

Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)
Unofficial Notes on Dorchester County Board of Education Work Session
January 11, 2024 – 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 Michael Diaz opened the Work Session at 4:30 pm. The Board received presentations from Ms. Myesha Ford, Principal of Maple Elementary School (MES) and Ms Marybeth Blake, Principal of Warwick Elementary School (WES).

Ms. Ford reported that 450 students are currently enrolled at MES, compared to 402 students enrolled for School Year (SY) 2022-2023. Ms Ford indicated that about 51% of Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade students are currently performing on grade level or above on measures of English Language Arts (ELA). The goal at MES is for 60% of PreK through 5th grade students to perform on grade level or above on ELA measures by the end of this school year, compared to 53.4% at the end of SY2022-2023. She also outlined several programs and incentives to encourage and enhance reading, such as daily independent reading and Reading Night events.

Ms. Ford indicated that about 49.5% of 1st through 5th grade students have achieved their growth goals on Mathematics measures. The goal at MES is for 57% of 1st through 5th grade students to achieve their mathematics growth goals by the end of this school year, compared to 48.4% at the end of SY2022-2023. Programs to improve math performance include individual tutoring, specific math lesson studies, and iReady intervention blocks.

Ms. Ford reported that during SY2022- 2023, the average daily attendance for MES (kindergarten through 5th grade) was 90%. By the end of SY2023-2024, MES hope to achieve 92% daily attendance. She indicted that during the SY 2022-2023, MES had an average of 14 major discipline referrals per month, but that MES is currently averaging 32 referrals per month. Their goal is to lower such referrals to an average of 15 referrals or fewer per month by June 2024. MES is in its third year of “House” implementation, featuring House incentives, House Lunches, House Celebrations, and House Movie nights. Family engagement is an area of success for MES.

Ms. Blake reported that 359 students are currently enrolled at WES, compared to 349 students enrolled for SY2022-2023. She noted that WES is a 4-Star School on the Maryland Report Card, with 92% of WES first graders on or above their reading step goal and 86% of third graders on their step target or above. She indicated that 286 Kindergarten through 5th Grade students met their first trimester reading challenge. WES is in its first year of “House” implementation with various House activities and events. She suggested that about 45 students are from outside the regular WES geographic area.

Ms. Blake reported that most WES students have their basic needs met before they come to school so the greatest focus at WES can be on reading and mathematics. The goal at WES is to improve academic progress by increasing the number of students reading on/above level from 59% to 64% and increasing students’ accuracy on their grade level basic math facts by half their current gap by the end of the year. WES is also working on inclusion, especially of special needs students, and addressing the social and emotional needs of WES students. Parent engagement at WES is very strong and has resulted in many parent-provided enhancements that most DCPS schools do not have.

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President Diaz provided an overview of the process for developing and reviewing the proposed Budget for SY2023-2024. This year, the Board's Budget Committees is taking a deep-dive into the budget process, devoting 4-6 weeks to understanding elementary school budgeting, followed by a deep-dive into middle and high school budgeting. The Board will hold public meetings at the end of each segment to keep the community informed. President Diaz indicated that our representatives in the State legislature have revealed that the two most active issues under discussion involve the many challenges related to meeting the Maryland Educational Blueprint objectives and dealing with the increasing juvenile justice problems.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 pm.