



GLOUCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DIVISION LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING

Via Zoom
December 9, 2021
8:30 a.m.

SUPERINTENDENT/DIVISION UPDATES

Dr. Walter Clemons welcomed everyone to the meeting and hoped members had a good Thanksgiving and benefited from the extra day off given to employees. There are six school days remaining prior to winter break and Dr. Clemons encouraged members to make the most of them.

George Bains (Deputy County Administrator) indicated the annual budgeting process had started in the county departments. During the October 19 joint meeting of the School Board and Board of Supervisors (BOS), additional funding was approved to move the GCPS transportation facility forward. In addition, at the December 7 BOS meeting, the BOS approved the pass through federal funding request from the school division. Mr. Bains is hopeful that open broadband will be available on Main Street by the end of the year and additional sites for towers located, to include more on schools' sites. Gloucester County has hired Eric Beach as the new Technology Director.

Gloria Williams (Community Engagement and Public Information Manager) stated volunteers and parents are slowly being allowed back into schools and she was excited to be able to attend the recent Page band concert. Mrs. Williams expressed that it is good to be safe, but back! Community use of facilities for Parks and Recreation as well as full service schools is also going well. Community Engagement will be launching an updated website in a few months and is available to help with needs in the schools. The GCPS Educational Foundation annual race has been scheduled, with a 3K/8K walk/run on March 26 and a virtual 5K option March 5 – 26. More information will be forthcoming.

Dr. Clemons indicated the division has worked to update the GCPS webpage to be more user friendly and thanked Kelli Gabel for efforts to make this happen. A link to the new "Where's the Bus" app is now available on the homepage. Dr. Clemons thanked Mrs. Tanya Deckard (Director of Transportation) for working to make the app available to families. Dr. Clemons welcomed Cathy Balderson who is currently serving in the capacity of acting principal at Peasley Middle School. Dr. Craig Reed, former Peasley principal, has left the division to serve in a central office capacity for Caroline County Public Schools. Katie Litton is also at Peasley M.S. providing support. Budget season starts today with principals meeting with Dr. Clemons and the Executive Leadership Team.

The School Board will meet in the TCWEC auditorium on Tuesday, December 14 at 6:00 p.m. Prior to the meeting, there will be a reception from 4:30 – 5:45 p.m. in the TCWEC cafeteria to honor outgoing School Board members, Anita Parker, Elisa Nelson, and Brenda Mack. Steve Patton, Director of Food Services will be providing refreshments for the reception. Dr. Clemons encouraged members to come out to honor those who have served and is looking forward to ending the remainder of the month on a positive note.

I. EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATES

Balanced Calendar Update – Dr. Chuck Wagner (Assistant Superintendent of Instruction) provided an update from the Balanced Calendar committee, indicating the name change from “Year Round School (YRS)” to “Balanced Calendar” more accurately describes what an actual schedule entails. The committee met on December 2 and will provide an update at the December 14 School Board meeting, which will be the first time the public is hearing about the status since the School Board approved moving forward with the exploratory grant. The committee is exploring the value and feasibility of adopting a non-traditional calendar and plans to provide a recommendation to the School Board no later than the spring of 2022 for possible implementation in 2023-2024. Committee members have visited schools in Hopewell and Chesterfield County that currently implement a balanced calendar model and received positive feedback from staff in those districts. Dr. Wagner discussed possible impacts such as athletics and school buses needing to be retrofitted for air conditioning. In addition, some school kitchens are not air conditioned. Staffing is also a concern with cafeterias and transportation. Community childcare providers have been included in discussions and are supportive. Committee members will be returning to Chesterfield County on January 4 to visit a school during an intersession, and have scheduled additional meetings planned for January 20, March 10, and if needed, April 28. Dr. Wagner plans to involve the community through a variety of ways, to include focus groups, School Board updates, a survey, social media, online announcements, speaking to the Chamber of Commerce, interviewing on WXGM and holding Town Hall meetings. In addition, a new website link will be posted on the GCPS website following the December 14 School Board meeting. Dr. Clemons feels it will be important to have the support of staff and hopes to set up Zooms with our teachers and those who are currently utilizing a balanced calendar. Kristen Heaney, Balanced Calendar committee member, also said it may be more impactful for elementary and secondary teachers to meet separately. Student focus groups were also suggested and will be planned in the next couple of months. In the schools visited, teacher burnout was one area the balanced calendar proved to be beneficial.

Heather Lucas (Chief Financial Officer) indicated budget meetings would begin today (12/9), starting with principals, followed by support departments tomorrow (12/10). Next week, Governor Northam is expected to release his proposed budget for the next biennium. Revenue is up in the state and Mrs. Lucas is hopeful teacher and support staff raises will be a part of the proposed budget. Governor Elect Youngkin’s budget is unknown, but is expected to be supportive of education.

Rachel Blankenship (Executive Director of Human Resources and Compliance) indicated intent notices will be going out in January, and it is important for staff to respond quickly. Some retirement notices have come in for mid-year retirements as well as some who plan to retire at the end of the year. Please encourage staff to submit notices early if they plan to leave. This will help with recruiting for next year.

Bryan Hartley (Executive Director of Operations) indicated that he and Mrs. Deckard followed up with GCSO regarding the bus arm system. Curbing was installed at Achilles this week and paving should be done soon. In addition, the Page baseball field project is progressing. Craig Smith (Operations Coordinator) is working to get rid of surplus furniture/equipment and holding monthly safety meetings. Please send the school safety representative from your building or department to these meetings.

II. DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Lisa Jones (Director of Nursing) stated 83 students ages 5-11, participated in the COVID vaccine clinic offered last week and a second vaccine clinic will be available in January. House Bill 2019 takes effect January 22, which will allow albuterol to be administered to students having respiratory distress. Training will be needed and should begin in January or February. Mrs. Jones also expects several updates from the state on January 4. Dr. Clemons added that masking changes may be included based on conversations from the new Governor, and may require localities to determine if masks will be optional. GCPS will also have three new School Board members beginning in January. OSHA guidelines are being reviewed in Virginia, and may require employers with more than 100 employees to be vaccinated or submit to weekly testing.

Steve Patton (Director of Food Services) indicated all school cafeterias scored well on the Governor's Scorecard. Abingdon was chosen for a bronze award and will be visited by the state Director of Food Services in the near future. GCPS Food Services averaged 5,200 meals per day last month and are currently working to enhance the options at GHS.

Tanya Deckard (Director of Transportation) said inappropriate behaviors on the school buses have increased. On a state and national level, this is occurring and has caused accidents due to the distractions. It is important to have the administrators' support on some of these situations and the ability to remove transportation privileges when needed. The "Where's the Bus" app is available and overall has been great, with a few limitations. GCPS is working with the GCSO on bus stop arm cameras. Once an ordinance is in place, these will be provided at no cost to the division or county. Mrs. Deckard is hopeful for a 2022-2023 implementation. The cameras will take pictures of license plates, drivers and a \$250 fine will be imposed. The company will use those funds to support the service. Upgraded camera systems would be provided for every bus at no cost. GCPS Transportation won first place in the holiday parade, which was a great team building activity. Mrs. Deckard recognizes it was very cold this morning and expressed kudos to all who work the bus loop.

Scott Shorland (Construction Manager) stated there has been significant progress made at Achilles and bus loop paving should begin next week. Thank you to staff, parents and students. Topsoil has been stripped on the Page baseball field and additional activity will soon be occurring. The land disturbance permit for the new Transportation Facility should also be available soon. A lot is going on with GHS involving the architect, staff and administration. A design should be ready for bidding this spring.

David Miller (Facilities Manager) indicated many projects are occurring; however, some materials are delayed. Generators have a five month wait time and other items are taking weeks or months instead of days. Lighting projects are occurring now after hours at Bethel, followed by Abingdon commencing in February. A pump house upgrade will occur at Bethel over winter break and bids are out for waste water pumps. Please keep submitting work orders. Also, student behavior seems to be causing additional vandalism in restrooms this year.

Jimmy Viars (Grounds Manager) indicated the grounds department is focusing on the removal and installation of playgrounds and are currently removing old sections at Botetourt and any trees needing to be removed for the new playgrounds. Other needs will be addressed as soon as possible. Eileen Kersmarki, Bethel principal, asked about the turnaround time between old playground removal and new playgrounds being installed. Mr. Viars estimates it will take 6-8 weeks, indicating after the removal of the old sections, the land needs to be stabilized, which is

requiring the removal of old mulch that won't support the footers and fill dirt being put back in. In addition, weather and the installing contractor's schedule have to be factored in. Mr. Viars added that all materials have been delivered.

Jim Rieflin (Director of Technology) indicated plans are underway for office staff with old computers to receive updated equipment. Please contact Mr. Rieflin if you feel you need additional support on any programs.

Craig Smith (Operations Manager) reminded members that the United Way and GCPS Educational Foundation campaigns will end on December 17. Please promote these in your buildings or departments. The deadline to complete SafeSchools training has been extended to Friday December 10. GCPS has received a grant through VRSA in the amount of \$4,000 and will use the funds to purchase a 500 lb. hydraulic lift cart for moving items throughout the school and a biohazard spill kit. Training is planned for all custodians to have a regular plan for cleaning floors that should enable them to avoid stripping floors during the summer. Dr. Clemons asked DLT members to encourage staff to contribute through United Way or to the Educational Foundation, noting if everyone gives a little, it adds up.

ADJOURNMENT --- 10:02 a.m.