

Parent Advisory Committee  
3/21/2024

**Dr. Luna-Vedder, Director of Schools, delivered an update on general CMCSS news.**

- The two biggest things on the district's plate right now are the things on your agenda - testing, and the budget.
- With the budget, we are mainly trying to incorporate and determine how to move forward with the things that we used ESSER funds for.
- We are prepping for testing as well, which Dr. Kimmie Sucharski will talk more about.
- We are on the path of a solar eclipse! It is not nearly like it was a few years ago, but we are going to provide glasses so children can see. You are welcome to opt out if you don't want your child to participate in activities related to the solar eclipse.
- Mark your calendars! June 5th is when summer school will begin. Each school should communicate with families about more specific information regarding summer school schedules as the time gets closer.

**Elizabeth Vincent, Director of Continuous Improvement, delivered an overview of the Legislative Liaison position in CMCSS. That full presentation can be found by clicking on [this link](#).**

**Dr. Kimmie Sucharski, Director of Assessment and Accountability, delivered an update on testing dates.**

- Dr. Sucharski walked through the testing that will take place in the spring semester.
  - There are several dates for testing, which include field testing for new test items, the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), among others. For the full list of dates, please review Dr. Sucharski's full presentation at the link below.
- Please be aware of the resource LiveBinder (from the TDOE). It will provide you with practice tests and can give you a good insight as to what the testing environment will look like for your child. Also, you can use those resources to have data in the event you think your child might benefit from an accommodation for paper testing.
- There is also a parent portal for TCAP.
- AP testing also takes place, typically after the TCAP assessments. If we miss those test days for whatever reason, we have to call and make sure those students are excused. We are assigned a makeup day from College Board.
- Dr. Sucharski shared some tips for helping your child be prepared for their tests, such as talking positively about the tests, helping students get plenty of rest the night before, and reading with your child.

**Questions:**

- Can any student test on paper?

- No, we are limited by state law on how students can test. We will argue with the state when we think a student requires an accommodation that they may not otherwise be receiving through an IEP, etc.
- What if we have a student where we don't know if they would test better on paper or not.
  - In that case, we let the IEP team make the decision, and we make sure the student is tested in both environments to assess which mode would be better. Once the IEP team makes that decision, it goes into their accommodations. This is where you might try using LiveBinder.
- Is that kind of accommodation available for students with a 504, or only for an IEP?
  - There are different types of accommodations depending on what that student might have - there are accommodations and accessibility features.
- Is that (paper option) only available for grade 6 and up? Or can 3-5 access that as well?
  - There are accommodation features for all grades.
- Do these dates include makeup days as well?
  - Yes, these date ranges include makeup dates.
- If my student has a medication that they take before a test to help with anxiety, is that something that needs to be in a 504?
  - I'm going to follow up on that question to provide a more thorough answer, but my initial answer is that there should not be any issue for your student to take any required medication before a test.
- If I put out a request to get information from parents on the Facebook groups about what we can do better, there are always complaints about the amount of testing. How much of our typical testing is federal, state, etc.? Is there anything we can do to control or change that?
  - Most of our testing is state mandated - universal screener, TCAP, ACT - so most conversations about the amount of testing in school districts occurs at that level.
  - Benchmarks are something we do as a district - we track our progress on our scope and sequence.
- Why hasn't TCAP counted toward grades?
  - There is a law that allows districts to not count if scores are not received in 5 days. Given the delay the last few years in test scores coming back, we have not included them in final grades for the last few years.
- Do you have a role in the ACT Prep materials?
  - Yes, we shop for the materials and we coordinate test prep. At the schools.
  - I was traveling when the prep happened, and so all we could do was the practice test. Could we have options that would allow them more options if they have to miss school?
    - We will certainly keep that feedback in mind as we look at our materials each year.
- Would it be possible to have an ACT test in 8th grade? (Practice test)?
  - We used to offer that (EXPLORE) but it's not available anymore. We are making some version of that for the Innovative School Pilot Program.

To view Dr. Sucharkski's full presentation, please [click here](#).

**Chris Reneau, Chief Financial Officer, came to share about the budget.**

- Budget is available online ([link here](#))
- We have three main sources of revenue:
  - State funding
  - Local funding
  - Federal funding
- The biggest source of revenue is from the state - that revenue is funded through property taxes, sales tax (7%).
- The new way that schools funding is determined (TISA), originally called the BEP
- TISA is much simpler:
  - Base, weights, direct funding, outcome funding.
  - Every student in the state of Tennessee gets \$6,860
  - There are additional funds if a student is a unique learner, socio-economically disadvantaged, etc.
  - Outcomes are awarded to districts for performing well
  - Direct funds are K-3 literacy, CTE, ACT
- The state only allocated 2.6% more for TISA this year than last year.
- That's important, because we can only do so much with that increase.
- We try to give everyone a step, which is a raise based on your years of service (2%, typically).
- We also try to do a cost of living adjustment on top of that.
- Assuming we did both of those things, our TISA funding is knocked out.
- We have an annual budget of about a half-billion dollars, and about four hundred of that is salary. It is important for you all to know that, because we have to plan so much of our funding to go toward that.
- Local option sales tax makes up most of our local funding.
- With ESSER going away, there are several projects that we are trying to figure out how to fund.
- There are several districts in a lot of trouble because they used ESSER funds for hiring and recurring expenses, but we are not in that position. We have primarily budgeted and accounted for the positions we had through ESSER so no one will get laid off.

**Questions:**

How do you make salary comparisons for teachers?

- We work to meet those parameters by looking at similar districts, especially like districts with similar cost of living.

How are decisions made about facilities projects? I know it's important to keep things equal and I understand why we need new schools, but we've got things like CHS' leaky gym that also need to be kept up. How do those things get prioritized?

- We have got several projects going, but we only get so much from the county to fund ongoing maintenance requests. However, many of those major projects are in the process of being covered!