

Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)
Unofficial Notes on Dorchester County Board of Education Meeting
June 13, 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 4:00 pm to discuss personnel, negotiations, legal matters, and administrative functions. Board President Mike Diaz opened the Public Meeting at 6:00 pm with Board Members Susan Morgan (Vice-President) Talibah Chikwendu, Sheri Hubbard, and Chris Wheedleton present.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the Board unanimously approved the selection of Dr. Jymil Thompson to be the new Superintendent.

Dr. Jodi Coleman, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment delivered the Instructional Update and provided proficiency level data for the 274 English Language Learners in DCPS, which indicated that 27.0% of these learners are at the *Entering Proficiency* level; 24.2% at the *Emerging* Level; 32.8% at the *Developing* Level; 15.6%; at the *Expanding* Level; and 0% at the *Bridging or Reaching Proficiency* Levels. Dr. Coleman stated that these percentages are indicative of the large number of newcomers who have entered DCPS since 2021. Relative to scheduling, Dr. Coleman explained that a majority of high school courses will be offered every-other day for the entire school year to reduce the large gaps in instruction that have occurred among DCPS students year after year, and that have contributed to the very low ranking of DCPS students compared to students in other Maryland school districts. Classes will be approximately 70 minutes long within a 5-period A/B rotation schedule that opens up more room for course offerings in addition to collaborative teaming opportunities. The new scheduling will make it possible to manage Blue Print requirements, Career Support Pathways, and Apprenticeships. It will also give teachers an opportunity to collaborate with grade level and content teams to focus on professional development, data diving, and school or district-based initiatives, in addition to co-planning needs. The new scheduling will not increase teacher workload, limit student class choices, or decrease overall instructional time. However, students will need to take additional courses to meet Career Pathway requirements. Dr. Coleman indicates that DCPS has to raise expectations and challenges for students.

Public Comments:

Writer #1 expressed concerns about the high school schedule changes and has conveyed those concerns to Dr. Coleman who was reported to be very responsive. The writer indicated that Chesapeake College's course-drop period is not compatible with the High School schedule.

Writer #2, a graduate of DCPS, the parent of DCPS graduates, and a teacher in DCPS, thanked the Board for listening to community concerns. The writer questioned how Vision Quest is funded and what it offers.

Speaker #1, a CSD Student, asked the Board when and how the views of DCPS students have been considered by the Board. The speaker was concerned about students who disrupt the learning of so many other students, and how early-graduation students will be accommodated under the new high school schedule .

Speaker #2 expressed concerns about the new high schedule that was introduced late in the year with little input from students. The speaker indicated that limited resources need to be directed toward students and that student and parent input must be considered.

Speaker #3 was a parent concerned about teachers who lack the qualifications for the subjects they are teaching. The speaker asserted that these teachers are not providing the level of instruction that students need and deserve.

The Board approved the **Consent Agenda (4-1)**, consisting of the minutes of the May 16 and June 3 meetings, as well as the Second Reading of Board of Education Policies on ethics, membership, officers, expenses, and

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conversion to the procedures manual of the policy on student suspension of more than 10 days. Mr. Wheedleton reiterated his concerns about the June 3 meeting.

The Board unanimously approved the following **Action Items**: personnel for June 13, 2013; annual Microsoft renewal (\$87,618); Table of Rate for Student Bus Contractors (\$131,346); Warwick ES gymnasium renovation and air conditioning (reject current bid and rebid this project); SY2024-2025 Special Education staffing plan; Apex Edmentum 3-year contract (\$250,156/\$83,385, annually); DCPS Career Ladder (developed in conjunction with Dorchester Educators) in compliance with Blue Print requirements for review by the State AIB. The Board did not approve the *7-Mindsets* contract for elementary school social emotional learning (\$84,500).

The Board also approved for the Second Reading of Board of Education Policies on executive officers, compensation, expenses, payment, educational programs, conferences, and use of technology, and Instructional Policies on media selection and reconsideration of media materials.

The Board received the Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee Annual Report, the Appropriations & Expenditures Report, and the Capital Projects Report as information items. The CFO indicated that she hopes to end year with a small positive variance.

Mr. Wheedleton moved to terminate the Vision Quest Contract for convenience and ask the Superintendent to make a recommendation for another high school alternative education program (Approved 3-1, with Mr. Diaz recused).

Mr. Wheedleton delivered an extended statement indicating that he is angry at the leadership of the Board. His statement can be found on Town Hall Streams, beginning at approximately 1.42.45 into the meeting. (https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=121&id=60877).

Superintendent Thompson thanked the Board for hiring him. He noted that we need to have a sense of urgency about improving student performance and working together to do that.

The public meeting was adjourned at 8:07 pm.