

EACC Board of Education Comments

November 15, 2022

Delivered by Dawn Pipkin on behalf of EACC President Sean Heyl and the members of EACC

Good afternoon, Dr. Navarro, Members of the Board of Education, CCPS Leaders, and community members,

This is American Education Week and I know that all of you share EACC's commitment to the promise and opportunity that public education provides to the children of this community. To follow through and encourage the promise that public education should be for the children of Charles County we all need to be committed to not "doing what we have always done." We need to examine the structures, the processes, and the priorities we set all the while listening to the voices of the educators, both certificated and support personnel because they are on the front lines doing their best to for children while feeling the weight of the workload and the expectations that just keep increasing day after day, year after year.

I am sure that none of us in this room would disagree with the urgency to give our children the best possible experiences and education that we are able to provide. However, if we don't commit ourselves to examining the workload and the expectations we place on the shoulders of educators, we will fail to retain and recruit the high-quality work force that is necessary to deliver a quality educational experience to our students.

Here are just a sampling of concerns EACC has heard from educators in recent weeks:

"We are being asked to sign up for multiple committees at our work site but are not being given the time to complete this committee work and time isn't provided for committees to meet in the duty day, so this adds more meetings and workload on an already burgeoning plate."

"Our school is running a two-hour early dismissal schedule on a normal school day for "specialized programming" like Pep-Rallies, PBIS events, special activities for students and every time we do that my already limited planning time is shortened or a schedule is created where some staff don't have planning in the schedule, and we have to advocate for making sure everyone has at least the length of the shortened period."

"I have data spread sheets to complete and share with leaders to monitor progress and share information on student performance and this adding it to the spreadsheet is in addition to the regular data I collect through classroom assessments and grading student work that needs to be communicated to parents through progress reports and report cards. Adding this data to a spreadsheet does not help me the lessons planned for interventions or make more engaging lessons."

"I have now been assigned to cover a class for the 20th time this year in time that is not my self-directed planning. Although I realize that we are still working to address the staffing shortage and the need for substitutes having to

provide coverage really impacts our school climate and morale which leads to a vicious cycle of staff taking days for their own mental health.”

“My schedule doesn’t provide transition times between any classes, so I lose minutes of lunch and planning time every day when I take my students to and from the cafeteria or to their special area classes due to this lack of transition times-built in.”

“My school schedule doesn’t allow the full contractual minutes for planning because our periods are less than 45 minutes at the secondary level. Because staff should be on hall duty to support student transitions our school regularly loses planning minutes in order to maintain a safe and orderly environment.”

These excerpts are just a few of the concerns EACC has heard from educators in the last month and has worked with building reps and leaders to address and will continue to do so, but something has to change. Collectively we cannot say we are about teaching and learning and supporting educators and allow these working conditions to continue without being addressed. The time to remove the phrase, “I know you have a lot on your plate, but here is something else that needs to be done,” is now. We need to prioritize the work that directly impacts teaching and learning, and we need to take a hard look at what needs to and will come off the plate. Failing to do so, we continue to feed our patterns of resignation, retirement, and the never-ending hiring cycle that is required to keep our schools fully staffed.

Together, we have the power to address these challenges to make Charles County Public Schools the place that can be proud of its support of educators and the students they serve. CCPS can become that district that reflects on what we are doing and makes changes that will make a difference in our retention numbers. All we have to do is flip the script and stop accepting that just doing more is required and focus on the most important aspect of our work; teaching and learning. We must evaluate what we are committed to taking off the plate in order to support all those who work tirelessly on behalf of students from our building leaders to our classrooms, to central office. The time to make those changes is now.