

Summary of the Board of Education Meeting

Thursday, November 29, 2007

Action Items

- Approved the regular consent agenda including minutes of regular board meetings and donations.
- Approved the restricted agenda including bids and contracts and the ratification of the representation fee agreements with HCEA and HCEA-ESP.
- Approved an FY09 capital budget appeal of \$38,328,000 to the State Interagency Committee.
- Approved the design development/construction documents for the Glenelg High School drama addition.
- Approved revisions to Policy 2030, Ombudsman, with an amendment.

Safe Schools Data Show Positive Trends

Terry Alban, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, Assessment and Program Evaluation, presented a progress report on the school system's Goal 2 and data related to attendance, student behavior, and school environments. Dr. Alban reported that all elementary, 18 middle and 9 high schools met the state's satisfactory standard for attendance. A total of 28 schools achieved the excellent standard with attendance rates of 96 percent or higher.

A review of suspension rates indicates that over 94 percent of HCPSS students follow policies and engage in safe behavior. The suspension rate is 5.6 percent at the high school level, 5.5 percent at the middle school level, and less than one percent at the elementary level.

Overall, the HCPSS School Environment Survey, which measured the perceptions of students, staff, and community in five key areas - welcoming environment, physical environment, discipline, nurturing environment, and diversity/commonality - yielded positive results. At all three levels, questions regarding student discipline in schools drew the fewest positive responses from staff, but received the most positive responses from parents.

Homewood Center Principal Tina Maddox and Special Education teacher Ken Katzen reported on strategies that have produced positive academic and behavioral changes among students in the Center's programs. Data show that attendance has increased, habitual truancy has decreased and suspensions are down. School environment survey results measure perceptions among all groups across all five key areas.

Board Approves Revised Ombudsman Policy

After receiving testimony from Chris Workman, Chairman of the Community Advisory Council, on proposed revisions to Policy 2030, Ombudsman, the Board acted on the Council's recommendation to add clarifying language regarding the Ombudsman's relationship to the Board. The Board approved the revised policy with an amendment to add language that states the Ombudsman reports directly to the Board.

Speakers Comment on Attendance Area Adjustments

Testimony at a public hearing on Attendance Area Adjustments focused on the Greenbridge neighborhood high school attendance exception and plans for comprehensive high school attendance area adjustments for 2010. Many of the 16 individuals who testified asked the Board to refrain from redistricting students once they have started high school. Speakers also addressed plans in the Feasibility Study, asking the Board to not move students from Howard to Long Reach. At a work session following the public hearing, the Board discussed the Greenbridge exception. The Board is scheduled to make a decision about the area on December 13.

In Other Action...

In his report to the Board, Superintendent Sydney Cousin commended the administrators and staff of Lisbon Elementary and Glenwood Middle, the members of the Crisis Intervention Team, and other central staff for the manner in which they responded to the tragic death of three students. He also congratulated Atholton High Social Studies teacher Mabrooka Chaudhry, recipient of the 2007 Milken Award.

Chairman Diane Mikulis announced that Superintendent Sydney Cousin will receive the Howard L. Cornish Appreciation Award from the Metropolitan Baltimore Chapter of the Morgan State University Alumni Association

Deputy Superintendent Sandra Erickson reported that the participation of HCPSS students in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and exams continues to increase and scores on the AP exams remain high. In 2007, there were 3466 students enrolled in AP courses, representing 22 percent of high school students. Most of these students, a total of 2548, took one or more AP exams. Of the 5333 AP exams taken in 2007, 78 percent of the scores were a 3 or higher. More than half of the scores on the AP exams in 2007 were a 4 or higher, which is also a noteworthy accomplishment.

Six high school students who attended Leadership University reported on a study they completed on school lunches.

Natalie Woodson, representing the Council of Elders of the Black Community of Howard County, presented the year-end report on the partnership between the Council and the HCPSS.

Chris Wertman introduced himself as the new Chairman of the Community Advisory Council and shared his goal of reaching out to the community to expand membership of the Council.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 13, 2007.