

PTA Meeting with Interim Superintendent, Dr. Kay-Wyatt
3/20/23

Dr. Kay-Wyatt's Presentation

- ACPS has 15,400+ students in 18 schools (as of 9/30/21)
 - 110 countries of birth
 - 121 native languages
 - 60% receive free/reduced lunch
 - 33.5% English Learners
- 2025 Equity for All Strategic Plan
- Enhanced student wellness and security measures
 - Focus on SEAL
 - Weapons abatement pilot program at secondary schools
 - Attendance used to go out after the school day ended; now it goes out at the first bell and again at lunch
 - Closed campus at King St and Minnie Howard

1. Are you applying for the permanent Superintendent position?

She declined to answer that.

2. George Mason is working hard to address learning loss from the Covid year (Dragon Club and individual remediation plans). What are the ways the District is addressing it at the elementary level?

- Math
 - Looking to bridge the core content.
 - Assess where students are. Tier 1 is the base.
 - Just in time quick checks
 - Professional learning for math teachers
 - Break differentiation into manageable chunks
 - Two resources: DreamBox and Do the Math
- Language Arts
 - Really Great Reading (K-2)
 - Bookworms (3-5)
 - Assessment system

3. Related to this, the maximum class sizes for each grade appear to be the same as they were before and during the pandemic. Has the District considered reducing the maximum class size numbers in order to help teachers address learning loss? How can we as parents interact with the District to adjust these maximums?

- Classroom Caps
 - K: 22
 - 1: 24
 - 2: 24
 - 3: 26
 - 4: 26

- o 5: 26
- These caps didn't change from before the pandemic because these numbers are pretty low, according to the Superintendent.
- Capacity transfers to stay under these caps
- We know it's best to keep kids in their community but the school board has prioritized these caps.
- **Follow-up Q from parent: What else can be done given that my child can't read and there are others in the class who can't read either?**
 - o Supt mentioned afterschool programs (Dragon Club)
 - o There's a teacher shortage and we're trying to combat that, as well. We'll continue to work on this.
 - o If you're going through our MTSS system, there are Tiers 1, 2, and 3.
- **Follow-up Q from parent: Can we pay our teachers more? Who can make that decision?**
 - o We're doing surveys and compensation studies to retain the teachers we have.
 - o Our comms and finance team are working on videos to explain that the ACPS package is a really good deal.
 - o ACPS pays 80% and 90% of health costs for instructional and support staff costs, respectively.
- **Follow-up Q from parent: We have a concern that we'll be losing two of our teachers.**
 - o There are extra seats in this building so we are right-sizing.
 - o There are a limited number of FTEs.
- **Follow-up Q from parent: There's inconsistency in class sizes from year to year. It gets lumpy. Is there a creative solution for this?**
 - o She liked the term "lumpy" but didn't seem to have a creative solution to offer. She reiterated that they need to adhere to the class caps the school board set.

4. If lowering maximum class size isn't possible, what are some other ways that ACPS or community partners can help our kids, particularly those in the middle that aren't in TAG and don't need extra help to meet minimum requirements?

E.g., - Tutoring services, like Book Buddies?

- Adding an instructional assistant for 1st graders & 2nd graders?

- Extended Learning Opportunities for Tier 2 and 3
- Tutor.com is free but it's only for kids in grades 6 and up

5. The projected enrollment numbers for GM see us losing two more teachers and having larger class sizes in the affected grades. Does the District make the projection methods public and how often are they evaluated to determine if they are still valid methods for making these projections? For example, the actual numbers from this school year exceeded the projected numbers (excluding kindergarten, those projected numbers are based on different factors than prior year enrollment). If that happens again next school year, even by just a few

children, then multiple grades could start the year with numbers that exceed the current maximums.

- Projections are aligned with industry practices
- We review and adjust
- We're seeing more kids come back to ACPS
- School board presentation on 11/28 about the projections; watch the video to learn more

5. We understand that there are two citywide autism classes being moved to George Mason. Why are they being reassigned to George Mason, particularly when the whole school will have to move to the new swing space in late 2024? It seems that two transitions in relatively quick succession might present extra challenges.

- Goal is to optimize instructional and programming opportunities for students
- **Follow-up Q from parent: Where are they coming from?**
 - She's not sure. There will be a presentation on this.

6. In addition to the classroom teachers and aides that will accompany the two autism classrooms, what other resources is the District going to provide to help other support staff (counseling, social worker, etc.) that will be supporting the new classes?

- Professional learning for all GMES staff
- Weekly consultation from specialists

7. How is the District advertising for new positions? Are we going to college job fairs outside of the immediate area? Are we using LinkedIn to broaden our reach?

- 35 external recruiting fairs across East Coast, Mid-Atlantic region, and PR
- Decline in students going into ed schools
- A lot of universities went back to 4 year model rather than accelerated
- We have a transfer fair to go to a different grade level
- We have a career switcher program; these are some of the most passionate teachers and they have real world experience
- Advertise in LinkedIn, Indeed, and Handshake
- There will be a bus driver campaign. Come work in an office with a view.
- **Follow-up Q from parent: How do you address home affordability in ALX for prospective teachers?**
 - It comes up a lot
 - Our strategy is to get people in a school building, to see the strong culture and then they find a way to make it work
 - Some teachers don't live in ALX but commute in
- **Follow-up Q from parent: Do you do exit interviews w/teachers who leave?**
 - Yes, and we get a lot of feedback. Often, it's around pay and we have reported out on that data before. It's also about burnout.
 - We also have a stay survey that asks about intent for the next year. We ask, what can we do to keep you here? Maybe the transfer fair is helpful to them.

8. What is the District doing to attract teachers from neighboring Districts or at the very least, convince teachers to stay in Alexandria instead of moving to, e.g., Fairfax or Arlington?

- 2.63% step increase and an additional 2.5% increased market rate adjustment
- 1.25-4% for the staff that were previously underpaid
- Stay surveys

9. What is your impression of the TAG referral process and are there any changes planned for the future? Some GM parents have expressed frustration that the process seems to place too much emphasis on standardized test results.

- Factors in progress reports, work samples and observations skills and part of our identification process
- ***Follow-up comment from parent: There's been no response after an appeal.***
 - Please follow up with me and I'll get it to the right person. Go to webpage and click on my name.

10. What's the timing for the swing space? Are we still on track?

- There was an update in Dec. and we are sticking to that timeline.
- We can come back to provide an update.
- We help teachers with a packing plan. It's orchestrated down to the box.
- She's not sure if it's 2024 or 2025 when we move.

11. Seeking more clarity on the autism classes

- Two FTEs and any specialists needed
- This will not take away from other FTEs at the school

Additional Qs? Send to Geoff and he will compile them and send to her. Qs about the swing space should be saved for when that meeting happens.

Other PTA business:

Last month's minutes were approved.

There will be three more PTA meetings.

- Mar (3/27) PTA Meeting - BE Smart and gardening committee
- April (4/24) PTA Meeting - Academic coach Ms. Heckel will present on something related to reading
- May (5/22) PTA Meeting - new officers and year-end wrap up; maybe the swing space discussion, too