

Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)
Unofficial Notes on Dorchester County Board of Education Meeting
April 18, 2024 – Dorchester Career & Technology Center

Submitted by Tom Puglisi

Note: Supporting documents can 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 4:30 pm to discuss personnel, negotiations, legal matters, and administrative functions. Board Vice President Susan Morgan opened the Public Meeting at 6:00 pm with Board Members Talibah Chikwendu, Sheri Hubbard, and Chris Wheedleton present. Board President Mike Diaz was absent.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Student Board Representatives presented highlights of recent activities at North Dorchester High School (NDHS) , Cambridge-South Dorchester High School (CSDHS), and the Dorchester Career & Technology Center (DCTC) respectively. Their presentations can be found *on the DCPS Board Docs website at <https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/dcps/Board.nsf/Public>.*

Mr. Vaughan Evans, Principal of **North Dorchester Middle School (NDMS)**, presented a mid-year update on NDMS that described the school’s mission and vision. On academic measures last year, of NDMS students demonstrated proficiency in math, 23% demonstrated proficiency in science, 29% demonstrated proficiency in social science, and 37% demonstrated proficiency in English language arts. At mid-year this year, 46% of NDMS students are performing below grade level reading, and 77% are performing below grade level in math. NDMS is focusing on improving the performance of all students this year. Mr. Evans noted that school attendance is critical to success, so this year’s goal is to reduce chronic absenteeism by 5% compared to last year and to increase overall attendance to 91%. To address this issue, school personnel conducted 36 home visits to homes of chronically absent students during the month of August prior to school opening. Attendance incentives have included an attendance challenge, absence calls to parents, 10-day absence letters to parents, Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS) meetings with initiation of action plans, and notices of truancy finds. Actions taken to improve academic achievement include identifying target populations for the appropriate tiered interventions, conducting robust conversations with students and families, introducing interventions for English language arts, and offering after school tutoring. Disciplinary goals are to reduce out-of-school suspensions by 5 % and to reduce classroom disruption and disrespect by 5%. NDMS has two school counselors and one school social worker who conduct interventions including small group sessions, inclusivity awareness, teacher referrals, collaborations with local mental health agencies, mediation services, mindfulness emphasis, and MTSS meetings. NDMS benefits from an extensive network of community partners. NDMS successfully implemented the Ron Clark House System this year.

Mr. Michael Richardson, **DCPS School Security & Emergency Management Manager**, spoke about a variety of actions taken or being taken to enhance school safety, including school radio capability, cell service, building mapping, school-specific security plans, notification systems, security vestibules, and security cameras. Attacks on adults and bullying and harassment are up over last year, but improvements are occurring in other areas.

The Board unanimously approved the **Consent Agenda**, consisting of the minutes of the March 25 Board Meeting and the April 11 Open Work Session, as well as the Second Reading of Board of Education Policies on Membership, Legal Authority, and Terms of Office, and Personnel Policies on Transfer, Classification of Positions, Americans with Disability Act Amendments, and Attendance and Punctuality.

The Board unanimously approved the following **Action Items**: personnel for April 18, 2024; recognition of a new administrative appointment; additional grants acceptance (\$34,605, including \$18,847 from the Maryland

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Association of Boards of Education (MAGE) for North Dorchester Middle School (NDMS) security access control and \$13,758 for Hurlock Elementary School (HES cafeteria tables from and the Choose Kindness Foundation; 450 student Acer computers (\$192,600); 400 student Dell computers (\$264,000); and Power School products (\$269,463.52).

The Board also approved the First Reading of Board of Education Policies on Filling Vacancies, Removal from Office, Student Representative Selection, and Personnel Policies on Bloodborne Pathogens/Serious Diseases, and Lactation Accommodations.

The Board received the following information items: the Appropriations & Expenditures Report, the Capital Projects and Technology Reports, and the draft Quarterly Grant Report.

There were no oral or written comments from the Public.

Board members welcomed Ms. Chikwendu to the Board and thanked Ms. Green for her services to DCPS (Hubbard, Morgan, Wheedleton); noted the active use of data to target needs of individual students and schools, as well as community engagement in career opportunity programs and the superintendent search process (Wheedleton); thanked Mr. Evans and the Student Board Representatives for their presentations (Hubbard); and thanked members of the public for their attendance in person or remotely (Morgan). Dr. Morgan invited everyone to contact her directly if they have questions or concerns, and quoted Malcolm X in reminding everyone that *Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.*

Superintendent Thompson welcomed Ms. Chikwendu to the Board and thanked Ms. Green for her service. He noted that the Executive team is working to identify actionable items to improve student achievement based on data. He emphasized that because 23rd in the State is unacceptable and no can remove themselves from accountability.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm.