

Summary of the Board of Education Meeting

Thursday, September 20, 2007

ACTION ITEMS

- Approved the restricted consent agenda including bids and contracts, school bus contract terminations and transfers, donations, and minutes of closed meetings.
- Approved the minutes of regular board meetings.
- Approved the Annual Comprehensive Maintenance Program as required by law.
- Approved the Board's quarterly agenda for October through December 2007.
- Approved revisions to Policy 3000, Religious Observances (see: *New Religious Observances Policy Approved*).
- Approved the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan Update for submission to MSDE (see: *Board Approves 2007 BTE Master Plan Update*).

HSAs: On the Move from Good to Great

School officials are very pleased with the school system's High School Assessment (HSA) pass rate, according to Coordinator of Testing Portia White. In a report to the Board, White indicated that the system has seen gains in all content areas and across all student groups since 2004. She noted that:

- Overall, 99 percent of our middle school students passed the HSA.
- Eleven Howard County middle schools had 100 percent of their students passing the algebra test.
- Five high schools have pass rates above 90 percent in 3 or more content areas.

White reported that the Class of 2009 is leading the way to greatness. Currently, the pass rates for those who have taken the tests are:

- | | |
|--------------|-------|
| - Algebra | 94.3% |
| - English | 89.4% |
| - Biology | 90.7% |
| - Government | 94.1% |

The system has targeted efforts and resources to prepare every student to meet the HSA requirement. Every department that has a direct connection to one or more of the assessments and their requirements has collaborated to provide the best services to students and their families and to schools.

New Religious Observance Policy Approved

Students may be accorded reasonable accommodations to meet religious obligations according to the newly approved policy on religious observances. According to the policy, students with an approved, documented religious obligation that cannot be fulfilled outside of the school day may receive a reasonable accommodation to fulfill that obligation.

Parents must make a written request to the principal/designee for such accommodation. The Equity Assurance Coordinator will review requests and make a determination regarding accommodations. Students whose absences are excused under this provision

are required to make up work missed during their absence from class in accordance with Policies 8010, 8020, and 9010.

Board Approves 2007 BTE Master Plan Update

Elizabeth Mahler, Coordinator of Strategic Planning and Program Enhancement, presented the 2007 Bridge to Excellence Master Plan Update for Board approval and submission to the Maryland State Department of Education.

The update document includes an Executive Summary, financial information and resource allocation, and the system response to the five Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act Goals. The plan also addresses specific student groups and cross cutting themes.

This is the fifth year of the five-year BTE Master Plan process. The annual update process occurs between May and November. Updates must be approved annually by Maryland State Board of Education.

Mt. Hebron Community Petitions Board to Improve School

The majority of the 43 persons who testified at the public hearing on the fiscal year 2009 Capital Budget spoke about the capital needs at Mt. Hebron High School. Speakers reiterated numerous problems from mice to sewer backups, with many suggesting that a new facility is the only viable solution. Others expressed concern with the disruption that would be caused by the major renovation. The Board will hold a work session on September 21 at 9:00 a.m. and take action on the proposed budget on October 1 at 7:30 p.m.

Capital Budget Priority Listing Reviewed

The Board reviewed the Capital Budget Priority Listing for the FY 2009 capital program, which will be forwarded to the state after a Board vote on October 1. The priority list is developed based upon criteria of the Public School Construction Program and is required when the Board applies for state funding for eligible projects. The list does not necessarily reflect local priority for the funding of capital projects.

In Other Action...

At Public Forum, parent Marc Norman spoke to the Board about school site selection and the opportunity for a school site at Turf Valley and the less than adequate parcel offered to the Board of Education. Wilde Lake High School student Natalie Hills shared her positive experience in Speech and Debate. Parent Kim Kutchins suggested that the school system collect information on why students leave the system.

In his report to the Board, Superintendent Sydney Cousin reported on the Board's Legislative Breakfast with local elected officials. He also congratulated River Hill High coaches Earl and Brandon Lauer for being inducted into the Maryland Wrestling Hall of Fame and Coordinator of Health Services Donna Heller for her selection as Maryland School Nurse Administrator of the Year.

Board members Janet Siddiqui and Ellen Giles reported on the Recreation and Parks

Board meeting and the MABE Legal Services meeting, respectively.

Board Vice Chairman Frank Aquino reported on the recommendations coming out of the MABE Resolution Committee that individual board members will consider and vote on during the MABE Annual Conference.

The Board provided suggestions and input to the 2008-2009 Calendar Committee.

During their appointments with the Board, Community Advisory Council Chairman Rose Dennison reported on the recent work of the Council and PTA Council President Mary Jane Grauso asked for open processes and communication between the Board and the community.