

Regular Meeting Cumberland County Board of Education

April 13, 2021

Superintendent Updates the Board

Dr. Connelly began his comments by thanking everyone for their efforts as CCS students have returned to in-person learning. Thereafter, he shared the following information with Board members:

Observances

The Month of the Military Child (MOMC) is being observed in CCS throughout April, where the district salutes “our smallest heroes -- military children -- acknowledging their sacrifices, courage and resilience.” This year’s theme is “Purple Up for Military Kids.” He thanked the district’s community partners who recently ‘stepped up in a big way’ to support these 13,000+ military-connected students and their families. The NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the Braxton Bragg Chapter of the Association of the United States Army recently donated thousands of books and Gatorade to the students. Dr. Connelly also invited everyone to join in celebration the Month of the Military Child by wearing “Cumberland Purple” attire on April 16, *Purple Up Day* to show our military students that we recognize their tremendous service and sacrifices. He also encouraged people to place purple ribbons outside of their home or place of business.

Child Abuse Prevention Month, also observed across the county in April, is being recognized in CCS. Dr. Connelly said the district recognizes the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect. Through this collaboration, prevention services and supports help protect children and produce thriving families. Everyone plans to observe this important month by wearing blue on Fridays in April.

Plan A Update

Dr. Connelly assured the Board that we successfully transitioned to Plan A this week with approximately 61 percent of CCS students enrolled in the in-person learning option, while 39 percent of them have remained remote learners. He noted that our premier professionals have worked diligently to accommodate the learning options selected by families and continue to provide high-quality learning experiences for our students. The Superintendent said that like many school districts across the state and nation, our schools are navigating through some staffing challenges related to quarantines and resignations. Even so, CCS employees have been resilient and have deployed a variety of strategies that were built into their reopening plans to address these challenges.

Dr. Connelly said that the district has already begun addressing back-to-school plans for the fall. In preparation, the leadership team attended a webinar from DPI to learn more about ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds including the required

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Superintendent
Dr. Marvin Connelly

back-to-school plan that each district must submit as part of the planning process for ESSER III funds.

He said that although we are currently operating under Plan A, the team is working to update our current plan to reflect where the district will be this fall. The team foresees the following changes:

- Dissolving Wellness Wednesdays, which will allow students to attend school for in-person learning five days each week; and
- Eliminating the full-time virtual learning option for students at every school and allowing families who want their child to remain virtual to enroll in one of CCS' Cumberland [Virtual] Academies.

Dr. Connelly said that in accordance with guidance from the state, CCS will post our draft back-to-school plan on our website and invite stakeholders to provide input prior to finalizing it. He added that the district looks forward to leveraging the ESSERS funds, in alignment with the goals in our Strategic Plan, to have 'a great comeback' and address many pressing needs throughout our school system.

2021 Graduation Exercises

Dr. Connelly informed the Board that district administrators have met with high school principals, senior class student leaders and presidents about graduation plans for the Class of 2021. Cumberland County Health Director Dr. Jennifer Green has also reviewed the plan and made several recommendations. He said that currently, we are planning for graduation ceremonies to take place in the Crown Coliseum, adhering to all State COVID-19 guidelines and capacity limitations. Graduations will begin on Friday, May 21 with the Early College High Schools and continue through Friday, May 28 with four Traditional High School ceremonies per day, except on Sunday when there will be only two ceremonies taking place during the early evening hours. In order to comply with the capacity limitations and the six-foot social distancing requirements, each school will conduct multiple graduation sessions by groups.

Memorandums of Agreement Get Board's Support

Members of the Board approved the following Memorandums of Agreement:

- Fayetteville Technical Community College, the Cumberland County Board of Education and Cumberland Polytechnic High School;
- Cooperative Innovative High School Renewal Form (CIHS); and
- Career and College Promise Program (Non-CIHS).

Upcoming School Year Calendars Approved

Cumberland County Schools' (CCS) academic calendars for the 2021-2022 SY and the 2022-2023 SY received approval. Both calendars will soon be posted on CCS' Website.

National Observances Garner Full Support of the Board

The nine-member Board approved observing the month of April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month. According to the proclamation, strides will be made by CCS throughout the month "to join in and increase their [our] participation in efforts to support children and families, thereby preventing child abuse and strengthening the community in which we live."

The Board also approved the 2021 CCS Month of the Military Child (MOMC) Proclamation, which calls on the district to “give support to activities that honor, support, and thank military-connected students.” MOMC will be observed throughout April.

7 Revised Policies Accepted by Board

The following revised policies were approved by the Board:

- 1320/3560 – Title I Parent & Family Engagement
- 1740/4010 – Student & Parent Grievance Procedure
- 1742/5060 – Responding to Complaints
- 1750/7220 – Grievance Procedure for Employees
- 1760/7280 – Prohibition against Retaliation
- 3101 – Dual Enrollment
- 3102 – Online Instruction (First Reading)

Board Recognitions

Betty Musselwhite, the associate superintendent of School Support Services, shared the following recognition with the Board:

2021 NCAGT Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted (6 -12)

Long-time educator Jennifer Senter, who is an AIG Teacher/Consultant at John Griffin Middle School, was recently announced by the North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented (NCAGT) as the 2021 NCAGT Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted for Grades 6-12. The announcement came during the NCAGT’s 46th annual state conference, which was held virtually. Senter was first chosen by her colleagues as Cumberland County Schools’ 2020-2021 Academically/Intellectually Gifted Teacher of the Year and then, she was nominated for the state-level competition by Cumberland County Schools’ AIG Coordinator, Carrie Childers. From there, the NCAGT Board of Directors selected her as the recipient of the state-wide honor based on her past and present contributions and accomplishments in the field of gifted education.

Board Approves Superintendent’s Budget Proposal for FY 2022

Members of the Board voted to accept Dr. Connelly’s *financial plan for student success*, which reaffirms actions outlined in The Cumberland Commitment: Strategic Plan 2024. While district leaders built budget business cases to maximize the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds and to address many of the pressing needs that exist throughout the school system, there is a need for increased funding at the local level. Therefore, the Board agreed to request \$88.1 million in local funding from the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners. This represents an increase of 9.2 percent or \$7.4 million over this year’s appropriation to fund local budget priorities.

The budget request includes allocating significant resources to support students’ academic acceleration and address the social and emotional impact of the pandemic on students’ lives. As a one-to-one learning district where all students have access to a Chromebook, in order to ensure the long-term success of this initiative, the recommended budget includes increasing the number of Technology Services personnel. Moreover, CCS plans to invest in all premier professionals by increasing the local supplement for teachers, assistant principals, principals and classified staff. It has been six years since the last supplement increase, and according to Dr. Connelly, the pandemic magnified the urgent need to recruit and retain top-notch staff.

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The local funding request also includes:

- Hiring additional personnel to support school leaders and enable schools and students to thrive in the aftermath of COVID-19;
- Increasing the number of project managers to address pressing facility needs in the district's aging buildings; and
- Addressing anticipated salary and benefit increases as a result of projected state salary increases.

The district also plans to allocate a significant amount of federal and state funds to support Performance, Accountability, Support, Empowerment (PASE) schools, which are schools designated by the state as low performing.

The Board is required to submit its request to the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners by May 15 for consideration. To learn more about CCS' proposed budget, visit www.budget.ccs.k12.nc.us.

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