

Summary of the Board of Education Meeting

November 9, 2006

ACTION ITEMS

- Approved a consent agenda including school bus contract transfers, staff personnel, donations and minutes of Board of Education meetings; and received monthly status reports on the operating budget and school construction fund.
- Approved revisions to Policy 11400, Parent, Family and Community Involvement (see: "Board approves stronger parent involvement policy").
- Approved the Supplemental Contract Agreement, Declaration of Easements, Covenants, and Restrictions and Maryland Environmental Service Contract for Operation and Maintenance for the Glenelg High School renovation project.
- Approved a Proclamation in Honor of Veterans Day, November 11, 2006.
- Approved the name Veterans Elementary for the new northeastern school.
- Approved the quarterly meeting report of the Board Audit Committee (see: "Board receives status report on school audits").

Calendar Committee recommends adding two early dismissals for elementary, middle schools next year

The Calendar Committee is recommending that two additional early dismissal days be added for elementary and middle schools for the 2007-2008 school year. Director of Public Relations Patti Caplan, who chaired the committee, reported members felt strongly that elementary and middle school teachers needed more time at the end of the second quarter for correcting local assessments, figuring and recording grades, planning, data review, and team meetings. She indicated that administrators also need additional time for school-based professional development.

The committee has proposed that all schools close 3 hours early for three days during high school exam week in January. Currently only high schools have three early dismissal days.

Deputy Superintendent Sandra Erickson suggested that other options exist for providing elementary teachers with additional planning and team meeting time, but they have price tags. Alternatives will be considered during the fiscal year 2008 budget development process.

A public hearing on the proposed calendar will be held on December 14, 2006. The Board is scheduled to take action on January 11, 2007.

Goal II strategies improve school environments

Strategies for ensuring schools are safe and nurturing environments are making a positive difference, according to the Bridge to Excellence Goal II Annual Report presented by Assistant Superintendent Linda Wise. Those strategies include the Summer Institute for School Improvement, the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support Initiative, campus security measures, cultural proficiency training, anti-bullying programs, and initiatives to reduce suspensions.

In the area of attendance, Director of Assessment Terry Alban reported that all elementary, all middle and 8 high schools met the satisfactory standard. Thirty-three schools met the excellence standard with an attendance rate of 96 percent or higher.

Maintaining a safe and nurturing environment requires that students demonstrate safe behavior and follow the HCPSS Code of Conduct. Students who demonstrate disruptive or unsafe behavior will be suspended from school. The Maryland State Department of Education has established a standard for safe schools, which states that 2 percent or less of a school's student population will demonstrate unsafe behavior. HCPSS elementary schools have a suspension rate of 0.8 percent. The suspension rate for middle schools is 5.7 percent and for high schools is 5.5 percent.

Alban also presented data from the School Environment Survey conducted last spring 2006. The survey measured five key categories: Welcoming Environment, Physical Environment, Discipline, Nurturing Learning Environment, and Diversity and Commonality.

Principal Marcy Leonard introduced Atholton High School staff and students who participate in the school's Youth Action Corps, a mentoring program for African American males. The Action Corps is one initiative contributing to the decline in the school's overall suspension rate from 6.7 percent in 2005 to 3.9 percent in 2005. During the first semester in 2005-06, Atholton had 48 suspensions, half of which involved African American males. During the first quarter of this year, the school had only seven suspensions, two of which involved African American males.

Board approves stronger parent involvement policy

The Board approved revisions to Policy 11400, Parent, Family and Community Involvement. The policy is consistent with current federal, state, and county initiatives and includes a stronger mandate for parent, family and community involvement. The changes are effective as of January 23, 2007.

The Board held public hearings on two policies. The hearing on Policy 1311, Procurement of Materials, Supplies, Equipment and Services, drew no public comment. Parent Linda Turner testified at the hearing on Policy 3611, Confidentiality of Student Records. She encouraged parents to review their child's records and ensure that they are kept confidential. The Board will take action on both policies on November 21.

Board receives status report on school audits

Board member Patricia Gordon reported that the audit for Mayfield Woods Middle School has been completed and the report issued. Audits for Oakland Mills High School and Elkridge Elementary School are nearly complete. Reports for both schools will be issued after comment from both principals have been considered.

Thirty-four persons testified at a public hearing on the proposed attendance area adjustments for the 2007-2008 school year. Testimony centered on five recommendations

from the plan. Speakers from the neighborhoods of Brampton Hills and Wheatfield asked that the Board consider sending their children to the new Veterans Elementary School. Parents from the Glenwood Middle School area opposed moving students out of Glenwood. Others spoke against the recommendation to move a neighborhood to Thunder Hill Elementary that currently attends Northfield. Others opposed moving students from Waverly to St. Johns Lane. Bryant Woods Elementary parents spoke against a plan to move students from Bryant Woods to Running Brook.

The Board will hold work sessions on the proposed attendance area adjustments on Tuesday, November 14 and Thursday, November 16 at 7:00 p.m. and is scheduled to take action on the proposal on November 21.

In other action...

Members of the Centennial Lane Elementary School Band opened the meeting with their rendition of the Star Spangled Banner.

At Public Forum, Linda Norris, media specialist at Centennial High School, updated the Board on databases recently added to high school media centers and thanked the Board for continued support of media services. Parent Linda Turner presented comments about getting to know children with learning disabilities.

The Board reviewed the Charter for the revision of Policy 3131, Publications/Communications.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 21, 2006.