker noted that DCPS falls next to the bottom among counties on the Eastern Shore in bus contractor reimbursement.

Speaker #5 stated that her grandson has a 504 plan in place but was banned from school property and referred to New Directions Learning Academy without being formally suspended and without the required written notifications. She later learned that after being banned from school property, the child was recorded as having been given “excused absences” rather than being suspended. The Speaker requested a written explanation from DCPS about these issues.

Speaker #5, who is a school bus contractor, complained that DCPS failed to respond in a timely fashion to contractors’ complaints that schools were not enforcing “no-zone” spaces reserved for buses, resulting in late bus runs throughout the system. She noted that bus contractors have not been treated with the respect they deserve.

Speaker #6 reported that her son was working with the Job Corps but was inexplicitly withdrawn from school. The Speaker also reported that children are being banned from school but are being reported as having “excused absences” rather than being recorded and reported as suspended. The Speaker indicated that she is filing a Freedom of Information request for data about excused absences and suspensions.

Consent Agenda. The Board approved the meeting and work session minutes for March 16, April 9, and April 13, 2023

Board Actions. The Board approved the following actions: selected personnel nominations from the Superintendent; Board of Education meeting schedule revisions for SY2023-2024; a change in regular meeting and work session start times to 6:30 pm; the Virtual Day Instructional plan for SY2023-2024; selection of Mr. Jeff Grafton as a ESMEC Health Insurance Alliance Trustee; purchase of walk-in refrigerators and freezers for Vienna Elementary and South Dorchester K-8 (\$96,925 and \$93,975, respectively); a contract with Specialized Education of MD to operate two High Road classrooms as part of the summer academy (\$86,000); purchase of immutable backup storage (\$56,886) from Data Networks; Elementary School Security Vestibules Program Design Services for Sandy Hill, Choptank, and Maple elementary schools (\$64,775); repainting the ceiling and purchase and installation of Sandy Hill ES gym flooring (\$90,000); and purchase of a Toro Bermuda field mower (\$44,869) for Cambridge-South Dorchester HS. The Board deferred purchase of new Dell laptops for teachers and staff (\$266,340), pending receipt of additional information.

Information Items: The Board received the Maryland Pupil Personnel Month Proclamation (May 2023) and recognition of DCPS pupil personnel workers; the Maryland School Nurses Day Proclamation (May 10); and the regular appropriations and expenditures, capital projects, and grant reports. Budget variances will be reconciled, and all grant monies will be expended before the end of the fiscal year.

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Student Board Members thanked the Board for the opportunity to participate actively in Board meetings. Board Members thanked the graduating Student Board Members and welcomed their replacements. They thanked the public for their attendance and comments, congratulated those persons who have recently received awards or recognition, and expressed gratitude to DCPS teachers and staff. *Note: President Morgan's closing statement can be found on her website at <https://susanmorganschoolboard.com/>.*

The Superintendent thanked the Student Board Members, members of the public who commented tonight, and staff and students recognized during the meeting, including DCPS student athletes. He reminded everyone about the upcoming opportunity to comment on the Master Planning and Feasibility Process via the DCPS website.

The open public meeting was adjourned at 8:24 pm, and the Board immediately reconvened in closed Executive Session to discuss personnel, negotiations, legal matters, and administrative functions. The closed session ended at 10 pm.

UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS

May 7-13, 2023	Teacher Appreciation Week
Monday, May 8-12, 2023	Pupil Personnel Worker Week
Wednesday, May 10, 2023	National School Nurses Day
Monday, May 29, 2023	Schools/Offices Closed - Memorial Day
Tuesday, May 31, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.	C-SDHS Graduation
Wednesday, June 1, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.	NDHS Graduation
Tuesday, June 6, 2023 - 5:00 p.m.	DCPS Retirement Celebration East New Market Firehouse
June 6-7, 2023	Half-Days for Students Report Card Prep
Wednesday, June 8, 2023	Last Day for Students Half Day
Monday, June 12, 2023	Last Day for Teachers
Thursday, June 15, 2023	Regular June Meeting of the Dorchester County Board of Education
Monday, June 19, 2023	Office Closed - Juneteenth
Wednesday, June 22, 2023 8:30 a.m.	Annual Eastern Shore Superintendents and Board Members Education Conference at Chesapeake College
June 28 & 29, 2023	Board Retreat - Packing House
Monday, July 4, 2023	Office Closed - Independence Day