

Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)
Unofficial Notes on Dorchester County Board of Education Meeting
Thursday, September 21, 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>
President Morgan's closing statement can be found on her website at <https://susanmorganschoolboard.com>*

The Board went into closed Executive Session at 4:00 pm to discuss personnel, negotiations, legal matters, and administrative functions. Board President Susan Morgan opened the Public Meeting at 6:10 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance, review of the Board Calendar (see below), and comments from Student Board Representatives. The Board voted to add two items to the agenda (a) discussion on the dance team, and (b) discussion of the Vision Quest DCPS Alternative Education Program contract.

Dr. Coleman and Dr. Aber provided the Board with an instructional update on data that will be used to track progress on the key performance indicators from the Academic Success Priority Areas of the Strategic Plan.

- The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) for District Data:
 - English Language Arts (ELA) 3-8 & 10. Reading gaps, especially for secondary students, need to be identified and addressed. Teacher training in the science of reading and additional learning modules for students are being implemented. Diagnostics and assessments of students are being conducted to identify and address individual student gaps.
 - Math 3-8, Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geography. Work needs to be done to improve math performance. Tools are being used to identify and address gaps, especially in math discourse.
- Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA) District Data. Government and Biology instructional and assessments are currently in transition.
- College and Career Readiness Report. DCPS has very few students meeting this standard. Efforts are under way to determine why strategies used to date have not worked and what is needed to raise student performance. Evaluation of math instruction in DCPS is underway and strategies are being implemented on how to improve instructional strategies and engagement.
- DCPS Summer Academy. DCPS invited 768 students to participate based on the needs for specific skills needed by individual students. Only about 200 students took advantage of this opportunity. Elementary school students demonstrated improvement in phonics. Middle school students needed comprehension skills rather than basic skills. Engagement is an important aspect of success.

No members of the public delivered comments for presentation at the meeting, either orally or in writing.

Dr. Stafford questioned why Dance Team activities have been restricted even though this program has proven itself to be effective in improving both academic and behavioral measures. The Superintendent indicated that problem involves bargaining unit issues that he hopes to resolve within a matter of days.

The Consent Agenda consisted of Board Meeting and Work Session minutes and was approved unanimously. The Board unanimously approved the personnel appointments (to be announced shortly) discussed during the Executive Session and recognized the following recent appointees:

- Dr. Jymil Thompson, Assistant Superintendent, Central Office - Effective: September 25, 2023.
- Dr. Donald Boyd, Supervisor of Strategic Initiatives, Central Office - Effective: September 18, 2023.
- Ms. Chloe Hackett, Assistant Principal, Maple Elementary School - Effective: September 1, 2023.

The Board approved the following programs unanimously unless otherwise indicated:

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- Use of the 7 Mindsets platform, which is a Tier I scaffolded social emotional learning curriculum focused on shifting mindsets and wellbeing. DCPS will utilize this platform for grades 6-12 as its social emotional learning platform (\$64,800, 2-year contract). The program will be implemented by teachers with results accessible to counselors and social workers. The platform has been used successfully in Charles County (for four years) and Woodson High School in Washington, DC (for two years) relative to discipline and attendance data. The platform will be implemented in January with teacher training developed this Fall.
- An agreement between Chesapeake College and DCPS to establish the standards for enrollment in Chesapeake College for high school students participating in Dual Enrollment, Gifted & Talented Early College Enrollment, and CTE Programs. The agreement is required by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The components outlined in the agreement align with State requirements and the feedback from the Accountability & Implementation (AIB). The fine surrounding Eastern Shore counties meet regularly to further define this agreement and the procedures that will be followed. The Dorchester County Board of Education will be responsible for all applicable tuition, fees, and course-specific supplies. Total cost will depend on enrollment. The anticipated cost for Fall 2023 is \$78,000, and the anticipated total cost for the SY2023-24 school year is \$160,000. These costs reflect a doubling of enrollment over last year with a corresponding decline in advance placement and CEU enrollments. School Counselors are currently responsible for monitoring the program for DCPS. Going forward, details regarding appropriate courses, limitations, monitoring, and effectiveness remain to be worked out fully with the five cooperating Eastern Shore counties.
- Student licenses and professional development for the TeachTown platform, which provides a method of instruction to develop play skills of young students and students with disabilities. The licenses provide a data collection instrument to monitor progress on these skills. The platform will be implemented in all PK3 and PK4 classrooms who have students with IEPs or IFSPs at a cost of \$36,370.
- Continued use of Mid Shore Community Mediation Center for DCPS for SY2023-24 at a cost of \$56,000. Board members noted that outcome and impact data have not been provided as requested, and questioned why the program was not implemented in the schools with the highest mediation needs. Tabled by 3-2 vote pending receipt of the requested information.
- Adoption of the Raptor Technologies School Safety Visitor Management platform, which screens and tracks school visitors and volunteers, manages the volunteer program, provides staff training, and responds to emergencies. Initial startup cost is \$31,801.40 with a yearly cost of \$17,430, beginning July 1, 2024.
- Replacement of the original equipment rooftop Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems and modifying the ductwork at Choptank ES to allow for dedicated ventilation air or fresh air for students and teachers. The project includes kitchen ventilation replacements, ductwork, and ceiling system replacements. The cost is \$2,736,034 to be funded through ESSER and State funding.
- Request for State funding for FY2025 under the Capital improvement Plan (CIP) to continue the Elementary Security Vestibule program at Hurlock ES, Vienna ES, South Dorchester School, and Warwick ES; repair and improve the original HVAC ductwork and air-handling systems at Cambridge-South Dorchester High School; renovate the Warwick ES gymnasium; replace rooftop and rooftop equipment at Mace's Lane HS; meet ES education specifications countywide; and perform renovation versus replacement assessments for open space elementary schools. Once endorsed by the County Council, the request goes to the State for approval by the legislature.

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- Payment for services for a student with disabilities placed at Villa Maria School under an Individual Education Plan IEP. The DCPS contribution is \$47,980 and the MSDE contribution is \$32,461. Dr. Coleman reviewed the processes for determining when a nonpublic placement is warranted. DCPS relatively few nonpublic placements.
- Payment for services for three students with disabilities placed at The Benedictine School under an IEP. The DCPS contribution for each student is \$64,669, and the MSDE contribution for each student is \$71,404.
- Contract with Vision Quest for the DCPS Alternative Education Program consisting of: (a) In-school services including psycho-educational groups, anger management, conflict resolution, substance abuse education, and case management. (2) Off-Campus services including full curriculum educational services and appropriate behavioral support services by staff certified by MSDE to promote the successful return to the student's regular academic program; (c) Family Functional Therapy when referred by the Vision Quest Case Manager or the DCPS Director of Student Services; (d) and comprehensive documentation on each DCPS student's progress within the Vision Quest Services program on no less than a monthly basis at a cost of \$93,363.00 per month for up to three years. Approved with a vote of 3 in favor, 1 opposed, and 1 abstention.
- Grants received by the school district during the month of August 2023, but not included in the approved Operating Budget: Grants from MSDE for \$132,398 for CES school improvement initiatives, including salary and contracted services for professional development; \$22,965 for CES school improvement initiatives and supplies; \$390,000 to support the pre-k program.

The Board unanimously approved for a Second Reading (a) 8 policies involving purchasing requirements, and (b) the merger of three policies involving the Board's legal basis.

The Board received a no-cost MOU for provision of school-based mental health services in DCPS buildings by qualified staff of the New Day, New Start agency. The Board also received the Appropriation & Expenditures Report and the Capital Projects Report, which contained nothing out of the ordinary.

Board members welcomed the student representatives and encouraged them to participate; thanked the Human Resources Department for its efforts in recruiting certificated teachers; welcomed Dr. Thompson and Dr. Boyd and thanked them for choosing DCPS; welcomed new and returning teachers and staff; thanked the Executive Team, principals and thie leadership teams, teachers, and staff for their work in for getting DCPS ready for the school year; emphasized the need for continued and expanded partnering with the business community to developing career readiness opportunities; and stressed the need for young adult education in Dorchester County. Student Board representatives indicated they are excited about the new school year and about serving as Board representatives.

The Superintendent thanked everyone who attended or watched tonight's meeting, as well the DCPS personnel who made presentations this evening. He welcomed Dr. Thompson and Dr, Board, and welcomed and thanked new and returning teachers and staff. He expressed concerned about the number of altercations and suspensions that have taken place so early on the year.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS

Friday, September 29, 2023	Early Dismissal for Students Professional Develop. for Teachers
October 2-4, 2023	MABE Annual Conference Annapolis, MD
October 2-6, 2023	Farm to School Week
October 9-13, 2023	National School Lunch Week
Thursday, October 12, 2023 4:30 p.m.	Board of Education Open Work Session BOE
Thursday, October 19, 2023	Early Dismissal for Students Parent Conferences
Thursday, October 19, 2023 6:00 p.m.	Regular October Meeting of the Dorchester County Board of Education DCTC
Friday, October 20, 2023	Schools/Offices Closed MSEA Conference