



GLOUCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DIVISION LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING

October 14, 2021 – 8:30 a.m.

Via Zoom

SUPERINTENDENT/DIVISION UPDATES

Dr. Walter Clemons welcomed members and expressed gratitude for all that is being done by all staff during this time.

COUNTY UPDATES

Gloria Williams, Community Engagement and Public Information Manager – Mrs. Williams relayed information from George Bains, Deputy County Administrator, that the Board of Supervisors approved the use of ARPA funding for the expansion of wireless broadband throughout the county.

Community Engagement is now fully staffed and Mrs. Williams is working with the newly implemented Full Service Program at GHS. Currently, six students and families are being assisted through the program. The Gloucester Resource Youth Team (GYRT), consisting of community members from various entities, is working to identify services needed to assist youth in our county. The GCPS Educational Foundation is planning to host an in person 3K/8K on March 26, 2022. The Celebrate Caleb Wellness Grants are currently available, with grants up to \$150 each for a wide range of wellness initiatives.

Dr. Clemons thanked Dr. Stefan Mygas (GHS principal), the GHS staff, and everyone who helped to make homecoming a success. The parade was the largest Dr. Clemons recalls since being in Gloucester. Kudos!

Dr. Clemons discussed the upcoming Joint Board of Supervisors (BOS) and School Board meeting on October 19 and is hopeful conversations with the BOS will go well. Many big things are on the horizon regarding funding. Dr. Clemons added that the upcoming election is very important for our county and schools. Please learn about your candidates and vote if you haven't already done so.

At the October 12 School Board meeting, the School Board approved two early release days (1:30 p.m.) for elementary schools on January 24 and March 31, at the end of the second and third quarters. Dr. Clemons recognizes elementary staff have less planning time than secondary staff and hopes the additional time will be beneficial.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATES

Dr. Chuck Wagner, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services – Dr. Wagner thanked the group for all that is being done during this time, noting how he and Dr. Clemons observed all that is required just to serve lunch in classrooms during a recent visit at Peasley M.S. Staff is working to utilize ESSR grants as efficiently as possible and may have funding for picnic type tables to provide our schools with outdoor seating areas. Umbrellas were suggested, however after discussion discouraged. Jimmy Viars, Grounds Manager, will look into available options for tables. In addition, Mr. Viars suggested the tables be placed on a concrete slab and possibly located under an outdoor shelter. Dr. Wagner suggested tables be our first step, with shelters possibly to follow.

Heather Lucas, Chief Financial Officer – Budget packets should go out the first of November. Mrs. Lucas asked principals and directors to be thinking about requests for next year. The School Board approved an adjustment to the bus driver pay scale, which should help GCPS to be competitive in attracting and maintaining drivers.

Rachel Blankenship, Executive Director of Human Resources & Compliance – Most vacant positions have been filled. There are a few teacher and support staff positions still open, but Mrs. Blankenship anticipates it may be second semester before the teaching positions are filled, after fall college graduates begin seeking employment. The groundskeeper position is still open and if anyone knows of someone who may be interested, please have him/her apply.

Bryan Hartley, Executive Director of Operations – Mr. Hartley indicated the long-range capital plan would be presented to the planning commission tonight, Oct. 14. Included in the plan are HVAC needs, renovations, and school bus replacements. In addition, discussion will occur regarding retrofitting some of the current buses with air conditioning. Mr. Hartley is also hopeful the partnership with the Gloucester County Sheriff's Office will allow us to move forward with stop arm cameras for school buses.

The 2022-23 school calendar will look similar to the 2021-22 calendar, with plans to start before Labor Day and leave a professional day between each quarter. In addition, Mr. Hartley will be proposing and seeking input, on making the last day of each quarter an early dismissal for elementary students as well as the day of the homecoming parade. Winter break may look a little different due to the way Christmas and New Year's fall on the calendar.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Scott Shorland, Construction Manager – Construction to the Achilles bus and parking area has resumed and Mr. Shorland is hopeful it will be completed without interruption. COVID has impacted everything, even materials that were not expected to be delayed, have been, including HVAC equipment. Mr. Shorland indicated work is being done with the county regarding the transportation facility, which he is hopeful will soon begin. The baseball field construction is progressing, with the field mostly cleared.

Lisa Jones, Director of Nursing – Mrs. Jones anticipates flu shots along with COVID boosters to be offered soon and is also scheduling the second dose of the HPV vaccine. Hearing and vision screenings are occurring and plans are in the works to have dental screenings for grades K-6. Mrs. Jones is also working to obtain information on the VISSTA program for COVID testing, as well as an evening clinic once COVID vaccines are approved for students. These shots are time sensitive and would require parental consent.

Dave Miller, Facilities Manager – Mr. Miller is working to repair the large hole in the floor at GHS that has formed due to leaks in the past few months. A remodeling project and repairs are occurring at TCWEC, as well as lighting at Achilles, with Abingdon and Bethel scheduled next to receive lighting. New pumping stations will be installed at Bethel and Petsworth, with work expected to occur over the holiday break. GHS will also be receiving new pumps, during off hours. In addition, Mr. Miller is in the process of updating the legionnaire's plan, LED testing plan, and indoor air quality plan.

Jimmy Viars, Grounds Manager – The GHS football field is being painted today for the last home game. The grounds department is still shorthanded and Mr. Viars thanked everyone for their patience. Please contact him with any grounds issues.

Steve Patton, Director of Food Services – Food Services staff served 92,000 meals in September, which was a record month for GCPS. There will be a federal review in February at Botetourt and Page. Mr. Patton will be communicating with those managers prior to the review. Paper products are currently difficult to obtain and various suppliers are being utilized to maintain inventory. Mr. Patton indicated that Sysco has done a great job working with the Food Service department during this time.

Tanya Deckard, Director of Transportation – Mrs. Deckard noted there have been many challenges with the lack of drivers. Some routes have been split or doubled and athletic runs are a struggle. The Transportation Department tries to notify schools ASAP if a split is needed. “All calls” are also done if buses are running late. The Page/Peasley/GHS athletic route is being driven by a paraprofessional and is later than normal, but this currently is the only way we are able to continue the route. Mrs. Deckard is continuing to encourage coaches to obtain Commercial Drivers’ Licenses (CDLs) if possible. Currently, there are three drivers in the bus driver training program, down from five. If these three complete the requirements, it would leave only two more vacancies to fill. The average driver is currently working 30-45 minutes over the contracted driver hours daily. Mrs. Deckard shared that two deaths have occurred in the transportation department in the past three weeks, as well as the loss of two spouses. Mrs. Deckard appreciates the mission of her staff to the Transportation Department and noted that next week is Transportation Appreciation Week.

Mrs. Deckard is excited about the possibility of school bus arm cameras and hopes GCPS will be able to move forward. In addition, three new seventy-seven passenger buses are being ordered, which will help with the number of drivers needed. Eileen Kersmarki, expressed her appreciation for the drivers at Bethel. Dr. Clemons added that he is thankful for our team.

Jim Rieflin, Director of Technology – Mr. Rieflin thanked everyone for their patience during his transition into the Director of Technology roll. ITRT’s are currently fully staffed with the exception of one who is on maternity leave. Chrome books will be in all grade levels, as well as an additional 120 teacher laptops that will help substitutes and teachers. Kajeets (mifi’s) may be assigned to students, but have a limited range. Mr. Rieflin has requested 150 stronger Kajeet routers. A wireless network is being installed throughout the county to assist areas currently without service. Mr. Rieflin has also requested Kajeets to be installed on buses to allow students to be able to do homework who have long bus rides to sporting events or even some who have up to one hour rides from school. The work order tickets that came in during September have been greatly reduced to a manageable amount. Headphones are being distributed and additional are available if needed.

Dr. Wagner inquired about an option on our phone system that would allow an employee to record a phone conversation if there was a need to do so. Mr. Rieflin indicated that option may be available by the end of the month or sooner.

Craig Smith will be continuing as the United Way Coordinator for GCPS. More details to follow.

OTHER ITEMS SHARED

Dr. Clemons asked if staff had any good news to share and indicated his son is enjoying middle school and thanked Mrs. Hendrix and the Page staff. Mrs. Deckard has secured a new mechanic who has been great. Vehicles have also been updated with the new school logos as they come in for maintenance or detail. Dr. Tingley said as of November 1 all Speech Pathologist positions will be fully staffed.

Wear yellow on Friday, October 22 for Transportation Week and “Big Yellow” for bus drivers in support of safety!

ADJOURNMENT: 9:50 A.M.