

**Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)**  
**Unofficial Notes on Dorchester County Board of Education Meeting**  
**May 16, 2024 – DCPS Central Office**

*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 3:00 pm to discuss personnel, negotiations, legal matters, and administrative functions. Board President Mike Diaz opened the Public Meeting at 6:02 pm with Board Members Susan Morgan (Vice-President) Talibah Chikwendu, Sheri Hubbard, and Chris Wheedleton present.

The Board unanimously approved (i) the proposed agenda (with deletion of the first reading of a proposed policy on memoranda of understanding), and (ii) a motion to reconvene in Executive Session after the conclusion of the Public meeting.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, **Student Board Members** 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>*. Wil Reinbold (and alternate Trinity Murray) from CSDHS, Dylan Ruppert (and alternate Nuvia Cristina Lopez Menjivar) from NDHS, and Ande Callahan and alternate (Nia White) from DCTC completed their terms tonight as Student Board Members for SY2023-24. Te'kai Drummond (and alternate Emma Robinson) from CSDHS, Nuvia Lopez Menjivar (and alternate Ali Bahar) from NDHS, and Nia White (and alternate Javier Luna-Clemente) from DCTC were introduced as Student Board Members for SY2024-25.

Ms. Dawn Corkran, **Principal of Hurlock Elementary School (HES)** reported that HES has 387 students this year (comparable to last year), including 36 Special Education (SPED) students, and 18 English Language (EL) students; 40% of HES students are identified as African American, 39% as Caucasian, 7% as Hispanic, 12% as Multi-race, and 2% as other. About 36% of K-5 students are on grade level or above in English Language Arts and 32% of students are on or above grade-level in Math. Average daily attendance is about 90%. Principal Corkran indicated that discipline interventions have not been very successful this year due to staff inconsistencies, with suspensions mostly resulting from attacks on adults and students. HES has one school social worker and one school counselor to provide mental health services and make mental health referrals. Principal Corkran described HES's goals for FY 2023-24 and the strategies being implemented to meet those goals. HES focuses on creating an environment that makes children want to come to school and is working to develop effective interventions for low performing and gifted students.

The Board unanimously approved the **Consent Agenda**, consisting of the minutes of the April 18 meeting, as well as the Second Reading of Board of Education Policies on membership, filling vacancies, removal from office, student representatives and Personnel Policies on blood borne pathogens, serious diseases, and lactation accommodations.

The Board unanimously approved the following **Action Items**: personnel for May 16, 2024; recognition of a new administrative appointment (Title 1 Coordinator, Ms. Silva); the proposed SY2024-2025 calendar; contract to Solient Teleservices for Special Education Speech Therapy (\$149,850); advance placement textbooks for (i) college-level argumentative writing and research and (ii) using databases, the open web, evaluating sources, and citing sources properly to avoid plagiarism in research; and a virtual education plan for use during a prolonged state of emergency (per Board stipulations), as required by State Law; and the SY2024-25 virtual

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education plan. The Board did not approve a proposed contract with Specialized Education of Maryland, Inc. (High Roads) for three Special Education classrooms for up to a total of 27 students (\$784,869).

The Board also approved the Second Reading of Board of Education Policies on Board ethics; the First Reading of policies on the school system ethics panel, duties and responsibilities of Student Board Representatives and alternates, Board President and Vice President expenses; and conversion to the procedures manual of the policy on student suspension of more than 10 days.

The Board received the Appropriations & Expenditures Report and the Capital Projects Report as information items.

**Public Comments.**

1. Representing the *Gentlemen’s Club of Dorchester County*, the speaker noted that there are many challenges facing our youth today and that the school system needs to implement resources like the Gentlemen’s Club for boys and girls at every school, at every level.
2. The Director of *Maryland Reads* (<https://marylandreads.org>) noted that the entire State of Maryland is experiencing the fastest rate of reading proficiency decline in the country. The speaker noted that strong leaders make a difference and that the superintendent stakeholder process in DCPS has demonstrated that DCPS needs a superintendent who can lead the initiative to improve reading. *Maryland Reads* is available to serve as a resource for DCPS.
3. A former 3-term Board member pledged support for Interim Superintendent Thompson, who was an energetic and effective principal at Mace Lane Middle School, even going so far as to follow children home on his bike to ensure a safe journey at the end of the school day. The former Board Member volunteered to help with whatever the Board needs.
4. A very active and engaged 11th grade AP student at NDHS described a petition against the proposed changes to convert to a very heavy high school schedule with “A” and “B” days.

**Board Member Comments.**

**President Diaz** explained that this year, the budget has been closely scrutinized as if DCPS were a business. He stated that the system of uncontrolled spending has been terminated, efficiencies have been identified, controls have been instituted, and the approach to spending in DCPS will look very different going forward. He thanked Ms. Dale for all her assistance in conducting the budget analysis and spending review.

**Vice President Morgan** quoted Frederick Douglass who said that if there is no struggle, there I no progress. She noted that the Board and DCPS are currently struggling with significant challenges, but that she hopes that significant progress will result. Dr. Morgan thanked the Student Board Members and those attending or watching.

**Ms. Hubbard** thanked the Student Board Members and tonight’s Gentlemen’s Club speaker and offered congratulations to graduating students. She noted the importance of reading in academic achievement and expressed the belief that reading instruction needs to be extended through the end of high school.

**Mr. Wheedleton** emphasized the importance of community engagement and highlighted the opportunities that Career Coaches and many other programs are opening up for our students. He noted that the community consultation sessions emphasized the importance of leadership qualities for the next Superintendent.

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**Superintendent Thompson** expressed appreciate to the Student Board Members for their service and encouraged students to speak up for themselves and ask good questions. He thanked the Executive team and Central Office staff for their hard work over the last several months. Dr. Thompson reiterated the need to set goals and actionable items to achieve those goals. He stressed that #23 in the State is not good enough and that #23 behavior cannot be accepted. Dr. Thompson reminded everyone that we all have to put our focus on the children and take the responsibility for changing behavior that reinforces acceptance of #23 performance. Leadership, he said, is defined by impact.

The public meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm, when the Board re-convened in closed Executive Session.