

**CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2013 – 2014**

MEMBERSHIP¹

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¹ Members are selected on the basis of high school district

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INTRODUCTION

The Board of Education requested that the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) explore current Calvert County Public School (CCPS) substance abuse education programs to determine their adequacy and how the school system can do more to educate our students on substance abuse.

In lieu of our November meeting, the CAC attended the Southern Maryland Region Common Core State Standards Information Session held at Huntingtown High School.

Members of the CAC participated on a number of school system ad hoc committees during the school year.

DISCUSSION

The CAC received various presentations on the topic of substance abuse, programs and services available from school employees, law enforcement, and community organizations.

Topics Presented:

- CCPS Current Substance Abuse Education
- Current Drug Trends in Schools, presented by Sheriff's Office and School Safety Advocates
- Drug activity and trends in the schools and Calvert County presented by the Calvert County State's Attorney
- Community outreach, Project Grad, Mock Crash events, and other programs and services offered by Calvert Alliance Against Substance Abuse (CAASA)
- Local law enforcement liaison officers in schools and their work with school-based Safety Advocates

During our information gathering, we learned that substance abuse education in Calvert County Public Schools begins in Kindergarten. At this level, basic information is given on identifying medications. Education continues through elementary school with discussions on the harmful effects of smoking, avoiding unknown substances, prescription and over-the-counter drugs, illegal drugs, media influence, addiction, and refusal skills. The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E) program is currently offered in Grade 6. Students take part in substance abuse education each year in middle school, focusing on Tobacco (6th grade), Alcohol (7th grade), and Drugs (8th grade). At the high school level, the instruction is lacking. It is only offered during the one semester health class, usually taken in 9th grade. The topic - Drugs of Abuse, Alcohol, and Tobacco - is usually covered in 17 days or less. Students are getting, at best, only 17 class periods of education on Substance Abuse in four years of high school!

Real-life stories of drug and/or alcohol addiction, the problems they cause, and the effects of poor decisions could have a significant impact. Regular presentations could include personal struggles of treatment and counseling, possible jail time, the difficulties of returning to life in their community, finishing education, and trying to get a job. The long term effects of substance abuse are also important.

During meeting discussions, it became evident that a need exists in high school to keep the subject of drug abuse in the forefront of students' attention. It seems that current efforts are sporadic and a program of more frequent reminders would be beneficial. From the presentations made to the CAC, we became aware that drug abuse in the schools, although not epidemic by any means, is an ongoing area of concern. As a result, the topic warrants an active informational program. Suggestions for reminding students to avoid the use of drugs ranged from tasking Art classes with developing posters for display around the schools, to including a brief reminder during morning announcements, to adding notes in the parent newsletters reminding them to dispose of prescription drugs when no longer needed. Another idea is to increase participation in extracurricular activities. This may require re-instituting late buses for students who would otherwise have no transportation.

Peer pressure was one of the strongest factors identified in either encouraging or discouraging the use of drugs. Positive peer pressure against drug use can be very effective. Several counties in Maryland participate in a national peer program called SADD - Students Against Destructive Decisions. Peer pressure can be exerted in formal group settings as well as in informal, personal relationships.

During discussions, members addressed ways to prevent and educate students on substance abuse. Some of the suggestions that came from these discussions are as follows:

- Educate teachers and administrators on how to detect students under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Have procedures in place for the protocol.
- Increase use of drug detecting canines more frequently and during school hours, not just before or after school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More formalized, integrated program at all grade levels encompassing school staff, the county health department, Sheriff's Department, and CAASA (Calvert Alliance Against Substance Abuse) coordinated by Student Services.
2. Regular reinforcement in the high schools of the dangers and pitfalls of substance abuse. This could include a yearly assembly/program on Substance Abuse with a public speaker who can share a real life story. May also include presentations from the State's Attorney and/or law enforcement personnel.
3. Continuing education on Substance Abuse throughout high school (every year). A continuing education program could include a number of initiatives such as school-wide or system-wide poster contests oriented towards drug abuse/awareness, and frequent reminders to students and parents highlighting techniques for identifying and preventing substance abuse.
4. Investigate participation in S.A.D.D. in both middle and high schools

ADDITIONAL PRESENTATIONS

In order to keep abreast of current topics within the school district, the CAC received presentations on:

- School Security
- Revised Weapons Policy
- Beach Elementary School Redistricting
- Twitter and CCPS

- Calvert Middle School Robotics Team
- Superintendent's Budget Report
- AppliTrack – online employment application system
- STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math programs

PARTICIPATION

Ad Hoc Committee Participation

Members of the CAC participated on the following committees:

- School Calendar 2015-2016
- Educational Support Person of the Year
- Teacher of the Year
- Beach Elementary Redistricting
- Weapons Policy and Procedure Review and Revision

Conferences

- Safe and Supportive Schools Conference

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CAC FUTURE STUDY/REVIEW

- Student Leadership Enrichment – Opportunities for a broad range of students
- The Effect of the Common Core Curriculum on students with special needs - to include students with limited English proficiency, IEPs, 504 plans, and who are economically disadvantaged
- Follow up on Common Core implementation and communication, including the next generation implementation of the science curriculum.
- School Safety - Security in Buildings
- Activity Buses for middle and high school to allow more students to get involved in extracurricular activities
- Feasibility of a truant officer(s)
- Feasibility of starting the academic year after Labor Day