

Open Work Session

Quarterly Work Session with Wicomico County Board of Education

July 20, 2022

Dr. Micah Stauffer, Superintendent; Mr. Gene Malone, Chair of the Board; Dr. Rick Briggs, Chief Academic Officer; Dr. Brian Raygor, Chief Finance and Operations Officer; and Ms. Kim Miles, Assistant Superintendent for Student and Family Services, came before Council. Dr. Stauffer introduced Board Member Anne Suthowski and Mr. Jesse Reid, Comptroller, who were in the audience.

Dr. Stauffer passed out the agenda. He clarified, the first three items were requested by the Council, and the last three are items they put on the agenda.

Discussion on Staggered Terms for Board Members

Mr. Malone said Dr. Stauffer asked him to lead this discussion, which is an ironic discussion the day after the Primary. He said he thinks it is a good idea to have staggered terms for the Board of Education. He said surrounding Counties do, but he guesses his question to the Council would be why is it that important for them to be staggered when the Council is not staggered, and the County Executive is not staggered? He said they could have a situation where there are going to be a lot of new Councilmembers based on people not running and there may be a new County Executive, and the School Board is no different. He said the Council wants to talk about staggering the Board's terms, and maybe they should stagger everybody's. He said the Council must be more important because they make more money than they do, and he is just basing it on private sector. He said obviously it is a good idea and most of the Counties have maybe Districts 1, 2, and 4 go in four years, and then maybe the other two districts and at-large go in six years, so they could stagger it the first time, but obviously it is an important conversation for all Elected Officials, not just the Board of Education.

Mr. McCain said it is ironic Mr. Malone says that because, when he saw this on the list, his first thought was the Council does not do it, the State Legislators do not do it, so the same logic would apply. He said to him it sounds good, but he does not know if it is a good idea or not a good idea, but he thinks in the end it is all about the same. He said there is a cost to it when they do staggered terms because it costs money to have staggered elections, but the other side of it is that the reality is that everybody could get replaced, but when has that ever happened? He said there have never been seven Councilmembers replaced, and there has never been every School Board Member replaced. He said it is always that a few go, a few stay, and a few get elected out. He said another thing with staggered would be they would always be changing, which is not necessarily an advantage either because there would not be that continuity. He said he knows Mr. Malone is Chair of the Board and they all sort of having a working relationship, which takes a little time to develop. He said some things this Council has worked well on and some Legislative things they have worked on for three and a half years now into the term that they still do not have to completion. He said, if they were switching people halfway through the process, that might change it and make it even harder.

Mr. Holloway said the interesting thing would be how they would do it. He said, if they decided to stagger the elections, that would mean they would somehow have to have two people serve an extra two years, to which Mr. Malone responded, or they would have to shorten them, so either way he does not know how they would do that. Mr. Holloway said that would create a fight and some animosity amongst some people. He said it sounds good, but he does not know how they do it.

Mr. Dodd said he has always been a fan of staggered elections for one of the reasons just stated, and it may not have ever happened that the slates have been wiped out, but it could very well happen. He said, in this situation they would have eight new faces including the County Executive and then the only person who knows how to run the show possibly would be the existing Director of Administration. He said what they would have to do is somebody would be gifted two more years, or somebody would lose two years, and there is a cost to that, but there would always be an election, whether the gubernatorial or the presidential race. He said Cecil County does it, but he does not know of any other County. He said he had this discussion before with Ms. Acle, and she may know what other Counties do it, but they know that Cecil County does it. Mr. Malone said Worcester does staggered for their Board of Education. He said he did not read Somerset's, and other Counties stagger them too, but not everybody does.

Mr. Hastings said, to clarify what Mr. Dodd is getting at, there is only one County in the State that does that for their Council, which is Cecil County. Mr. Dodd said he did not know of any other Counties, but if the Board did it, he thinks it would make good sense for the Council to do it at the same time.

Ms. Acle said she thinks it is a great idea, but the only thing she would caution on is, if they are going to do it, she would do both the Board and the County Council because, when having an election during a presidential year it is very different than running in a gubernatorial year, so they do not want to have three School Board Members out there by themselves running in a presidential race. She said it is very polarizing, and they have all just been through a primary, and it is even worse during a presidential election. She said, if they are going to do some, she would recommend doing all so they do not have to hone in the concentration on education and getting these three people put out there.

Mr. Cannon said he does not have much of an inclination for it. He said he gets what Mr. McCain said that it sounds good in theory, but then, when they get into the actuality of it, he thinks it also creates a problem that nobody knows when they are running. He said there would be three people running and it would get very fragmented he thinks. He said he is okay with leaving well enough alone. He said he agrees with Mr. Malone that the idea is it is not just a suggestion for the Board of Education, it would be for both Bodies of Government.

Mr. Mitchell said he does not know how Cecil does it unless maybe it is not a Charter County, but the County Council specifically is a four-year term, and they would need a Maryland Constitutional Amendment to change the Council. He said the Board is statutory and could be changed by the Council, they would just have to figure out which way they would do it.

Ms. Acle asked if citizens have reached out to Mr. Malone about this? She said clearly the Board is living it so they understand it, but are there any other groups or teachers who have said this might be a problem, to which Mr. Malone responded, he has not heard from groups, but he has heard from individuals throughout the year about them all being up for reelection. He said he thinks the topic came up because they also were searching for a Superintendent, so it hit their mind that they could lose all the Board Members and have a new Superintendent starting July 1, so that could be an issue. He clarified, no groups have said they need to do this, he has just had people asking him why. Ms. Acle said that is when they start having bureaucrats take over.

Mr. McCain said it is not broke, so why go down that path?

Mr. Mitchell said he would like to correct something he mentioned before. He said staggering the Board is statutory, but it is State statute, so they would have to ask the Delegates to introduce that to change it, but it is not a constitutional amendment.

Mr. Malone said he would like to say that one of his colleagues has arrived, and that is Mr. John Palmer, who is also a Board Member, and he is in the audience.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Mr. Cannon said he knows this item has been in the plans for quite some time and he knows it is part of what Kirwan wants to stress, and he knows they already have that in their wheelhouse.

Dr. Stauffer said obviously this is something on their minds even more so at this point in time, and they have some things they go through for recruitment. He said they have a Grow Your Own initiative through the Teacher Academy of Maryland, which is a CTE program that works with their students who are interested in going into the education field and is a CTE completer and something that students could enter into as early as 9th or 10th grade. He said they also have a Grow Your Own initiative with their noncertificated staff, which is those who are not certificated to be teachers but may be working in clerical positions or as instructional assistants. He said they work with them to make sure they can have tuition reimbursements, they flex their schedules to be able to accommodate their course work, or do student teaching as well. He said they support them through that process in hopes they can retain them to be a teacher for them as they move forward.

Dr. Stauffer said they have very strong partnerships currently with Wor-Wic, Salisbury University, and UMES, and they serve as all of their schools for student interns, and that is a big recruitment process, obviously, as student teachers come in to learn the profession and learn the trade. He said they also have a number of job fairs that they participate in throughout the Mid Atlantic region. He said they also host their own job fair that is very well supported by the businesses here in the area. He said, when they go to job fairs or host their own, they connect with the Tourism Departments so they have a number of resources and materials with them to hopefully promote the area that they are in as well.

Dr. Stauffer said those are some of the things they do for recruitment. He said obviously for both recruitment and retention, salary is a big part of that, so they have worked very hard with the support of their State as well as also their local funding with salaries they are able to offer their teachers and all of their staff to make sure they are competitive with their neighbors around them as well as throughout the State. He said they also are looking at their largest salary increase on an average of 7 percent this coming year for all of their staff, and that was something they are very proud of to be able to offer that.

Dr. Stauffer said he is going to have Dr. Briggs talk about a State grant that he took the lead on that they are excited about for this coming year.

Dr. Briggs said he will share really quick about the Maryland Leads Grant. He said it was an opportunity offered by MSDE to target seven strategic areas, and they outlined the different ones, and one of those was staff support and retention. He said, working collaboratively with their instructional team and Dr. Raygor in his previous position, they really recognized the need, and they definitely focused on staff support and retention. He said they received funding for almost \$7 million for this with the vast majority of that funding going directly to their employees both current and future in the form of \$2,500 bonuses throughout next school year. He said there will be three payments throughout the year because they do

not just want them returning in September, but they want them staying all year long, so they will receive a payment of \$850 at the end of September, \$850 in the middle of December, and then another \$800 at the end of March. He said it is their hope that this will be well recognized on top of the 7 percent. He said it has been a recruiting tool for those coming to Wicomico County looking for jobs, and it has also hopefully served as a retention incentive for people to return to them next year. He said that is just one small thing, but they are very happy they were able to offer that to their employees. He clarified, it is for all fulltime benefited employees, so the instructional assistant who may not be making as much as the high school principal, everybody gets \$2,500 across the board. Mr. Davis said that does not include bus contractors, to which Dr. Briggs responded, it does not include contractual employees.

Dr. Stauffer said he has one more piece regarding teacher retention, which is that they also have a great teacher induction program that he has asked Dr. Raygor to provide some information on.

Dr. Raygor said, in his previous job, one of the supervisors he oversaw was their supervisor of the new teacher induction program, and that is a program that has run for many years and has evolved over time and has a number of components. He said they have a New Teacher Academy that they offer to all new teachers that is four days prior to the start of the school year and the return of teachers. He clarified, it is an optional program, but most of their teachers, well over 80 percent historically, have attended this. He said they pay them stipend money to attend and they get a lot of training on some of the nuts and bolts, such as their student information system that they have to use for importing grades and so forth, and a lot of support in terms of developing their plan for the opening of school and what their classroom can look like. He said then they bring all new teachers in for two days prior to the veteran teachers coming in, which is contractual as they have those two extra days, but they have a breakfast with leadership and they get time with their content area supervisors and they then return to their building to have time to meet their principal, assistant principal, and administrative team. He said, on the second day they have time to begin working in their classroom and setting things up to make it a real welcoming and engaging place they want it to be for students on the first day.

Dr. Raygor said they also have five fulltime new teacher mentors and 100 percent of their job is supporting the new teachers, so they are out there in the classrooms working with them, co-teaching, co-planning, and doing non-evaluative observations where they can then provide some formative feedback to the teachers. He said, beyond that, they have content area coaches in just about all of their content areas – reading, math, science, social studies, language acquisition, and those coaches, while are not purely dedicated to new teachers, do spend a large portion of their time providing the support they will need because they are going to support the teachers as needed, and obviously those new teachers are going to need a little bit more.

Dr. Raygor said, as Dr. Stauffer mentioned, they have a strong partnership with Salisbury University, and one of those was just indicative last week at their Leadership Academy where they had two faculty at Salisbury University who surveyed their new teachers and found out what they took away from their first year, particularly in support from their building administration and their central office supervisors, and did a session for their leadership sharing that information with them so that they can make plans to better support the new teachers in the future.

Dr. Briggs said the only thing he would add is, in regards to the teacher shortage, he thinks they spoke about it previously, and it is very much real. He said he can say honestly and openly that they are hiring teachers today that he would say ten years ago they would not have hired as the pool is so shallow. He

said those teachers need more and more support, so the supports that Dr. Raygor just explained are even more critical today based upon them hiring novice, what he would almost say non-ready teachers, to which Mr. McCain added, nontraditional. Dr. Briggs said nontraditional pathways coming in with limited student teaching experience and noncertificated working towards their certification, so the supports are very much needed.

Ms. Acle said she appreciates Dr. Briggs' honesty.

Dr. Raygor said they know nationwide there is a teacher shortage, and they know they are not going to recruit themselves out of the shortage, as the pool is just not there, so these retention efforts as they continue to evolve are going to be more and more important to provide support, retain those people, and hopefully then make the need for recruiting drop a bit.

Mr. Holloway said he guesses maybe things will change since they have new leadership, but the complaints he hears from teachers that he interacts with is support from administration. He said the teachers say they have a problem with a student, they send them to the office, and they just send them back and tell the teacher to deal with it. He said they are talking about retention, and he thinks one of the issues is frustration on the teachers' part of not being able to teach because of the chaos going on in the classroom. He clarified, he is just telling them what he has been told, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, he appreciates that, and he thinks that is very real and he believes that sometimes it could be for a number of reasons. He said one is what Mr. Holloway just mentioned, or it could be just that there is a lack of communication where maybe the administrator felt like the teacher needed to do more things on their end at some point and that did not happen, but that communication was not there or that understanding was not there. He said he agrees with Mr. Holloway that they do not want a student who has been sent out of a classroom for misbehavior to just come back in with no explanation and there not be any partnership between the administration and teachers, and that certainly is not something they would expect, and he does not think that is something the vast majority of their administrators would expect either. He said he appreciates the feedback and certainly something they are looking at and continuing to work on is that communication piece.

Mr. McCain said this might sound a little odd, but, when they were talking about the new teachers, is there any financial component from an advisory standpoint communicated with them? He said they have the 403b and the 457, and he always found with his wife being a teacher and these younger teachers she might be mentoring that, because he was a business person, they would always think for some reason that he knew about the 403b and 457, but they would ask him that question, and his thought would always be they are teachers, they are not financial planners. He said he knows the people who administer the plan come in, but he always feels that is a little more selling them on product and not necessarily giving them just good common sense advice and encourage them to take it. He clarified, it is great that they have that option, but he just feels like that would be helpful to younger teachers to be educated on that and the benefits of that.

Dr. Stauffer said, just to make everyone aware, all of their employees for whatever position they are hired for go through a pretty extensive orientation process. He said he mentioned earlier the 7 percent average salary increase for all employees across the board, but they neglected to mention the excellent benefits package that they have including health insurance, retirement, and the availability of 403b plans and other things like that. He said that is all covered in their orientation process and they also

have that Lincoln Financial plan that comes to visit throughout the schools and central office as well to make themselves available for employees.

Ms. Acle said she so appreciates Dr. Briggs' honesty because the only way they are ever going to fix a problem is if they are honest and talk about it, so she really appreciates it. She said what she has heard from teachers who are retiring or getting out of the profession is that they do not want to do the professional development on social and emotional learning. She said she does not know if that is something that is coming down from the State and it has to stay, or if that is something they control at the local level doing some other type of professional development modules.

Dr. Stauffer responded, he is aware of things that are out on social media and he has gotten the questions in the community as well, and social and emotional learning is the new term. He said the older term may be character education or the values calendar for those who were in the school system a long time ago. He said social and emotional learning is essentially taking it to that next level where not only are they talking about the values that are important for a person to have internally and to display, but also the values that are important in how they interact with others. He said they are taught to be respectful and how to act respectfully towards others as well. He said he would have to probably turn this over to Ms. Miles to get more information on that, but he knows that there are questions out there about what social and emotional learning is.

Ms. Acle asked, how is that interpreted, and who interprets it one way and who interprets it another way, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, that gets back to that communication piece as well.

Ms. Miles said she thinks Ms. Acle just nailed it as it is in the interpretation of the terminology. She said there is an embedded part in much of the professional development that is delivered and she will go back to what Mr. Holloway said about the teacher who may be frustrated because a student is sent from class and administration may return them to the class at a point in time. She said part of that whole process is classroom management and student behavior management, and an embedded factor in that is the development and application of social skills of interaction with others of appropriate behaviors, so it may be that a component of that is embedded and someone is classifying it as social and emotional learning. She said she is very interested if at any point in time Ms. Acle has specific information, to which Ms. Acle responded, she does. Ms. Acle said the question is, who is defining appropriate and what is appropriate. Ms. Miles said they work with the Naviance Program and the Second Step Program with Naviance being secondary and Second Step elementary. She said these are very much aligned with the College Career Readiness Standards across the State, so these are very much supported and recommended, and they are under the very official arena of SDL, or whatever terminology may be used, but it ranges from financial literacy to social awareness of self and interacting with others. Ms. Acle said she understands that, but if a teacher is leaving because they do not want to do it, and there are parents leaving the public school system because they do not want their kids in it, it is kind of defeating the purpose. Ms. Miles said she would be interested in knowing more about that because, as Dr. Stauffer said, it may very well be a communication area that they could address even further for clarification.

Dr. Stauffer said he would encourage Ms. Acle to learn more about it, and recently he has done the same thing coming in from the background he had. He said she can go to the Naviance website and look up what social and emotional learning is and the topics they discuss, as well as Second Step and the topics they discuss. He said he thinks what she will find is that many of those topics are things that they would want all of their children and themselves as adults to learn more about and understand. He said,

if there are specific questions, he thinks they can certainly field those and find more information on that to get to the Council, and at the same time it is something he has had questions about as well, so they will work to get more communication out there.

Ms. Acle said she appreciates them being open to conversation because it is the big elephant in the room. She said teachers are leaving, parents do not want their kids in the public schools, and this is where they are right now, so they cannot ignore it. Dr. Stauffer said they will get to his entry plan after a few more topics on the agenda, but he hopes that people would let him know. He said he has been in this system for almost 25 years, and as much as he is out in the community, he has not had anyone come up to him and specifically say that they are leaving the County because they are being required to teach this. He clarified, he does get questions about what social and emotional learning is because, as many things, it has taken on this new title, but character education has been around the educational system from when he was in elementary school at Beaver Run all the way through.

Mr. Cannon asked if they do exit interviews when teachers are leaving, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, yes. Mr. Cannon said he would think that through the exit interview they would know those types of circumstances if the teacher feels they are talking to someone who is distanced and objective enough where it does not come back, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, it is a survey that they are asked to complete, so that is information they get. He clarified, again, he has not seen that, or it has not been brought to his attention.

Career and Technology Education (CTE)

Dr. Briggs passed out a handout and said this agenda item was requested by a Council person, and he does not know who or what specific questions they had. He said they are very blessed to have Mr. Brian Ashby as their CTE Supervisor, and Mr. Ashby is the longest serving Supervisor of CTE in the State. He said Mr. Ashby knows more about CTE than most people have ever known, even in State leadership, and they are very blessed to have him. He said Mr. Ashby is on vacation or he would be here, but working with him he created a one-page cheat sheet to kind of update the Council on where they are with CTE, which he will not read, but he will highlight a couple of things.

Dr. Briggs said they currently have 23 approved MSDE programs, and those programs must be aligned to business and industry needs equaling high demand, high wage and high skill. He said the focus on all of those is certification and licensure so, when the students leave the program, they need them to have a certificate or a license that says they did it and they are ready to go into that career and work, and that is critically important for them.

Dr. Briggs said, in regards to new developments, they are very pleased that their JROTC program is now a part of CTE. He clarified, they had a JROTC program for years, but it has kind of sat in its own silo, and now it is an MSDE-approved CTE completor program.

Dr. Briggs said they have seen pretty steady growth on all of their different programs. He clarified, they remained steady or grew, and he will highlight two programs that have shown the most recent growth, which are computer science and business education, and one of the reasons for that growth is that those opportunities can happen in the home school. He clarified, if they are a Bennett or Mardela student, they do not have to go to Parkside CTE to benefit from the computer science CTE program or the business program, and they have several CTE programs that are taught in the home school.

Mr. Dodd said Dr. Briggs did a good job with the cheat sheet and he glanced through it and may have missed this, but in the past the Council asked questions about one of the programs, especially since Somerset and Worcester do not have it. He then asked if Dr. Briggs knows what he is talking about, to which Dr. Briggs responded, plumbing. Mr. Dodd said yes, that is what he was going to ask about. He then asked what is going on with that, to which Dr. Briggs responded, there is a plumbing component in their HVAC program. He said, again, going back to where he talked about high demand, high wage, and high skill, it also is high interest. He said they have students who are interested in computer science and business education, but unfortunately they did not have students who are interested in plumbing, and they saw those enrollment numbers continually going down. Mr. Dodd asked how they can direct them to go to these programs because it is going to be a lucrative program, to which Dr. Briggs responded, part of that is in the recruitment efforts. He said, just like they recruit teachers and employees, they also recruit students, so Mr. Ashby and his team and Mr. Witte, who is the Assistant Principal for Parkside CTE, go into the middle schools and do intense programming and sharing of information with 7th and 8th graders. He said now that they are hopefully coming out of the COVID situation they have increased that where they are giving students the opportunity to go and visit CTE and see it firsthand and talk to current students, so they are hopeful that it will benefit through that. He said, to be honest, again, some students just do not want to do work, and plumbing is not an easy job, and unfortunately they live in a society where people do not want to work and are looking for an easy way out. Mr. Dodd said he has always been a big fan and big supporter of the CTE program, but it is so important, and he is seeing more and more on social media where people are saying they need to start focusing on these types of programs instead of trying to push everybody to college, and he would love to see everybody go to college. Dr. Briggs said they are definitely headed in that direction.

Dr. Briggs said, skipping down to the Blueprint, in the Blueprint it clearly says that students should achieve college and career readiness by the end of 10th grade and then go into these pathways, one of which includes CTE. He said these pathways are still being developed; however, if at the end of 10th grade it does not look like that student is on a pathway towards high academic achievement with a potential four-year college in their future, a good career pathway might be through the CTE program so that hopefully, again, they are leaving the school system ready to be successful in the community with a license or certificate and ready to work.

Mr. Dodd said it is not really a good idea to make it sound like it is a dumping ground because not everybody wants to go to college, and not everybody is college material, to which Dr. Briggs responded, that is correct.

Mr. Holloway said, about plumbing, it is interesting that three plumbing companies he knows of are generational. He explained, the father owns the company and the son goes into it, and that is kind of the way that works, so sometimes that helps. He said he does not know what the future of that will hold.

Dr. Stauffer said one thing to add to that is they are one of the only school systems in the State that has what they call ATEX, which is advanced tech exploratory. He explained, students as early as 9th grade can do a full semester of four different programs out of the 20+ that are offered, and they will get about a 23-day experience in each program to spend time with that instructor learning that field, and then they will rotate to the next one. He said, from there they can then choose the one that interests them the most, and that is what they will study for the next two and a half years. He said that is something that he is aware is hardly offered at all around the State.

Dr. Stauffer said what Dr. Briggs said about plumbing is correct because he was at Parkside as the principal at the time and they had to make a hard decision because, despite their efforts over many years to increase that enrollment, they were just not able to do that. He said, at that time HVAC was a high interest program, it was something their instructor was able to do, and in fact he would many times almost switch classes or students because some of the components were so similar, so it was very natural for him to bring in that plumbing component where it still is today as those students go through there, so they are learning some of those skills.

Mr. McCain said they keep talking about plumbing, but there is something that is just ironic and was in the Wall Street Journal not too long ago. He said they did an article and the title was "Plumber versus Physician" and it was about who earns the most money. He said right away everyone would think it was the physician, but they looked over their working career at the end who had earned the most money, and they took the average wages that a plumber earns and the average wages of a general practitioner. He said the problem with the physician is they are 32 years old or so before they are actually starting to earn income, and their average debt was \$275,000 in school, where the plumber started earning his income at 18 or 19 years of age, so they had a longer earning period, and in the end the plumber actually earned more income than the general practitioner. He said the whole article just talked about how in education they need to focus on the trades. He clarified, that was the spin of the whole thing, and they just used those as examples, but the trades are good earning potential for students.

Dr. Briggs said the last thing he will point out in regards to CTE is the changes that are coming because of the Blueprint. He said, as with all of their other programs, they report to MSDE and the guidance is coming from MSDE, but CTE now will no longer be under MSDE's guidance. He said now it will be governed by a unit within the Governor's Workforce Development Board and will operate under the oversight of the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB). He clarified, CTE is now being taken out of MSDE and going to be under the oversight of the Governor's Workforce Development Board, which will be overseen by the AIB. He said he thinks the term bureaucracy was used earlier, and he sees more levels of that coming into play.

Ms. Aclé asked if this is a good thing or a bad thing, to which Dr. Briggs responded, that is to be determined. He said he has some apprehension, but they will keep the Council posted.

Mr. Davis asked what the youngest age is that they take students over to CTE so they can see what goes on over there, to which Dr. Briggs responded, normally they do not start until about 7th or 8th grade, although he knows they have worked with some of their 5th grade elementary school students in the past where maybe the student is just not interested in school and is a potential dropout at some point because of their lack of engagement, or they say they are never going to do anything or that they are just going to be a basketball player. He said working with the guidance counselors and teachers and administrators they have done some younger-aged trips with 5th graders.

Mr. Dodd said that goes back to his thought that they are not glamorizing CTE, they are turning it into a dumping ground, or it kind of sounds that way when they are talking about high school dropouts, to which Dr. Briggs responded, not at all. He said it is for the student who does not see the benefits of staying in school. He said they have close to 2,000 students in their CTE programs, and none of those were dumped there, none of them. He said, of the 2,000, probably over 50 percent of them are actually going to a two or four-year college as well, so that is not it at all. He said it is trying to find a way to engage students in their education experience, and if a student is not engaged and they do not want to

be in an algebra class or do not see the benefits of it, they have to find another way to engage them. He said it is just exploring any and all options, whether it is JROTC or CTE, or an apprenticeship model where they just go straight to workforce and actually learn on the job. He said that is an area that he and Dr. Stauffer have talked about an opportunity of growth for them in partnership with some businesses in the community where bypassing CTE altogether and just going to work and learning on the job firsthand is another option as well.

Ms. Miles said she wants to go back to her Secondary Director role and all that has happened in CTE from that point and where they are now. She said they have some very highly competitive programs at CTE. She said a student has to really work hard to be able to be in the program, and the students know that, they know they start early, and they know that they have multiple chances to be able to engage.

Mr. Dodd said he has seen some of those competitions and he wants to use the terminology computer programming where they build the robots, and not everybody can do that.

Mr. Malone said, from a parent's perspective whose three sons went through school, CTE is one of the greatest programs they have going. He said public school has to be all things for everybody, and they have not always been that, but now they have an opportunity to go through CTE and can still go to college, so they can do both, and it is not like it was when he was in school with Vo-Tech. He said, when someone went to Vo-Tech, that was the end and they were coming out to do a career, which is what Mr. Dodd is talking about because then they were not going to college, but these kids have an opportunity to do both. He said what he thinks they need to do, and they are doing it, and Mr. Ashby does it well, but even better is educate the parents of the public school students that CTE is not bad. He said their child might still go to college, but CTE is a great opportunity to learn something, decide what they want to do, decide if college is for them, or both, and then they are going to graduate. He said they want to get their graduation rates up, and that is the fastest way to do that, educate the parents that CTE is not a bad word, it is a great, great opportunity. He clarified, it is not for everybody, but it certainly is a good program for a lot of people, and, as he said, they can still go to college, so it is not a dead-end type thing, to which Mr. Dodd responded, that is his point.

Mr. Cannon said he does not know what the restrictions might be on paying them, but can they actually turn the CTE program into one where they can get paid to work on the job, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, with all of their students who complete a CTE program there are two different avenues. He said there is what they would term apprenticeships, which the former term was workforce development, and then the second term is internships. He said their CTE completers who go through a three-year program do internships, and many of them are paid. He said they are going out on the job for on-the-job training in their senior year and learning that trade each and every day, and it is in communication with their CTE staff who go out and supervise them and check in with them while they are on that job. He said that is one side of it, and the second side of it is apprenticeships. He said he met with Dave Ryan this morning and they talked about things that are going on at the Airport and the importance that their community is going to have for airplane mechanics in the future, which is a perfect apprenticeship for their students. He clarified, that would be separate from CTE. He said they would still have a completer, which is mandated by Maryland where there is an academic completer, a CTE completer, or a completer in what they call apprenticeship where they are actually going out to a job and getting paid and getting a high school credit at the same time.

Mr. Dodd said there is a meme floating around social media and one of the Delegates posted it and he saw it a couple of weeks ago. He said it says normalize sending kids to trade schools after high school without making them feel like they are less than a four-year university kid.

Dr. Briggs responded, he has to shout out to Mr. Ashby and the Parkside CTE again because they have started a signing day. He said, what they traditionally think of signing day is when a student is going to go play football at a university or they are given a full ride, but CTE actually does a signing day for careers. He said, for example, when they get a fulltime job at Chesapeake Ship Building because of their welding certification, they actually have a signing day where the employer comes in, so that is a way of doing exactly what Mr. Dodd said, it is glamorizing or highlighting that, and that is a great example.

Dr. Stauffer said please know that he thinks everyone on this side of the table all want the same thing. He said their high school graduate rate is about 83 percent, but for their students who go into a CTE program and complete that program, their high school graduate rate is over 97 percent, so they know the value of CTE. He said they all want the same things, and they plan on taking a look at how they have been expanding that for many years under the great leadership of Mr. Ashby, and they want to continue to do that. He said, if they run out of space, they will need more buildings and funding to be able to do that, and this is on top of being able to push additional programs into their other high schools. He explained, many of their CTE programs are at Bennett, Mardela, and Wi High as well, such as computer science and business education, so they are trying to be creative in how they do that.

Wicomico Blueprint Coordinator

Dr. Stauffer said roles have changed a little bit, and awhile back he was appointed the Wicomico County Blueprint Coordinator. He said, since he has been appointed the Superintendent of Schools, that role may need to change a little bit because that is going to be a very important piece to their education system as they move forward over the next ten years, which is the length of the Legislation for Blueprint. He said he is advocating and has talked with Dr. Briggs about assuming that role, and Dr. Briggs has been very gracious and interested in doing that. He said his plan is to be able to take that recommendation to the Board of Education in their August meeting and, since it requires joint approval, he would like to bring that to the County Council in the second meeting of August.

Ms. Acle asked if Dr. Stauffer has discussed this with the County Executive, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, yes, he is aware. Ms. Acle said it is a very big role to play in their County Government, so she thinks Dr. Briggs would be excellent for it and she thinks it would be great.

Dr. Briggs said the AIB started meeting one minute and 15 seconds ago, so that is what he will be doing for about five hours this afternoon when he gets back.

Ms. Acle said she was looking on the AIB for people who are appointed in the work groups and there is someone from Talbot on there, but there is no one from Dorchester or Wicomico in any of the groups.

Dr. Stauffer said they will have quite a few members of the Expert Review Teams from their County, which will receive training from the AIB and will also be going around doing the reviews of other school systems and making sure that Legislation is being implemented, which will vastly benefit them from that knowledge and experience in doing that.

Mr. Holloway asked Dr. Stauffer to explain what AIB is, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, it is the Accountability and Implementation Board, which is a new department of Maryland Government and it now is the authority for local school systems regarding Blueprint Legislation. He explained, there is the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), which is generally the umbrella they have always operated under, but now they will actually be operating under three umbrellas, one being MSDE, one being the AIB, and one being the Workforce Development Department for the State of Maryland because they will be working directly with their CTE program. Ms. Acle asked where the elected school board falls in there, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, MSDE.

School Safety Update

Ms. Miles said she wants to follow up from a recent Council meeting where Mr. and Mrs. George Tunis were here from Hardwire and they announced their very generous donation that will support safety in all of their buildings as well as in other Counties in the area. She said they had a meeting with them at the Hardwire location, which is quite impressive, and then submitted just recently their number of shields being requested. She said, if Council remembers, they are basing this on the number of fire extinguishers in each school because the arrangement will be such that the extinguisher and the shield will be located in the same area for access. He said their submission is just over 550 shields, so this is definitely a very generous donation, and more information will be forthcoming. She said they are providing all of the hardware that is needed and they will begin that installation as soon as it is available. She said there will be training for their SROs in the use of the shields as well as an introduction and appropriate training for their school administrative teams and others so that they know what is in their building, what the purpose is, and how it is used.

Ms. Miles said she just wanted to give one other quick update to say their work with their Wicomico County Sheriff and SRO program continues, and they are very much looking forward to having their SROs on their teams again this year. She clarified, they are actually on their teams right now because many of them work in their summer programs. She said they appreciate the support Council provides in that and she wanted to let Council know that it is going in a good direction and the work is continuing.

Mr. Dodd said Ms. Miles mentioned the fire extinguishers and the shields. He then asked how many AEDs they have in the buildings as those are typically mounted on the walls as well, to which Ms. Miles responded, she would have to get him the exact number, but she knows that they are just above the compliant number. She explained, there is a certain number required per number of persons in a building, and they have those and then some in their buildings. Mr. Dodd asked if they have one in most of the schools, to which Ms. Miles responded, more than one in most schools, and in areas such as in their Shipyard at Bennett, in their stadium at Wicomico High School, and in the auditorium at Bennett as well. She said she wishes she could say that they have never had to be used, but fortunately they are there for those few occasions when they have literally been lifesaving tools.

Mr. Holloway said a few weeks ago the Council moved some money around to give the extra million dollars for school safety and hardening of the schools. He then asked if there is a plan for that, to which Ms. Miles responded, at this point she is going to ask for clarification or verification from Dr. Stauffer, but her understanding at this point is that they are still awaiting the guidance from MSDE in terms of how that funding will be managed in terms of an accounting manner. She then asked Dr. Stauffer if that is correct, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, that is correct. He said, when that MOE number was reduced and they originally came to the County, they were the first County in Maryland to make that request to

MSDE to extend the timeline for one-time funding. He said their timeline normally was at the end of March, but they were not notified of the change in MOE until a month after that, so they made the argument that they did not know and that was not fair. He said MSDE obviously understood and agreed that they would be able to extend that deadline, but since then, eleven other Counties have come to the realization that they too are in the same predicament as Wicomico, and MSDE withdrew that and said they would have to talk further with Council and then they would come up with a process. He said they are confident that they will still be able to provide that process for them to move forward, but they are waiting to hear back on what that process exactly will be. He said, as far as the one-time funding goes and the items they are specifically looking at, they have a plan for what that money would go towards to update and provide additional safety and security in their buildings.

Mr. Holloway said that money Council designated does not have anything to do with the maintenance of effort because they kept that in contingency, so it had nothing to do with raising the MOE, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, it will not raise the MOE. He explained, even though Council is in agreement and they are requesting it, MSDE has to approve the one-time funding to be able to move forward.

Ms. Miles said they are ready to go. She clarified, once that approval comes through, Dr. Stauffer referenced already having a plan for the items for purchase, and that listing of items to purchase is part of an active safety plan as they are continuously assessing the safety needs and the safety areas within all of their campuses and all of their buildings and not only taking inventory of what they have, but also planning for how they can continue to enhance and support the safety mechanisms in their buildings, so it is part of a continuous plan.

Mr. Hastings said the shields were mentioned and when he thinks of shields he thinks of a Roman warrior going into battle with a shield, but the fact is it just seems absurd that they have this continued conversation, so he thinks it is important to acknowledge that students should not be having to have shields in their schools. He clarified, that is obviously nothing that any of them around this table or room can particularly do, but the fact that this is even happening is absurd, and he is glad they are continuing to work on the building hardening and that they are actually trying to think through the safety, and he thanks them for that.

Mr. Cannon said he hopes, as far as the million dollars they are talking about, that they can make that happen. He said the higher up that MSDE can get it together, from what they have planned, that will go a long way from what he understands.

Ms. Miles said, when they speak of hardening, there is a lot of softening going on as well, such as teaching people in the buildings how to respond, how to be vigilant, and how to be aware of their surroundings as age appropriate. She said they have a very holistic approach to doing all that is humanly possible to ensure safe environments in all of their schools because, without that, all of these other things can happen.

Mr. Hastings said the one thing he thinks they have learned from Uvalde is that obviously even the folks who are as trained as trained can get and ready to go clearly dropped the ball, so the more they can have folks trained, the better.

Superintendent Entry Plan

Dr. Stauffer said, as he entered into the Superintendent position, there was an entry plan that was created to follow, and it has been posted on the Board of Education website and sent out through social media, and he would encourage the Council and others to take a look at that entry plan. He said it is separated into different areas of the plan. He said first is a welcome and introduction of himself and the background he has and where he comes from. He said the second thing in the entry plan is talking about principle leadership and the fact that they are all leaders. He said everyone in this room is a leader as they all have influence on others and everyone in their organization is a leader in some way. He said, from a bus driver to a food service worker, to a teacher to an instructional assistant, they all have influence over others throughout the day, and how important it is to do that in a way that portrays the values that they know are important for their students each and every day, so that comes first.

Dr. Stauffer said the third part is the community engagement phase where he is spending the first four months this summer and early fall going around and talking to as many organizations as well as community members, which would include students, parents, teachers, leaders within their system, and leaders within their community, as well as business leaders. He said some of them have already seen him in various locations doing that, and he probably should leave well enough alone, Ms. Acle, but he has to go back to that piece that they first started talking about with social and emotional learning. He said so far what he is hearing from community members, and he will continue to engage them and ask questions, is that they need more types of character education in their schools teaching their students about self-awareness, self-worth, dignity, respect, and those kinds of things and the importance of that. He said what they are seeing out in the community and what they hear about in their schools is how important it is for their students to understand what is expected of them and what values they want their students to be able to portray each and every day. He said those are the kinds of things he is hearing, and in moving forward, those are the questions he is asking so that they are aware as well.


Dr. Stauffer said the final phase is just the strategic planning phase. He said, as Dr. Briggs is coming on-board as the Blueprint Coordinator, they know strategic planning is going to be crucial as they move forward. He said they have to develop a County Implementation Plan for Blueprint that gets submitted to MSDE and the AIB in March of 2023, so that plan first must be approved by their Board of Education prior to that, and they have to develop that as they move forward in the late fall and early winter of this coming school year. He said his hope is that the community engagement phase that he will be engaging in between now and the time they start that plan will help inform and guide their work as they move forward. He said he just wanted to update the Council on that and where they are and how they are moving forward.

Mr. Dodd said he wants to congratulate Dr. Stauffer again on his appointment. He then asked if Dr. Stauffer has considered after the first of the year taking the new Council and the new Board Members in vans around to the different schools and different buildings and exposing them to the school system so they can get an understanding of what they do, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, he thinks that is something they can talk about what that would look like if that is an interest from the Council. He said he knows there are a number of Councilmembers who are in their schools from time to time for various events, and they will certainly have at least some new Board Members as they move forward, so he thinks that engagement piece will be important as well.


Mr. Holloway asked about a ribbon cutting for Beaver Run, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, as they know if they drive by there every once in a while, there is a very small portion of the building that is left at this point in time. He said there will be significant site work done in the area of where the old building was so they can get their buses and car riders in on the first day of school. He said their administration is already in the new school, and of course their teachers and students will be in there shortly. He said, once that site work is completed, which is significant as they are creating a bus loop, a car rider drop off, parking, grating, and all of those things out front, they will be planning a ribbon cutting ceremony once they get to that point. Mr. Holloway asked if it will be later in the fall, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, it will probably be sometime around Christmas or just a little after once they get that completed.

Mr. Cannon said he appreciates Dr. Stauffer initially sending out an invitation to everyone to meet with him personally. He said it was very beneficial for him to be able to express his concerns and his interests as well as to learn what Dr. Stauffer's focus is, so he thought it was very beneficial. He said, if any of the other Councilmembers have not had the opportunity yet to take Dr. Stauffer up on that, they should do it as it is a nice one-on-one. He said one of the most beneficial visits he thinks he has ever made to the schools was when he went to the pre-K program and got to see literally hands-on exactly what they are experiencing. He said he would recommend Councilmembers to try to take that up, and he would like to do that again, so would not mind another chance to go out there again however Dr. Stauffer may coordinate that because he thinks that is very important to see how that plays out. Dr. Stauffer responded, absolutely, and he thanks Mr. Cannon for his interest.

There was no further discussion.




John T. Cannon, President, At-Large

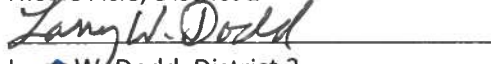


Ernest F. Davis, Vice President, District 1


William R. McCain, At-Large




Nicole Acle, District 2




Larry W. Dodd, District 3



Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator