

Open Work Session
January 17, 2023
Quarterly Meeting with Board of Education

Dr. Micah Stauffer, Superintendent; Mr. Gene Malone, Chair of the Board of Education; Mr. Jesse Reid, Comptroller; and Dr. Brian Raygor, Chief Finance and Operations Officer came before Council. Mr. Malone then introduced Board members John Palmer, Susan W. Beauchamp, and Kristin N. Hazel.

School Construction Update

Dr. Raygor said he is excited to share some updates on two major projects. He said, at Mardela they are currently moving swiftly through phase one of the construction, and they are currently on schedule and within budget. He said, despite all of the challenges in the construction industry, they are moving along pretty well, and that is because of some strategic moves they have made in terms of trying to get materials and equipment as it became available instead of at the point of need so they would have them and not be subject to delays. He said currently the slabs for the new part of the construction are on grade and completed. He said they appreciate the School Building Commission and the Board of Education with the support of the early equipment package as that has really been beneficial and got them things like the generators on site now as well as a lot of the MEP mechanical, electrical, and plumbing equipment. He said steel erection is near complete and, when driving down Delmar Road, you can see the steel in the back of the building for some of the new section, and they have the roofing materials on site with installation scheduled to start this week on the roof, so they will be undercover for the winter and construction will then continue under that roof.

Dr. Raygor said, regarding Beaver Run, if they been past there, they know that is just about done and the majority of site work is now completed as the building itself has been open since the beginning of the school year. He said they have some temporary construction entrances that are being removed. There is an outdoor PE and play area that have been seeded and fenced in. He said there is overflow parking on the west side of the property that was a gravel lot that is going to be pulled out and finished up with asphalt within the next week, and then in the spring the contractor will return to dress up the site where it is needed and over-seed where any grass has not come in. He said the documentation is 95 percent complete and they look forward to having the rededication ceremony a little bit later this spring.

Mr. Holloway asked when they are going to have the ribbon cutting for Beaver Run, to which Dr. Raygor responded, the date has not been finalized yet, but it will be later in the spring.

One-time Funding Requests

Dr. Stauffer said, if they remember, last year due to a dispute between the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Department of Legislative Services (DLS), the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funding for education from the County changed at the last minute. He said this resulted in a \$1,021,958 difference that left the County in a situation where it had budgeted more than was actually needed to meet the maintenance of effort requirement. He said the budget for the Council had been struck and drafted, and right before it was approved, the dispute between DLS and MSDE changed the MOE and that left a surplus at that point in time of a little over one million dollars in the draft budget.

Mr. Holloway said, when they reassigned those funds it was the hope of some of the Councilmembers that the money would go toward School Resource Officers (SROs) and then they came in and said it could not. He then asked if there a good explanation for that.

Dr. Stauffer responded, he is going to through his notes, but, yes, essentially, the one-time funding has to be listed and supported by the Council as well as the County School System, and then that goes to MSDE for approval, and they ultimately approved those one-time requests. He said the items that are listed on the one-time sheet are all items MSDE would approve. He clarified, they would not approve School Resource Officers because that is a reoccurring cost.

Mr. Holloway clarified, MSDE would not approve SROs. He then asked if they were asked to approve them, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, they would not. He said there is a COMAR reference on the one-time funding sheet that shows what they will approve and what they will not approve.

Mr. Winn asked if the recommendation for purchasing these items was brought to the Board of Education, and did the Board of Education get to see these requests, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, yes, the previous Board vetted it. He said this all occurred last June and then throughout the summer, so that communication did occur in a Board meeting over the summer with the previous Board. Mr. Winn asked what the plans are for SRO officers, are you just going to forget about it, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, no, they are very interested in expanding the SRO division. He said he made that very clear during the superintendent search last spring and they have talked about SROs with the previous Board, and he has communicated that with both the County Council and with the current Board, so he is very interested in expanding SROs. He said they have to find a way within their budget, and they think they do have a way as they move forward. He said they know that for each school resource officer they have to budget that salary and all that goes into that, so to expand their school resource officer division, they have to first get that into their budget. He said they have to work with Sheriff Mike Lewis, who they met with this past summer, and he has to recruit those officers and get them trained through the Criminal Justice Academy. He explained, there is additional training in order to be a school resource officer, as he is looking at Shane Baker who knows that very well, and then they will be able to work with the Sheriff's Department to continue to place them in an expanded role within their schools. He said they do have a plan and they are working on that plan, and they have communicated with Sheriff Lewis and he is supportive of the plan, and they are planning to move forward hopefully by December of next year and have additional resource officers in the schools by that time.

Mr. Cannon said there are so many issues that have developed nationwide. He then asked if they are seeing any additional funding coming down through the federal government to the State of Maryland to address issues like that because it is a huge concern for everyone.

Ms. Kim Miles, Assistant Superintendent for Student and Family Services, went to the podium. Ms. Miles said, to add to what Dr. Stauffer has shared and to respond to the question from Mr. Cannon, they continue to seek grants, and there are federal opportunities that are forthcoming. She said they will work within those to see if they are eligible and/or if they have the programming and planning for which grants could be applied, and they will keep the County updated. She said also, with regard to the SROs, she thinks there may be a positive impact that is a FTE in the Sheriff's Department that is additional, so, certainly, that partnership in working with Sheriff Lewis is critical, and with Mr. Malone and Dr. Stauffer leading, they are being well prepared to move forward when they can get those candidates in place.

Dr. Stauffer said his understanding from Sheriff Lewis is, at some point as that recruitment of additional officers through the Criminal Justice Academy becomes apparent, he will have to come before Council in conjunction with the BOE because they would be submitting a request to Council to increase his Department by X number of deputies, whatever that number may be.

Dr. Stauffer said he also wanted to say, while they are talking about SROs now, they will remember that these were all decisions that were occurring early last summer and they were in communication with both the Board of Education and the County Council earlier last summer. He said the whole delay was just due to MSDE and the process, and once they realized there was a dispute between MSDE and the Department of Legislative Services, once that was resolved, there were 13 other counties in the State of Maryland that were like Wicomico County where their maintenance of effort calculations had been different originally from what they ended up being. He said because of that they realized there has to be a process they would need to follow to be able to use those funds in conjunction with the County Council's approval of the one-time funds, but those one-time funds have to go along with the COMAR regulations in what is allowed for the use of those funds, and they cannot be used for school resource officers because that would be a reoccurring cost. He said the salary would occur each year after that, so it would not be a one-time thing. He said they are very interested in expanding the school resource officer division, so, with the Council's support, they will continue to look at being able to do that.

Blueprint for Maryland's Future

Dr. Stauffer said they want to continue to provide the Council and the community with an update on Blueprint for Maryland's Future and its impact on Wicomico County's Public Schools and the community at large. He said Dr. Briggs is the Wicomico County Blueprint Coordinator, but he could not attend the meeting today, so he and his team have provided a presentation and some notes to review.

Dr. Stauffer then went over the power point presentation. He said the Accountability and Implementation Board is commonly referred to as the AIB and it is a new government office for the State of Maryland. He said it has now posted its initial Comprehensive Plan on their website, which was officially adopted in December. He said the final document was not shared until a little over a week ago, so this is new information. He said they updated their Board last week and he wanted to make sure that the County Council also had this update as well.

He said the staff at Wicomico County Public Schools continue to work hard on the initial implementation plan, which is due on March 15 to the AIB and the Maryland State Department of Education. He said today he is going to provide updates on some of the work that is being done in their workgroups within the school system on each of the pillars that they are going to talk about. He said, if they remember, the five pillars under the Legislation for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future are: (1) Early Childhood Education; (2) High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders; (3) College and Career Readiness; (4) More Resources for Students to be Successful, which much of that relates to both special education as well English language learners and mental health for students; and (5) Governance and Accountability.

He said, for early childhood, at last month's Board meeting Ms. Eiler, Supervisor of Early Childhood, shared some information regarding pre-k and student performance on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. He said the early childhood team continues to work with private providers in the community. He explained, they have to partner with those private providers because, if they are expanding pre-k, they cannot continue to do that without the partnership of those private providers. He

said they want to ensure that students have access to pre-k programs and instruction and ensuring they have quality staff in the areas of their organization is a priority as well. He said it is essentially taking what was K-12 education and, over the course of the next 10 years, adding another grade level. He said the standards within that grade level, the instruction within that grade level, the teacher, and teaching staff within that new grade level all have a role. He said obviously adding an additional grade level to every single pre-k program at the elementary schools is a challenge, and that is a challenge they are going to have to face over the course of the next 10 years under the Blueprint Legislation.

Dr. Stauffer said there is a lot within that Legislation that has been accounted for and there are some things that have not been accounted for. He said, for instance, they have to have classroom space, they have to have an addition or portables, whatever it may be, to the schools where that pre-k program would expand. He said that is also a benefit in being able to partner with current pre-k providers out in the community, so they can also fall within their umbrella when it relates to good, high-quality instruction. He said there are two ways that can be expanded, and they are going to have to be able to search out both of those ways.

Mr. Cannon asked if they think they would continue to add on to each of the individual schools, or are they going to get to a place where they have a pre-k center, as we have some of those right now. Dr. Stauffer responded, it could be a little bit of both where they have some areas where they have a building available for lease just for that purpose. He said they may need to add on additional classrooms at existing schools and, again, they may need to continue to partner. He said they have four right now in the community, but they will need to continue to expand that partnership with the private pre-k providers. He said he thinks everything is on the table. Mr. Cannon clarified, he is talking about expanding those centers, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, yes, expanding the number of private pre-k centers, as there are more than just four in their community.

Mr. Winn asked if he is willing to work with private sector schools for pre-k kids, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, they are looking at private pre-k providers, such as Stepping Stones and Bundles of Joy, and those types of programs to be able to partner, not only with the school system, but also with MSDE as far as how that would look.

Mr. Winn then asked if he is specifically looking at certain providers or all providers to make it fair because they cannot just pick a provider and say they are going here. He said it should be, in his opinion, the parent's choice to say they want to keep their kid at Salisbury Christian School, and if the public school is going to offer this program, it is paid for by the tax dollars, and they are just going to go ahead and send their kid to the public school. He said it is going to hurt Salisbury Christian School and it is going to hurt other schools. He then asked if there is some way they can work with other schools, not just a couple, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, absolutely. He said he thinks the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Legislation expands it out to private providers. He said, as they continue to expand, that would be open to any private pre-k provider within the community. He said, obviously, there are going to be a number of requirements underneath the Legislation that they are going to have to agree to in that partnership, and that is what they are working on. He said it is very well defined within that Legislation on what the requirements are for the private providers and what their requirements are under the school system as well as MSDE. He said keep in mind that they are in month 6 of a 120-month implementation plan. He said the idea as they move forward is, after 10 years those partnerships would

continue to increase, as well as the capacity within the school system to be able offer more pre-k programs as well.

Dr. Raygor said, as Dr. Stauffer mentioned, this will be codified in the Blueprint Law, but there are opportunities for these private providers that have space and have personnel to partner with them through an MOU and the State. He said they are going to be subject to some of those State regulations in terms of money, but it does provide some opportunities for children to attend pre-k outside of their buildings, which may be something that some parents would want and may also provide them with some additional flexibility as they try to fit another 1200 students, which is about a grade level.

Mr. Winn asked, is this just pre-k students, or is this pre-k through 12th grade that people could use this ability to use private providers, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, under the Legislation it is just pre-k.

Dr. Stauffer continued and said power point slide six talks about high-quality, diverse teachers and leaders. He said having high-quality and diverse teachers is essential to meet the needs that they have for the students within their school system. He said they are going to begin the negotiation process as they do every year in the week ahead. He said the Blueprint Legislation calls explicitly for districts to increase the number of nationally board-certified teachers, which is the level that they are looking for under Blueprint. He said they are working to enhance and support the increase in expansion of the nationally board-certified teachers that they have in their school system. He said they currently have 22, but they are already on the path in being able to increase that number with the interested staff members that they have already reaching out to them, and they have reached out to them as well.

Ms. Shields asked if the Superintendent gets to see the actual applicants, especially minority teachers because she had one person she talked to this summer who had all the qualifications, certifications, and everything, and she was denied employment with the Board, but then she went to Delaware and got hired because she was certified. She said they need male teachers too. She said she just wants to make sure that the Superintendent gets to see the qualifications and certifications and all of that, even the Board Members because that way they will avoid the complaint that they do not have enough minority teachers in the school system. She said they need to make sure Dr. Stauffer gets to see the applicants.

Dr. Stauffer responded, specifically with this particular piece, it looks at what they are doing to develop the teachers that are already working in the school system and how can they expand on expertise that they have, but, to answer Ms. Shields' question, yes, applications are available to him as well as his team. He said those are things that they are always working on and asking questions about as they continue through. He said Maryland does have some very specific requirements potentially compared to Delaware or other states. He said they look to fill the higher positions through certified teachers in that content area, and then if that is not available, they continue to expand that circle outward.

Dr. Stauffer said the next pillar is College and Career Readiness. He said members of the division of instruction are having ongoing dialogue and planning sessions with Wor-Wic Community College and Salisbury University as they seek to expand opportunities for students. He said, thinking about those dual enrollment opportunities they already have in place, they are looking at expanding those opportunities. He said they are hopeful that they will have a path for interested students who have demonstrated that they are college ready by the end of 10th grade that they will be able to earn an Associate's Degree prior to graduating from high school. He said they are planning that pathway with their community college as well as Salisbury University and UMES. He said those are all colleges that

they have MOUs with, and they are all available to their students to be able to expand dual enrollment under what Blueprint is presenting over the course of the next 10 years.

Dr. Stauffer said the next pillar is more Resources for Students. He said they continue to be really proud of the additional support they have been able to provide in their school system to help ensure that students have access to the resources they need. He said there is at least one social worker now in each of their schools. He said they have also been able to provide additional mental health staff in their schools, as well as meet the needs of the over-growing English learner population with EL teachers and support staff to be able to meet the needs that they have. He said, again, these are all resources that are provided to them under the Blueprint Legislation, and those are all things that they are going to continue to be able to utilize and meet the needs as those needs change.

Dr. Stauffer said next is Governance and Accountability. He said the Blueprint Legislation requires the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) to monitor and report annually on the status of the implementation of Blueprint in schools. He said also, throughout that connection with MSDE, they have to be able to collect data, analyze data, and report data on a regular basis regarding student performance, teacher preparation, and use of funds. He said there is a very high level of governance and accountability under the Blueprint Legislation that it provides for. He said, again, they are going to be implementing in stages and meeting the requirements under that Legislation over the course of the next 10 years. He said, after drafting their local plan, which will be submitted as a draft to MSDE later in the spring, they will continue to have to monitor that plan, seek public input on it, and their Board will very much be aware of it. He said they will make the Council aware of it and there will be a final plan that will have to be submitted in June as they move forward. He said, in talking about the governance and accountability piece, he wanted their comptroller, Jesse Reid, to provide an overview of what is going to be a little bit different under the finance reporting systems that the Blueprint legislation is calling for.

Mr. Jesse Reid passed out a one-page handout. He said he wanted to take a few minutes to go over some of the latest reporting requirement changes, so he thought he would start with the way things have always been, and, as Council can see at the top of the page, they have always been required to budget and report expenditures by the 15 major categories at the top of the page, such as Administration, School Management, Instructional Salaries, and Operation of Plant to name a few. He said they also have to budget and report expenditures by object, of which there are hundreds, so he did not list them all, but all of the objects fall within the five major objects, which are salaries and wages, contracted services, supplies and materials, other charges, and transfers. He said, as Dr. Stauffer mentioned, as a result of Blueprint for Maryland's Future being implemented, they now also have to budget and report expenditures by funding source. He said the State wants to see the dollar follow the student and the reason for which it was given. He said, as you can see halfway down the page, the funding sources are the Foundation Program, which is based on total enrollment, comp-ed, which is based on the number of free and reduced meal students, special education, limited English proficiency, pre-k, and college and career readiness, all of which are based on the number of students in those categories. He said transitional supplemental instruction is based on the number of kindergarten through third grade students and transportation is based on total enrollment. He said, for example, looking at the Excel chart at the bottom of the page, you can see two of their many recently reported expenditures. He said the first example has a funding source of Limited English proficiency, category-instructional salaries, programs-regular programs, object-salaries, sub-object-substitutes, and the amount is \$5,355. He said the second example has a funding source of College and Career Readiness,

category-other instructional costs, program-regular programs, object-transfers, and sub-object-dual enrollment for \$38,985. He said every one of these fields have to be hand keyed in. He said, in addition to the reporting requirement changes, they are also set to having the financial data from their financial system interface with the financial system of MSDE creating a statewide transparency portal in which historical data will also be loaded. He said they have not seen what that will look like, but his guess is it will look very similar to what they currently have on their transparency portal. He said they have been told that it will include the school, so you will be able to filter on a certain type of expense for a particular school, for example.

Dr. Stauffer said, as it relates to Blueprint, they are always seeking input, and they continue to do that in a lot of different ways, such as through the workgroups that are centered around each one of the pillars he talked about today. He said all stakeholders are encouraged to send questions or comments as it relates to each of those areas or ideas that they may have to their repository of comments at wcboe.org and they will distribute those comments to the workgroups for consideration as they are drafting the plan. He said the template the AIB has provided is pretty specific. He said it is not just completely a plug-in, as there are quite a few things that they are asking for them to be able to put data in for each of those areas, but also to make it their own. He said it is always good to be able to have public input and the input of their stakeholders to be able to add those nuances to things on how they go about implementing these things over the next 10 years. He said the “what” is pretty much defined on many cases, but “how” they are going to be able to accomplish all of this is something they will be drafting in their plan this spring, which is something that is going to be revised as they move forward on a regular basis. He said they have been hearing about Blueprint for a long time, but, when looking at it, they are really only six months into the actual implementation of everything that has been laid out today, so it is a lot. He said they will keep Council updated on the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future every time they come back for a work session.

Maintenance of Effort Overview

Dr. Stauffer said he thought it would be good as they start the budget season to do a review of the maintenance of effort, especially with new Councilmembers, and then when they get into the budget process with their own Board Members it will be more specific as it relates to what the student attendance and student population count was in September and how that all fits in with the maintenance of effort funding formula.

Mr. Jesse Reid said maintenance of effort is the minimum amount the County has to fund the Board of Education and, going forward, it is going to be the greater of the traditional maintenance of effort without the kicker, which he will explain, or the local share, which is basically just a percentage of all the State pots of funding that they just reviewed but on a smaller scale. He said the local share, however, last year was and will continue to be lower than the traditional maintenance of effort without the kicker for quite some time. He said he is going to focus on the traditional maintenance of effort (MOE) without the kicker today. He said it is very simple as it is the total amount that they received in the current year divided by last year’s enrollment multiplied by this year’s enrollment. He said, if enrollment goes up, MOE goes up, and if enrollment goes down, MOE goes down. He said there was a little bit of a wrinkle last year because of COVID in that the State allowed them to use the three-year average of 2018, 2019, and 2021, and that number is slightly higher than their current year enrollment, so he is expecting MOE to go down slightly, but he will know for sure on Tuesday.

Mr. Reid said, for the new Councilmembers, there used to be a kicker or multiplier of roughly 2.5 percent if a County's education effort was below the Statewide average, and they usually qualified for this, but the current year was the last year for that kicker in the law, so unless they write that kicker back in, it will not be applicable going forward.

Dr. Stauffer said, one of the questions he answers out in the community is why the MOE number changes if it is maintenance of effort and it is supposed to be the same thing as last year. He said keep in mind that it is not the total amount that has to stay the same, roughly, under maintenance of effort, it is the amount per student, so as the enrollment changes, sometimes it may go up or down whatever it may be. He said it is the amount per student that would stay relatively the same as the previous year under maintenance of effort, and then it will be calculated based on whatever the enrollment is this year or average thereof of the three years.

Ms. Shields said she thinks she is going to need a Maintenance of Effort 101 because every time it comes up she has to look it up as to what it means. She said she shared before that Somerset County spends more money per student than Wicomico County does. She then asked, does that have something to do with the Maintenance of Effort and the tax cap, to which Mr. Reid responded, they may put more funding in than the MOE amount towards their students, but he would have to go back and look to be sure. Ms. Shields then asked if he could get that information to them, to which Mr. Reid responded, yes. Ms. Shields said people want to know why Wicomico County does not spend more money on its students than other counties do, and she does not know if it is because of the tax cap or something else, and she wants to make sure that she is thinking right.

Mr. Winn asked if all the students are legal immigrants or are they illegal. He said, not that it matters, as kids need to go to school, but are these tax-paying parents, to which Mr. Malone responded, it is federal law that they cannot ask. Mr. Holloway said it is a good question, but there is not an answer.

Ms. Miles said she will give the best answer she can - enrollment is based on residency in the County, so they do not inquire as to immigration status at the time of enrollment. She clarified, they do have a very specific list of requirements with regard to the documentation and things that are needed, but the enrollment itself is based on the county of residence. She said a student could be living in another county attending school here, but they would be charged tuition at the rate that would be required for them to be funded as if the student lived in Wicomico County. She said the MOE does not include those students who may be attending but live elsewhere, as they capture that with tuition.

Dr. Stauffer asked if the enrollment process is a County or State driven process, to which Ms. Miles responded, it is a State driven process and they have a team that is very well trained, many of whom are directly on her team in their central location, as well as those who are in the schools who are trained, and they are very specific and strict requirements of the student. She said, should anyone have any questions about a specific situation, she is probably the person to try to best address those.

Dr. Stauffer clarified, the process they follow from the State is very specific as it relates to where the student is residing more so maybe than the background of the student.

Mr. Winn said the immigration these days is really getting out of hand and everything is really expensive and he just wants to make sure that the County can afford it and that they are not bringing in a lot of people who probably should not be in our County anyway and we are paying for it.

Mr. Winn said he is not against kids getting an education, he thinks every kid should have their education, but he thinks we should also be accountable of who is getting these benefits because there are a lot of people that go to private school that are not getting these benefits.

Mr. Hastings said they are not going to fix immigration on the County Council.

Mr. Cannon said Mr. Winn is really asking if there are any metrics in place where they know if it is really beginning to strain their resources when there is an influx of immigrants to Wicomico County. He said it is no reflection on immigrants themselves, but he thinks it is their responsibility because they are seeing it now in New York and in El Paso where they are saying they cannot continue to afford this and they need assistance. He said they do not know if there is anything in place where the Board of Education or Administration has a way to monitor it or not, as they could be getting into some financial problems. Mr. Winn said there are a lot of immigrants moving to Salisbury and he is just asking.

Ms. Shields said her father came from Jamaica in the 50's and he worked. She said, from the connections she has with people who come here, she does not know their status, but they are working people and they are taking jobs that other people do not want to take, such as harvesting crops. She said the average American does not want to do those kinds of jobs, domestic jobs, the working people have skills, they are working, and she is quite sure they are getting taxes taken out of their check where they file taxes, but they are working people. She said she is not saying they should be having an influx, but she just imagines how New York City looked during the 20s, 30s, and 40s when they had an influx of people come to Ellis Island by the Statue of Liberty. She said she does not think the Board can regulate immigration as she thinks that would be some government agency to look into that. She clarified, she is not saying they could not keep statistics, but she would not want the Board to have to worry about the status of kids' parents.

Dr. Stauffer said he thinks that captures it well as an overall description of where they are. He said they will focus on the education of the student, so wherever the student may come from, they follow the enrollment requirements that have to be followed through the State. He said, once they enroll them, they are going to be assessed as they come into their classroom for instruction. He said, if it is clear through those assessments that they need additional resources, they may qualify for additional resources either through those assessments or their performance in the classroom. He said also, if those resources are needed and it is determined that they are English learners, that is also a State designation where they would receive additional resources or funding for particular students as it relates to the needs they may have in the classroom. He said this is very similar to special education students and the needs they may have and the support they may need to be able to access the instruction the teacher is providing in that classroom and whatever additional support they need to be able to do that.

Mr. Cannon said he does not think it is a reflection on the migrants themselves at all. He said what they are experiencing nationwide is a serious influx of migrants coming into the United States, and one thing that certain communities have to watch out for is if it truly is going to be able to comprise the resources that are already in place. He said he thinks that can really be the concern as to whether their budget may go up 20 percent because it is unprecedented. He said they are hoping there are measures in place to be able to anticipate that need.

Dr. Stauffer said they get additional funding if that designation is determined with the students that they have coming in. He said they know already with their numbers that a little over 10 percent of the

student population are now or what they would designate as English learners within the overall student population, and that additional funding would be used to hire additional staff, such as English learner teachers, instructional assistants for classrooms, and other support staff, as well as other support resources to meet the needs of those students.

Maryland State Assessments

Dr. Stauffer said the last thing on the agenda is State assessments, and Council should have in front of them the Kindergarten Readiness Assessments results, which he will talk about briefly, and then he will also just talk a little bit about other assessments in their school system. He said all students take the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment at the beginning of their kindergarten year, and the administration window is typically at the very beginning of the school year and it closed on October 10 this past semester. He said students are assessed across four domains as it relates to kindergarten readiness, social foundations, how well they get along with others, recognize emotions, cooperate with their peers, mathematics, identify and count numbers, copy patterns, grasp concepts of addition and subtraction, language and literacy, how those students have letter sound recognition, how well they speak clearly, talk and listen to adults, and use appropriate language for their age. He said lastly, physical well-being and motor development - can they run, can they jump, and can they perform fine motor skills when demonstrating basic safety and health skills. He said that is the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment as those students come to them as a kindergarten student. He said he thinks those results can stress the importance of a really strong pre-kindergarten program and that, again, is the interest of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in strengthening that program so that students are more ready to learn on an overall scale when they reach kindergarten. He said, as far as the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, teachers score the students through observation and evaluation during the first month of school. He said the schools are immediately available in the platform and to make instructional decisions for those teachers, and the students receive a composite score and a scale for each domain. He said the domain levels of those scores would be demonstrating readiness, approaching readiness, and emerging readiness. He said, as they move forward, those scores are communicated with not only the teacher and the staff of the schools, but also the parents and the students themselves. He said this gives them a foundation from the first moment they step foot in the public school system.

Dr. Stauffer said, as it relates to other State assessments, they also do the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment program or what they call MCAP, which consists of English, Language Arts, and math. He said they are assessments for grades 3 through 8 as well as English 10 in high school and Algebra 1. He said the MCAP data will be released with segregation by district, student group, and also special program, and that should be coming on January 24, so they are getting ready to see the release of that data very soon. He said, at this time, each local school district within Maryland was provided with an initial student file, so they have that, it just has not been desegregated by grade level, by school, or by subgroup at this point in time, but they can look for that information in the future. He said he knows Council will be hearing from their State Superintendent on the results as they relate across Maryland and also as it relates to each county in Maryland, and then how the results relate to previous years as well, and they will look for that data very soon. He said that is going to be his starting point as a new superintendent. He said, with the pandemic and other challenges they have had over the last few years, he would be shocked if that was not a result of what they will see the scores to be, and that is going to be something they will see consistently across the State of Maryland as well.

Dr. Stauffer said, when reviewing the National Assessment for Education Progress (NAPE), it is important to remember it is a national assessment. He said Council probably heard a lot about NAPE a couple of months ago in the news and throughout the nation, but this is a national assessment that is given to students in grades 4 through 8. He said it is a very random selection process, and though the data is indicative of what they may see as it relates to the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment program that they will get in January, the data reflects the participation really of only three very finite groups. He said, as it relates to Wicomico County specifically, approximately 25 fourth grade students enrolled at East Salisbury, Fruitland Intermediate, and Glen Avenue were included in this last round of NAPE assessments at the national level. He said they figure there were about 15,000 students total, and roughly 25 students locally were selected randomly to participate in this national assessment. He said that is then extrapolated out throughout the entire State and then each state across the nation. He said those scores that relate to literacy, math, and other areas are assessed at the national level, but it is a good indicator of where the nation may be as a whole, and it aligns in respects with Maryland's assessments. He clarified, it is just not specific to Wicomico County because it was obviously such a small random group of students, but stay tuned as they will be seeing more come out around the State on the MCAP results.

Mr. John Palmer came to the podium and thanked Ms. Shields for bringing up the difference between Somerset County and Wicomico County. He said, just as a reminder, maintenance of effort is just a minimum. He said anytime any Councilman wishes to increase a little bit more into a reoccurring fund for SROs, they would greatly appreciate it, so feel free to do that. He said also, they mentioned the tax cap, and he believes it is against the law to tax or to cap the revenue that can be raised in taxes; however, they can limit the rate of which it is increased and he thinks that is kind of what they have done in the County. He said, again, any time they put some money into the reoccurring fund, they are ready to accept it.

Dr. Stauffer said they also have their own local assessments, benchmark type of assessments, that are closely aligned with what the State assesses for literacy and math as well, and that is going to be more at the classroom level. He said those benchmark assessments are given by each of the teachers and then they can utilize that information a couple of times a year to help them plan and know where their students are as it relates to the instruction they are giving in the classroom and where they can go from there. He said they utilize those local assessments very heavily.

CTE Program

Mr. Merritt asked what the status of the CTE program is, and if there is any expansion in the future. He said he recently read that in the last two years applications in the trades have fallen 49 percent, but if you call a plumber out to your house, you will figure that out. Dr. Stauffer responded, he thinks there are many things sometimes with the Blueprint Legislation that can be questioned, such as how it relates to the local school system, how it relates also to a local governing body like the County Council, and what that means moving forward; but there are some things they will see through legislation that will be added to the Blueprint over the course of the next few years to account for some of the things that are missing, like the capital funding that might be needed to expand pre-k and those types of things. He said, as it relates to CTE, one thing that is definitely prevalent in the Blueprint is the expansion of CTE. He said, under the Blueprint, over the course of the next 10 years, one of the requirements will be that 45 percent of their graduating seniors each year should be and will be a part of some type of

credentialing program like CTE or an appropriate apprenticeship where they are out in the community working in an industry. He said he thinks they currently have roughly 27 or 28 percent of their graduating seniors involved with CTE just because there has been a strong interest in Wicomico County over the years. He said he thinks they are above many of the other local school districts around the State currently, but they still have significant work to do to be able to reach at least a minimum 45 percent. He said you will see that work over the course of the next 10 years, so you will see programs like CTE as well as new programs, like an apprenticeship, which may not require a specific CTE program or classroom, but that they are out in the trades and industry working with those experts in our community, and they will see those types of things expand.

Mr. Holloway said Mr. Merritt mentioned calling a plumber, but they dropped the plumbing program out of the CTE program, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, they have it incorporated in the HVAC program, so it is not a stand-alone program, and that is due to student participation in that program. He said obviously, if that were to continue to increase within the HVAC program and they see that interest continue to grow, hopefully that could become a program in the future, but that is where it is incorporated now.

Mr. Winn said he actually took the CTE class. He said he went through carpentry and he actually took the plumbing class when it was still there, and then they dropped it most recently. He said it is a shame that it was dropped because, like Mr. Merritt said, they need plumbers and they are now not teaching plumbers. He said he has opinions about that plumbing class, but in the carpentry class he went though they built houses every single year, at least when he was there they built a house, and they donated it to Salisbury Neighborhood Housing. He said he thinks that it is a great thing, but at the same time he wonders if it is against the law to make money off selling that house. He said the program could almost fund itself probably with building houses. Mr. Holloway said they used to sell the houses. Mr. Winn said it would be less money out of the taxpayers' pockets if they could turn a product out of it, as it would entice the students to see a return from their efforts. He said they could say they brought this money to the schools, this was me, I did that. He said he thinks that is gratifying for a kid to see that and would empower more people to jump into that program. He said he has a passion for CTE because it really did form his future and other people's futures because those instructors are influential and they are down-to-earth and their counselors. He said he knows they have counselors in the school, but they are counselors that you can have confidential conversations with. He said we need to do whatever we can to promote CTE.

Dr. Stauffer said they do have a strong partnership with Salisbury Neighborhood Housing and that has worked out very well for the students to gain that experience. He said there are also some partnerships where some of the supplies and materials and obviously the moving of the house and setting all that up is covered, not by the school system or as a taxpayer, but from a partnership. He said what they provide are the students to be able to learn their trade and their craft and working with those instructors, and that is currently the way it is setup.


Theft of School Buses

Mr. Holloway asked how they managed to lose the buses, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, the buses were stolen. Mr. Holloway asked if they got the keys or did they hotwire them and run through the gate, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, they were able to go through the gate. He said the keys at the time

were in the bus. He said that is a process they are looking at to be able to change, and they will have that changed in the future, but they broke and entered and stole the bus in that way.

Mr. Cannon said you have to wonder who would ever steal a school bus. Dr. Stauffer said they were all recovered, the bus and the two transportation vans. He said the Sheriff's Department is currently investigating the situation and they are working with them.

There was no further discussion.



John T. Cannon, President, At-Large



Shane Baker, Vice President, District 3



James Winn, At-Large



Shanie P. Shields, District 1




Jeff Merritt, District 2



Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator