

Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)
Unofficial Notes on Dorchester County Board of Education Meeting
Thursday, October 19, 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 6:05 pm. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the Board voted to reconvene in Executive Session at the close of the Public Meeting. Dr. Morgan then delivered the following statement:

There has been a lot of talk and many rumors have been going around the district about the recent contract DCPS has made with Vision Quest. This is not the first time DCPS has engaged the services of a private organization to help with behavioral issues of students. Previous contractors have proven to be ineffective and unsatisfactory. The Board searched for and methodically evaluated Vision Quest before considering their services. They presented to us data driven programs that actually work at helping students choose a different path.

Vision Quest was approved by the Dorchester County Board of Education to work with our high school students using two programs. The first program is to be conducted on the DCPS campus. It will address behavior and continue to allow the students to keep up with their schoolwork. The second program will address behavior and choices in an off-campus program designed for students who are on suspension or expulsion. Both programs will have as an important component Functional Family Therapy which works both with the students as well as their families. With Vision Quest, DCPS is getting much more than what was available through the previous contractor and for less money. This program is just part of the overall set of solutions for any student needing alternative education support.

One of the most important concerns that other Board Members and I have heard is the belief that teaching jobs will be cut due to the cost of Vision Quest. This is simply not correct. No jobs will be cut to pay for Vision Quest. It costs less money than we have paid previously, and if DCPS finds itself in a financial bind, teachers' jobs will come first. I hope this has assuaged your concerns. If questions arise, please continue to let us know. Thank you.

The Superintendent reviewed the Board Calendar (see below), and the three Student Board Representatives presented highlights of recent activities at North Dorchester (ND) HS, Cambridge-South Dorchester (CSD) HS, and the Dorchester Career & Technical Center (DCTC).

Mr. Jerome Stover, Principal at CSD HS, was presented with the Maryland Business Round Table (MBRT) June E. Streckfus Leadership in Education Partnerships Award for his support of the Next Generation Scholars Program,

An annual audit of the of Dorchester County Board of Education's fiscal operations was conducted as required by law. The audit was performed by UHY LLP, whose representative reported clean opinions for all of the audits conducted and noted that a clean opinion is highest level of audit finding. Certain minor deficiencies in internal controls were identified that provide opportunities for strengthening controls and operating efficiency. UHY continues to encourage the Board to monitor and review the financial activity at its schools as frequently as possible.

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Dr. Coleman provided the Board with an instructional update on data used to track progress on the key performance indicators from the Academic Success Priority Areas of the Strategic Plan. Schools that demonstrated the most significant growth overall on the English Language Arts (ELA/L) assessments from Spring 2022 to Spring 2023 included Hurlock ES Sandy Hill ES, Vienna ES , Warwick ES, North Dorchester MS and CSD HS. Schools that demonstrated the most significant growth overall on the Math assessments from Spring 2022 to Spring 2023 included Hurlock ES and South Dorchester School (SDK8). However, DCPS continues to rank 22nd and 23rd in the State on these assessments. Efforts are underway to expand use across DCPS of strategies that have been working in the more successful DCPS programs. At the conclusion of the 2022-23 school year (SY), 76.6% of first-time 9th grade students at CSD HS were classified as on-track towards graduation, while 88.6% of first-time 9th grade students at ND HS were classified as on-track. Looking solely at First Quarter SY2023-24 data, 66% of CSD 9th graders are currently on track for graduation and 85% of ND 9th graders are on track. During the first semester of SY2023-24, 132 students were enrolled in dual enrollment course(s), participating in an internship, and/or taking advantage of a work-based learning opportunity. Going forward, College and Career Readiness standards under the Maryland Blueprint will have to factor into how many dual enrollment courses an individual student will be able to take.

The second reading of updated policies related to purchasing were approved under the Consent Agenda.

The Board unanimously approved the following items (except as noted):

- Personnel actions discussed during tonight's Executive Session (to be announced shortly).
- Obligation and payment to High Road School of Anne Arundel County for services for a student with disabilities. DCPS contribution = \$38,598 MSDE contribution = \$10,570.
- Obligation and payment to Villa Maria School (Revised) for services for a student with disabilities. DCPS contribution = \$59,698. MSDE contribution = \$59,804.
- Comprehensive Maintenance Plan (CMP) for 2024.
- Furnish and install new security fencing at the Sandy Hill ES playground. \$116,636.
- Replace Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Systems at SDK8. \$9,929,700.
- Install new base and wall cabinets for six water damaged classrooms at Hurlock ES. \$125,020.
- Updated policy raising from \$25,000 to \$75,000 the level of expenditures that must be approved by the Board. Approved by 3-2 vote.
- First reading of updated policies related to ethics, grade reporting and homework, child abuse reporting, and business.

The Board received information regarding the "All for Love" mentoring program, the Appropriation & Expenditures Report, the Capital Projects and Technology Report, and the draft Quarterly Grant Report, none of which included any items of concern.

In public comments, the President of Dorchester Educators stressed that Board Members have an obligation to use appropriate and respectful language when addressing or referring to teachers and staff. Board Members should be encouraging and supportive of teachers and staff, rather than disrespecting and demoralizing them. A Maple ES parent expressed disappointment that tutoring is not available for all students and stated that maintaining teacher positions must be paramount. Two comments questioned various aspects of the Vision Quest contract and emphasized that it must be monitored closely to demonstrate effectiveness. One comment representing MidShore Mediation noted that its efforts are

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focused on conflict resolution and that students have viewed their mediation as reducing conflict going forward. The Board instructed the Superintendent to work with MidShore Mediation to identify and compile concrete outcome measures.

Board Members and the Superintendent delivered closing remarks, thanking all those who participated in the meeting. The Public Meeting was adjourned at 8:48 pm. The Board then reconvened in closed Executive Session and adjourned at 9:40 pm.

UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS

Friday, October 20, 2023	Schools/Offices Closed MSEA Conference
Thursday, November 9, 2023 4:30 p.m.	Board Work Session at Dorchester County Board of Education
Wednesday, November 1, 2023	No School for Students Professional Development Day
Friday, November 10, 2023	Half-Day for Students Report Card Prep for Teachers
November 13-17, 2023	American Education Week
Thursday, November 16, 2023 6:00 p.m.	Regular December Meeting of the Dorchester County Board of Education DCTC
November 22-24, 2023	No School/Offices Closed Thanksgiving