

Summary of the Board of Education Meeting

Thursday, February 8, 2007

Action Items

- Approved a consent agenda including staff personnel, bids and contracts, donations, and minutes of the Board of Education meeting; and received status reports on the operating budget and school construction fund.
- Approved a proclamation designating March 2007 as Women's History Month in the HCPSS.
- Approved Board positions on education-related legislation being considered by the 2007 Maryland General Assembly.
- Approved entering into a contract with St. John Evangelist Church for the exchange of property.
- Approved the instructional calendar for the 2007-2008 school year (see: "Board Approves 2007-2008 Instructional Calendar").
- Approved revisions to Policy 1211, Citizen Advisory Committees to the Board of Education and the School System; Policy 1221, Citizens' Advisory Committee to the Board of Education; and 11200, Public Hearings (see: "Board Approves Revisions to Policies on Advisory Committees").

Board Approves 2007-2008 Instructional Calendar

The Board of Education approved the instructional calendar for the 2007-2008 school year, but failed to add two half days in January for elementary and middle schools as recommended by the Calendar Committee. The Board expressed concerns about reducing the amount of instructional time for students and indicated the intention to address teacher workload through the FY 2008 operating budget.

According to the approved calendar, school will begin for students on August 27. Winter break runs from December 24 through January 1. Spring break begins on March 17 and ends on March 24. The Board approved scheduling the spring countywide professional development day on Thursday, April 24, which is also "Take Your Child to Work Day." With this decision, the Board hopes to address concerns expressed by administrators regarding growing attendance issues on that day. The last day of school in 2008 is scheduled for June 12.

Board Approves Revisions to Policies on Advisory Committees

The Board approved revised policies dealing with advisory committees and public participation in Board of Education meetings. Policy 1211, Advisory Committees to Staff and Schools, now includes details related to forming advisory committees, revised guidelines for appointing committees and selecting membership, and identifies school improvement teams as advisory committees subject to the policy.

Revised Policy 1221, Advisory Committees to the Board of Education, was expanded to include all advisory committees to the Board and changes the name of the Citizen's Advisory Committee to the Community Advisory Council. The policy also requires committees to the Board to comply with the Open Meetings Act.

Policy 11200, Public Hearings, was revised to cover public participation in meetings of the Board. The policy makes it clear that the general public is invited to attend and observe open sessions of the Board, while setting parameters for participation. The approved policies are effective July 1, 2007.

Board Reviews Changes to Violence Policy

Alternative Education Coordinator Craig Cummings presented recommended changes to Policy 3445, Violence and School Safety. Cummings noted that the revisions refocus the policy, emphasizing safe school environments rather than violence. The policy has been updated to add language regarding bullying and cyber-bullying, and replaces the terms "assault" and "battery" with "physical attack" and "threat." The Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed policy changes on March 8, and take action on April 12.

Policy Manual Scheduled for an Overhaul

Policy Specialist Ellen Miller presented a proposal to the Board that calls for the renumbering and reorganization of all Board policies. Miller proposed the change to provide better alignment with the policy categories used by surrounding counties and to allow for greater ease of navigation on the website. The Board will take action on the recommendation at a future meeting.

In Other Action

In his report to the Board, Superintendent Sydney Cousin remarked on the recent luncheon held for principals and their PTA presidents. He also reported on visits to the school system by educators from China, Liberia, and Korea. Dr. Cousin shared information about regional meetings he is holding with teachers and commented on how valuable he finds the conversations. He also congratulated the following staff members:

- Jennifer Clements, assistant principal at Mt. Hebron High, who was named Maryland State Assistant Principal of the Year by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- John McDonald, teacher at Marriotts Ridge High, who was named Howard County Outstanding Technology-Using Educator.
- Debra Shannon, teacher at River Hill High, who received the Armed Forces Communication and Electronics Association International Education Foundation Teaching Tools Award.

At Public Forum Madeleine Green, representing the Howard County Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition, asked the Board to review the amount of time students have to eat their lunches and for physical activity during the day, and to record measurable changes in behavior.

Board member Larry Cohen reported on his recent attendance at a MABE Federal Relations Network meeting in Washington. The Board also heard reports from the Student Member of the Board and the Oakland Mills High School representative.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 22, 2007.