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BOARDROOM CHATTER

Prepared by Public Information Officer

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The Board Office of Allegany County Public Schools

Superintendent's Report

Recognition of ACPS Retirees – THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

- Presented by Ms. Lori Lepley

“We appreciate all you have done for the school system, the students, and the community of Allegany County and we wish you the best of luck in retirement.”

- Mr. Jeffrey Blank, *Superintendent of Schools*

2025 ACPS Retirees

Michael McGowan, 51 yrs.
Roberta Clarke, 40 yrs.
Karen McCabe, 40 yrs.
Jeff Blank, 37 yrs.
Dr. Kim Green-Kalbaugh, 37 yrs.
Heidi Laupert, 37 yrs.
Robin Border, 35 yrs.
Karen Irons, 34 yrs.
Christine Rephann, 33 yrs.
Stephany Reynard, 33 yrs.
Desiree Witt, 33 yrs.
Edward Cockrum, 32 yrs.
Joseph Johnson, 32 yrs.
Teresa Mathews, 32 yrs.
Lisa Lutton, 31 yrs.
Lynn Muir, 31 yrs.
Kathryn Anderson, 30 yrs.
Debra High, 30 yrs.
Jenifer Lockard, 30 yrs.
Scott VanVlack, 30 yrs.

Todd Canan, 28 yrs.
Sandra Clark, 28 yrs.
John Heinrich, 28 yrs.
April McClay, 27 yrs.
Lisa Paz, 27 yrs.
Kathy Robinson, 27 yrs.
Kathy Beeman, 25 yrs.
Stephanie Maddy, 25 yrs.
Melissa Tarburton, 25 yrs.
Barbie Mallow, 21 yrs.
Darlene Ringler, 21 yrs.
Cherie Robison, 21 yrs.
Deborah Ross, 20 yrs.
Jean Fazenbaker, 20 yrs.
Faith Leasure, 20 yrs.
Janice Raines, 19 yrs.
Teresa Largent, 18 yrs.
Terri Yost, 18 yrs.
Susan Howard, 15 yrs.
Gary Matthews, 15 yrs.

Superintendent's Report cont.

Recognition of Track and Field

- Allegany High School
 - Ryan Wu
 - 1st place - Discus

“Ryan started throwing the shot put and the discus last year. He set a goal for himself this year – to get better. There were times when I would be out at ACM in the evenings and Ryan would be out there throwing. They say, every 10,000 throws, you’re going to get better. And he got better, and he got better, and he got better. As a result, this year, Ryan ended up earning the silver medal in the shot put, with a throw that was 9 feet farther than what he threw last year at the regional meet. In the discus, he ended up winning the gold medal and he threw a total of 48 feet better than he threw last year at the state meet.”

- George Brown, *Coach*



Pictured: Ryan Wu

- Allegany High School
 - Avery Miller
 - 1st place – 800m (1A state record)
 - 1st place – 300m hurdles (1A state record)
 - 1st place – Discus
 - 1st place – Triple Jump
 - 2nd place – Long Jump

“Avery Miller is a once in a generation athlete. I would argue that she is the best athlete to come out of Allegany County. When you look at her overall athletic career, her track and field statistics are rather astounding. She broke the Maryland State record for the most individual titles in Maryland State Track and Field history, with a total of 14. While winning 14 gold medals throughout her four-year career, she did so in eight different events, ranging from the 100, 200, 400, 800, the 330 hurdles, the long jump, the triple jump, and the discus. There are a total of 18 events in track and field and at Allegany High School, she now has eight individual school records and she was also a member of all four of the school setting relay teams.”

- George Brown, *Coach*



Pictured: Avery Miller

- Fort Hill High School
 - Landen Sweitzer
 - 1st place – High Jump

“Landen has been a multisport athlete here at Fort Hill. Played a little bit of football, basketball, and he dabbled in some track and was ultimately very successful in it. A great kid. Very easy to talk to, very polite kid and he’s going to do some great things. In the state tournament, he jumped 6’2, beating the next jumper by two inches to win a state championship.”

- Zack Alkire, *Coach*



Pictured: Landen Sweitzer

Superintendent's Report cont.

Recognition of Track and Field

- Fort Hill High School
 - Maeleigh Plummer
 - 1st place – High Jump
 - 2nd place – Triple Jump
 - 6th place – Long Jump

“Maeleigh has been here before for this particular event. She was able to come back this year and win the outdoor championship. This year, it was very exciting. She won with a jump of 5 foot in a jump off with four other girls. They all had to go up to five foot and she was the only one to clear five foot. It was pretty exciting, to say the least.”

- Zack Alkire, *Coach*

- Mountain Ridge High School
 - Sophia Brill
 - 1st place – 3200m

“Anyone who follows distance running knows that this has been on the verge for a couple of years now. And some strange things have happened over the years to not make that work. This year she ran 11:26 for the two mile. Just an amazing kid, an amazing athlete, and we're blessed to have a really great distance coach.”

- Jarron Hawkins, *Coach*



Pictured: Maeleigh Plummer



Pictured: Sophia Brill

Unfinished Business

Consider Second Reading of Student Schedules and Course Loads Policy

- Approved

Consider Second Reading of Evaluation of Students – Grading Policy

- Approved

Consider Second Reading of Telehealth for Students Policy

- Approved

New Business

Consider Approval of FY 26 Operating Budget

- Approved
 - Increase from anticipated Governor's budget
 - Suggest this increase to reduce the amount of fund balance intended on using
 - 2% increase in county's appropriation
 - Budget is 2.7% higher than last years

Consider Approval of the Special Education Staffing Plan FY 2026

- Approved
 - ACPS has 1533 students receiving special education services which is 19% of the student population. This is an increase of 156 students from the previous school year
 - ACPS attempts to maintain a ratio of 1 special education teacher per every 12-15 students in an inclusive setting; 1 special education teacher per every 6 students in an elementary self-contained setting; and 1 special education teacher for every 10 students in a secondary self-contained setting
 - ACPS has 943 students receiving speech therapy. ACPS attempts to maintain SLP caseloads at approximately 50 students per therapist
 - 105 Special Education Teachers
 - 102 full time Instructional Assistants
 - 63.5 Contractual Instructional Assistants
 - .4 Audiologists
 - 21.2 Speech / Language Pathologists
 - 1 Teacher of Visually Impaired / Deaf Educator
 - 1 Mental Health Counselor
 - 9 School Psychologists
 - 1 Infant and Toddler Coordinator
 - 14.6 Special Education Facilitators
 - 5 Behavior Specialists
 - 1 Non-Public Coordinator
 - 1 Data Manager
 - 4 Instructional Specialists
 - Provides for an additional 5 teaching positions funded through the local budget, an addition of 1 school psychologist position funded through Medical Assistance funds, and the addition of 19 contractual Instructional Assistant positions funded through the local budget.

Consider First Reading of Cell Phone Policy

- Approved

New Business cont.

Consider Regulations and Exhibit Review of Student Schedules and Course Loads Policy

- No changes

Consider Regulations Review of Evaluations of Students – Grading Policy

- No changes

Consider Regulations Review of Grade Point Average Policy

- No changes

Consider Regulations and Exhibit Review of Telehealth For Students Policy

- No changes

Reports of Special or Advisory Committees

Board Member Updates

- Recognition of retirement of Jeffrey Blank, *Superintendent of Schools*

“We, as the board, would like to recognize him for his dedication to ACPS. Mr. Blank has 37 years in ACPS. During that time, he’s worked as a teacher, an assistant principal, has worked in food service, transportation, human resources, and last, but not least, he’s been the superintendent for the past six years. His work experience and what I would call his calm, cool, and collected personality have served ACPS well and helped lead us through many ups and downs the past few years. Mr. Blank, on behalf of the board, we thank you for being such a positive influence on our students and our staff and for your leadership and dedication to ACPS and our community. While we hate to see you go, we really do wish you the best in your retirement and congratulations.”

- Crystal Bender, *Board President*

“It has truly been a pleasure and an honor working with you. I’ve enjoyed it. So, thank you for your service here.”

- Dr. David Bohn, *Board Member*

“It has been a pleasure. You can really tell that you love what you do and you really, really care. And I appreciated that.”

- Lori Lepley, *Board Vice-President*

Reports of Special or Advisory Committees cont.

“When I was first appointed to the board, my girls, who you taught at Braddock, were so excited. They loved you. They said you made math fun, which they didn’t get that from me. So congratulations and good luck.”

- Linda Widmyer, *Board Member*

“I’ve only had the pleasure of working with you for the past few months, but it really has been a pleasure. And to hear the stories that this board has, we are going to miss you tremendously. Thank you so much, Mr. Blank.”

- Max Green, *Board Member*

“It’s been a great experience. If things were easy, everyone would do it. And having the opportunity to lead in this seat, in this community, it’s been a real pleasure.”

- Jeffrey Blank

“I’ve enjoyed my journey as an Allegany County System employee. It’s been a true pleasure being part of such an outstanding system. One of the reasons I loved working for ACPS over the years is because here we work as a team and work together to provide the best education possible for our students. I’ve been the superintendent for six years and I know for a fact that it’s only doable because of my team of family, my team of friends, my team of colleagues, and the support they provide me through this position. I first want to thank my wife Leesa. She’s my rock throughout my career. There was no hesitation when I asked her about me applying for the superintendent position. I can’t say enough about her support and advice. Most importantly, she led her focus on our family, which allowed me to balance work over the years. We’ve been blessed with an outstanding family. Katie and her husband Robin, Amie and her husband Dane, our son Jacob, and our youngest child Salee. All are successful young adults, all of whom are products of ACPS. I thank you for your support, insight, and understanding. I know it is not easy when your dad is the superintendent. So, thank you. I’d like to thank my mom and dad. Mom passed away March 20th. Dad is still with us at the nursing home at Egle. I’d like to thank Lee and Teresa Fiedler. Lee passed away a few years ago. And they’re my father-in-law and mother-in-law, for always believing in me and for their guidance and their wisdom over all the years. The support from my parents and in-laws, all the different conversations, I’ve had with them through our marriage and through my lifetime. And there’s no question, their leadership has certainly helped me, watch them, and learn from them. Leesa and I both are one of five children. I want to thank our siblings and extended family for their unwavering support. Next I want to say thank you to my First English Baptist Church family. I’ve been a lifelong member of FEBC and the support they’ve shown me through the years has been greatly appreciated. Many can’t related to this, but I’ve been fortunate enough to grow up with a group I consider brothers. And to that group, all I can say is ‘thanks guys.’ They know who they are and they know what they mean to me and to each other. Next I need to thank my neighbors, my neighborhood, and community for their constant encouragement. It’s unbelievable how many people you see in your day to day life that come out and sometimes they can just look at you and know you’re thinking about something and all they do is support and encourage.”

“ACPS is successful for many reasons. One of those is the support we get from our county institutional leaders and our county services. Thank you for all your help and guidance through the years. So many different services have helped us, from the health department to police to the fire to all those services. Any time there’s something going on. That’s the best thing about education. All those services will do anything they can do to help students and our staff. When I started my role as Superintendent, I knew that I’d be working with top-notch employees who go above and beyond each and every day. Thank you to each and every one of you, past and present, for the dedication you have for our school system. They’re truly amazing. A special thank you goes to my office staff and my senior staff. Lastly I’d like to say thank you to our attorney and board members. Mike, thanks for all your legal advice and friendship. Linda and Max, in our short time together, I’ve appreciated your input. And Lori, for always given your perspective and insight, very much appreciated. The nice part of the board, you get views from all different angles, and that helps as far as trying to make decisions and moving forward.”

- Jeffrey Blank, *Superintendent of Schools*

Reports of Special or Advisory Committees cont.

“We have a great board here, if you haven’t already figured that out. Crystal, we’ve been through quite a bit during the times as you’ve been board president. Allegany County is fortunate to have such a great leader. Now, I’d be remiss if I didn’t thank two former board members, Dr. Root and Mr. Farrell. Dr. Root has been a mentor to me throughout my entire administrative career, from a teacher at Frostburg State University and from that point on in my master’s classes. He’s always been someone you can lean on. I know many of us do. And Mr. Farrell, he was a huge advocate for Allegany County Public School System and he is greatly missed by all. Last and certainly not least, Dr. Bohn. You’ve been with me from the beginning of my Superintendent career, and I thank you for believing in me. I thank you for trusting me in this position. To those who have reached out to me with emails, cards, handshakes, phone calls, thank you. There’s so many people that have reached out. It’s been overwhelming and much appreciated. People ask me if I plan to move out of Allegany County after retirement and the answer’s easy, no. Allegany County has and always will be my home. I will continue to support and be an advocate for our school system, and will be positive about supporting the solutions. When I see you out, please continue to say hi and let me know how you and your family are doing.”

- Jeffrey Blank, *Superintendent of Schools*

Board Member Updates

- Max Green
 - Celebration at West Side Elementary recognizing their selection as one of just 10 schools nationwide for the “Inspire the Future First” Recognition Program
 - Community Schools Program held event recognizing 14 community school coordinators and community partners