

Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)
Unofficial Notes on Dorchester County Board of Education Work Session
November 9, 2023 – DCPS Central Office

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>

Board President Susan Morgan opened the Work Session at 4:30 pm. The Board received information on a proposal to add a lacrosse program at North Dorchester High School (NDHS), the DCPS Student Services Program, and the new DCPS Career Coaches Program.

North Dorchester HS Principal David Stofa informed the Board that a sizeable number of students, families, and local businesses have expressed a strong interest in establishing a Lacrosse Program at NDHS to compete in the Bayside Athletic Conference. Principal Stofa indicated that ND Stadium is mostly outfitted for lacrosse usage, although a ball-stopper netting safety system (which would also be useful for soccer season) would be needed. Principal Stove reported that two local business owners have each agreed verbally to make \$10,000 donations to assist with start-up costs for the program. The Board will further consider this proposal at its next regular meeting.

Mr. Kirk Howie (DCPS Director of Student Services) and the DCPS Student Services Leadership Team (Ms. LaSina Branch, Supervisor of School Counselors; Ms. Kawana Webb, Supervisor of School Social Workers & Mental Health; and Ms. Regenna Jalon, Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Workers (PPWs) & Community Liaisons;) presented data on current and previous out of school suspensions, discipline referrals, mental health referrals, suicide assessments, and threat assessments indicating that Student Services personnel have been busy this year.

Ms. Branch explained that the mission of the School Counseling Program is to provide a comprehensive, data-driven, developmental program of services designed to promote the academic, personal, social, emotional, and career development of the diverse DCPS student population. School counselors promote academic success and well-being; enhance awareness of mental health; encourage positive, healthy behaviors; develop and implement interventions for students with mental health and behavioral health concerns; and provide individual and group counseling to address students' academic, social, emotional, and career planning needs. However, DCPS school counselors are currently expected to perform many other duties not related to their counseling responsibilities, a situation that DCPS needs to address. Specific goals for this school year have been established for school counselors in the areas of academic, career, and social/emotional success for students; implementation of specified programming for students to increase career and college awareness; completion of professional development activities on the roles, responsibilities, and best practices for school counselors.

Ms. Webb explained that the mission of DCPS Social Workers is to support the educational, emotional, and social needs of students and families; and to make use of resources available to them to achieve their full potential within their home, school, and community. Among other duties, DCPS social workers advocate for the rights of all children; consult with parents, school staff, administrators, and other stakeholders; participate in multi-tiered student support meeting; provide crisis prevention with trauma-informed interventions, and conduct in-home visits, as needed. Social worker goals for the 2023-24 school year include Increasing Tier II and Tier III interventions through small group interventions, treatment plans, and maintaining a caseload of at least 20 students and Increasing trauma-informed learning opportunities for staff.

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Ms. Jalon explained that the mission of Pupil Personnel Workers (PPWs) in DCPS is to assist and provide support to students and their families who are experiencing academic, behavioral, emotional, physical, and social difficulties to help them complete their program of study and graduate with the skills to be responsible, compassionate, and productive members of a globally competitive society. Among other duties, PPWs support the social adjustment of students experiencing problems such as truancy, nonattendance, drop-out potential, disruptive behavior, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and academic deficiencies. PPWs also interpret to parents, community groups, and public agencies the system's policies and procedures regarding attendance areas and residence verification. PPW goals for the 2023-24 school year include increasing the percentage of students not chronically absent in each student group by a minimum of 1% over the 2022-23 school year.

Ms. Jalon explained that mission of the Community School Liaisons in DCPS is to assist in supporting the transformation of a school into a place where educators, local community members, families, and students work together to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development. Among other duties, Develop positive working relationships with school principal and administrators, teachers and staff, families, community members and partner organizations Community School Liaisons participate in applicable school teams and effectively contribute to resolving resource support needs; work with partners to develop programming and activities for students and their families including family nights, after-school programs, and student clubs; and plan and implement activities to connect families with needed services. Goals for the 2023-24 school year include increasing the number of active partnerships at the school, department, or system level annually and increasing the favorable response rate of parents on the DCPS family engagement survey compared to the 2023-24 school year.

Mrs. Anna Howie, Curriculum Supervisor for Career and Technical Education, explained that the Maryland Blueprint for Education sets the expectation that each school district establish an MOU with the local workforce development board, to ensure that we offer individualized career counseling, tailored to local workforce needs and opportunities, to each middle and high school student. DCPS has hired three Career Coaches, whose goals for the 2023-24 school year include implementing LinkedIn Lunch and Learn opportunities weekly; engaging 8-10 different students per week; collaborating with school counselors to target students for the opportunity; engage at least 10 students at North Dorchester High School and 10 students at Cambridge-South Dorchester High School in apprenticeships.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 pm.