



PRESS RELEASE

Prince George's County Public Schools • www.pgcps.org
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DECEMBER 2, 2008
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JACOBS, WATSON ELECTED BY PEERS TO CONTINUE AS CHAIR, VICE CHAIR OF BOARD OF EDUCATION

Prior to yesterday's final monthly meeting of the year, members of the Prince George's County Board of Education re-elected Verjeana M. Jacobs, Esq., and Dr. Ron Watson as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, for 2009. For Jacobs, Watson and the entire Board of Education, 2008 was marked by unprecedented gains in student achievement, community engagement, and a clearly communicated direction for the school district.

"Last year, I promised to work to build consensus, inclusion, and harmony. I promised that I would do everything within my power to ensure that we stay the course – the course of success and achievement for our students, our staff, and our community," said Board Chair Verjeana M. Jacobs, Esq. "Teachers and administrators are doing a remarkable job getting our students where they need to be.

"However, over the last two years, it has been undeniable that some special interest groups would rather criticize and perpetuate negative perceptions of our school district for their own personal gain than celebrate the remarkable success of our students," Jacobs said. "Some have come to rely on dysfunction and failures within our school district. For these individuals, it's no problems, no platform. To these special interest groups, I say it seems inconceivable that you cannot acknowledge the progress of our children.

"Well, our president-elect, Barack Obama, has noticed and mentioned Prince George's County Public Schools during a speech in Ohio," Jacobs added. "Our children are noticing, parents are engaged, and employees are noticing that something good is happening in our public schools. Although we have challenges, we all have much to celebrate as well."

Vice Chair Watson encouraged the community to put to rest the notion that PGCPSS is second from the bottom among school districts in Maryland. PGCPSS is near the top when comparing the fastest rates of improvement. The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) results for Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPSS) have improved for five consecutive years and are currently at their highest levels since the MSA was first administered in 2003.

In fact, the MSA scores for PGCPSS improved at every grade level, in every subgroup, and in every subject tested on the 2008 Maryland School Assessments. A record 14 elementary schools exited the State's list of Schools In Need of Improvement. Three (3) high schools exited School Improvement status in 2008, and PGCPSS met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as a school system.

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During the 2007-2008 school year, 11 elementary schools exited School Improvement and seven (7) high schools met all requirements to exit the State watch list. Over the last two years, 35 schools have exited School Improvement status. PGCPs is now poised to exit Corrective Action by meeting AYP as a school system again in 2009.

Also, the 2009 Maryland State Teacher of the Year, William Thomas of Dr. Henry A. Wise, Jr. High School, represents PGCPs statewide.

"We cannot allow the same old negative remarks to characterize our school district," Dr. Watson said. "We must define ourselves by the progress and achievements being made by our students and teachers. We must also draw like comparisons, like the Schott Foundation report on graduation rates of black males in large urban school districts."

The Schott Foundation's latest state report ranked PGCPs third among large urban school districts with 10,000 or more black male students.

"Prince George's County is a jewel, and I look forward to working for the students and citizens of our county for another year," Watson said.

Over the last year under the leadership of Jacobs and Watson, the Board engaged parents and the community to support student achievement in several new ways:

- Community meetings in every school board district;
- An Anti-Truancy initiative and community walks;
- A comprehensive, school district-wide mentoring program; and
- A new Disability Advisory Issues Board.

Additionally, PGCPs is one of six districts selected by the Center for Reform of School Systems (CRSS) to participate in **Reform Governance in Action (RGA)**, a comprehensive two-year training program for school boards and superintendents that began in May 2007.

As part of its RGA work this year, the Board established and communicated a clear direction for the school district by developing, publishing, and implementing its:

- Core Beliefs and Commitments (Board Policy 0118);
- A Theory of Action entitled Managed Performance/Empowerment (Board Policy 0119);
- A System Oversight policy (Board Policy 0120); and
- A Constituent Services policy (Board Policy 1600).

Other topics covered yesterday in the final Board meeting of 2008 included a public presentation on the state's testing requirements for graduation. As requested by the Board, the Administration provided an update on the current status of students in the Class of 2009, the first senior class that must meet state testing requirements for high school graduation.

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The presentation is available under BoardDocs on the Board of Education Website and included the following key points:

- Overall Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) passing rates by content;
- The status model for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP);
- Passing rates for 2009 graduates;
- Students in jeopardy of not graduating this school year;
- Notification efforts; and
- Alternatives to the High School Assessments (HSAs)

The Board of Education will host a public hearing at **7 p.m. today at Clinton Grove Elementary School** to discuss site selection for a new Clinton area elementary school. The following is a list of other Board activities this month:

- **December 3, 6:30 p.m.** – Mentor Orientation and Match Night in the Board Room at the Sasscer Administration Building in Upper Marlboro;
- **December 8, 6-8 p.m.** – Legislative Meeting in the Board Room;
- **December 10, 7 p.m.** – Second public hearing at Clinton Grove ES to discuss site selection for new Clinton area elementary school;
- **December 12-13, 9 a.m.** – RGA site visit at Hilton Garden Inn in Greenbelt;
- **December 16, 6:30 p.m.** – Board Awards Night at High Point HS;
- **December 17, 5 p.m.** – Board Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Finance and Business (FAB) committee meetings.

The complete Board calendar can be found on the Board of Education Web page at www.pgcps.org.