

Education Committee Report  
Jonathan Edelson & John DiTomasso, Co-chairs

**The committee met at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 2nd, in The Other Barn.**

Special Guests: Ann DeLacy, Vice Chairperson, Atholton/Oakland Mills Cluster Representative, Howard County Board of Education; Dr. Renee Foose, Superintendent, Howard County Public School System (HCPSS)

The meeting started with quick introductions due to time constraints. Mr. Edelson noted the PTA/PTSA of each school but Thunder Hill is represented on the committee (the Oakland Mills HS rep was unable to attend) and Dr. Foose indicated she could help get participation from Thunder Hill.

We recapped the November discussion with Ms. DeLacy regarding the OECD results and the portrayal of OMHS in public releases and discussion. Dr. Foose pointed out that the OECD was one test given on one day where OMHS did not turn out as well as other HCPSS high schools. However, OMHS has above average SAT scores and will soon have other measures such as the new PARCC test that replaces the MSA.

There was brief discussion of use of tests like the MSA as a proxy for the quality of schools in a neighborhood when people are shopping for homes. Dr. Foose agrees the schools in Oakland Mills need to be promoted and is meeting with real estate agents to talk to them about what is happening in schools beyond scores on a single and now retired test. For example, the Gallup measure of hope among TSES students has increased substantially. She wants to help make Oakland Mills a destination community through positive news and more meaningful learning environments like the Elementary School Model (ESM) and the upcoming associate's degree program at OMHS (See November 2 report).

Dr. Foose talked about other tests being implemented to measure progress at younger ages (e.g., MAP). These tests show where each child is in math, reading, and critical thinking with results in easy-to-read reports. These allow teachers to understand each child's progress and needs for more tailored instruction.

Dr. Foose discussed the ESM. Under ESM, students at SFES, TSES, and a few other schools are receiving departmentalized education as well as world language education. These schools are also offering need-based all-day pre-K. However, the longer term vision is to move away from a "poverty model" to expand pre-K to diversify the experience so kids can learn from each other.

A member of the committee raised a concern about the elementary redistricting and its impact on the diversity of local schools. Dr. Foose discussed adequate public facilities requirements as well as the 11 criteria considered during redistricting. She indicated the redistricting was a short-term, imperfect solution to a longer-term problem. Schools in the east are at or above capacity while schools in the west are below capacity. HCPSS cannot get capital funding for more school construction with underutilized facilities. One solution has been to move HCPSS staff to occupy space in underutilized schools.

Several members of the committee also expressed concerns about the amount of recent change in OM schools. For example, OMHS, OMMS, and SFES have welcomed new Principals over the past two years. TSES and SFES started ESM and pre-K just after being redistricted, and SFES underwent a major renovation and construction project.

The discussion wrapped up with an exchange of new ideas. OMHS will start offering an early college program next year. At the end of the program, kids can earn both their high school diploma and an associate's degree. This will begin in 9th grade, so the system is looking at current 8th graders moving up to OMHS for candidates. An assistant principal would be a "dean" of the college, and there could be courses taught through Howard Community College (but inside OMHS) or courses taught by HCPSS teachers with specialized masters degrees.

We also discussed the possibility of International Baccalaureate programs in Howard County and whether OMHS is a possibility. Dr. Foose likes the IB program when implemented properly. If we had such a program in HCPSS high schools, it could only be at one school, so there would be competition for where it would be located. There is also an investment cost of about \$100,000 in professional learning, and Dr. Foose cannot implement it without approval from the Board of Education. Dr. Foose and Mr. DiTomasso pointed to Richard Montgomery HS in Montgomery County as an example of a pure IB program.

In middle schools, Dr. Foose is moving toward more specialized hiring, i.e., specialized certifications. Mr. Edelson asked if such hires would be targeted toward schools demonstrating need, and Dr. Foose responded they would be. Additionally, the world language program will be extended to 6th grade so kids in the ESM do not have a gap in their world language education after 5th grade.

In elementary school, Dr. Foose said ESM is working well so far but will not be expanded until perfected. Standards for the program are very high at SFES and other schools.

More generally, Dr. Foose feels children need an additional hour of education per day. Teachers also need flexibility in their schedules and additional time to provide the best education. Teachers also need more opportunities to become school leaders beyond the traditional path to assistant principal and principal.

The meeting time expired during discussion, but Dr. Foose indicated she would be happy to return for another meeting and enjoyed the discussion.

Next committee meeting: Tuesday, January 6, 6 p.m. at The Other Barn.

### **Other items of note**

Mr. Edelson approached Dr. Foose after the education committee meeting to discuss the "State of our Schools" idea. She was very enthusiastic and asked him to work with her assistant to schedule her time. Mr. Edelson will work with the Oakland Mills Events Coordinator on logistics, and the education committee will add this to its agenda to help plan the content. We are targeting March 2015.

The Howard County Police Department, HCPSS, Columbia Association, Chief of the Howard County Traffic Engineering Division, SFES administration, SFES PTA, and OMCA met to discuss ongoing traffic

and pedestrian concerns at SFES. Representing OMCA were Sandy Cederbaum, Village Manager; Reg Avery, CA Representative; and Jonathan Edelson, OMCA Board.

Police did surveillance at the school during morning drop off. They noted a few violations but found that the root cause of the problem is infrastructure rather than enforcement. Cars are backed up onto the road because there are too many for the carpool loop and parents are looking for alternatives. They did indicate that some have started parking at the Owen Brown Road dead end to use the new crosswalk and pedestrian island.

Since most of SFES's population comes from the north, the discussion focused mainly on improvements to that flow of traffic. There was discussion of reconfiguring the parking lot to better integrate the former black top area and extend the carpool loop, as well as discussion of "double-stacking" cars as they enter the carpool loop to alleviate traffic on the road.

The Village Manager also suggested a bus to bring kids from the northernmost point of the walking area since they once went to TSES very close to their homes but now go to SFES which is considerably farther, but still within the 1 mile walking radius, and requires walking through a commercial area. HCPSS representatives indicated this would be an exception to policy and recommended a study to determine where traffic is coming from and going during both drop off and pickup. SFES administrators, the PTA, and the police support this idea.

Mr. Edelson summarized the meeting in an e-mail to Ms. DeLacy of the Board of Education. She forwarded concerns to the Deputy Superintendent and visited SFES on December 5 to walk the property and have further discussion with the administrators and the PTA President.

OMCA and the SFES PTA will continue pursuing improvements to enhance safety and traffic flow.

On December 8, OMCA will present a Target gift card to the administration at SFES to support the community family adoption program.

On December 11, OMCA will present a donation to the OMHS PTSA.