




BALTIMORE CITY

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Overview and Update:
Augusta Fells Savage Institute
of Visual Arts (AFS)**

April 8, 2021

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer, Baltimore City Public Schools





Background

- City Schools initially identified **irregularities in course scheduling and inconsistencies in enrollment and grading** at AFS during a review of seniors' records at AFS in Summer 2019.
- The concerns were elevated, and an **investigation was launched** in August 2019 and is ongoing. Areas of interest include:
 - Credit recovery programs
 - Attendance
 - Enrollment
 - How were grades awarded
- Since 2019, City Schools has implementing strategies, **including replacing the school's leadership**, to help impacted students.



Timeline: Augusta Fells Savage

- **Summer 2019** – While the investigation was pending, AFS noted other concerns during Summer Graduation, and a small number of students were not allowed to graduate. Those students were given individual action plans.
- **September 2019** – The principal and assistant principal were placed on administrative leave. A managing assistant principal was identified for the remainder of the school year.
- **Spring 2020** – A review of individual student transcripts was conducted for AFS students, starting with seniors. Families received a personalized communication – mailed letters and phone calls - with an update on their progress toward graduation.
 - The letters were sent before summer school so that students could enroll in summer school if necessary.
 - If we identified a concern, we offered parent conferences to discuss a timeline and plan for graduation.
- **Summer 2020** – City Schools appointed an experienced and transformational principal at AFS. Under this new leadership, City Schools continues to review student transcripts and directly contact students' parents with concerns.

Sample communications

1500-A Harlem Avenue
 Baltimore, Maryland 21217
 (410) 396-7701 Phone

July 20, 2020

To the Parent/Guardian of: **REDACTED**

This letter is to inform you of your child's academic status. Please be mindful that students are required to have a minimum of **21 specific credits**, complete a minimum of **75 service-learning hours** and successfully meet the minimum requirement for **state assessments**. If a graduation required course is failed, he/she must retake the course in summer school or through a credit recovery program such as APEX to earn the credit. Please see below the courses that **all students** must pass to receive a Maryland State Diploma. If your child passed the course and earned a credit, you would see the number 1 marked beside the course. If the course title does not have the number 1 and is blank, that means your child does not have a credit for that course. It also means that it is imperative that your child pass the course and earn a credit when the course is placed on his/her schedule. Failure to do so could affect your child graduating on time and with his/her correct cohort/class.

21 Required Graduation Credits- You currently have XX.

English I- 1	Algebra I-	Biology-	US History-
English II-	Geometry-	Lab Science II -	Am. Government-
English III-	Algebra II-	Lab Science III -	World History-
English IV -	4 th Math-	Technology-	Foreign Language I-
Fine Art- 1	PE (.5 credit)-	Elective II -	Foreign Language II-
Elective I -	Health (.5 credit)- .5	CTE credits-	Extra electives-

***** You must pass the classes listed above to obtain a Maryland State Diploma*****

We are here to support your child in completing the remaining graduation credits. Please schedule an appointment to meet with your child's school counselor to discuss his/her graduation status. During the meeting you will receive the most recent state assessment scores, remaining service-learning hours needed and important information regarding your child's college and/or career goals. If you have any questions during the summer, I can be reached via email or by phone at 667.217.5179.

Sincerely,

Kiwana Floyd
 Professional School Counselor
KL.Terry@bcps.k12.md.us

0430 Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visua
 1500 Harlem Avenue
 Baltimore, MD 21217
 (410)396-7701

Report generated:
 01/25/2021

Student #vvvv
 Grade: vv
 Birthdate: vv-vv-vvvv

Parent/Guardian of: L?KC
 ?BBPCQQ
 Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The Compulsory Attendance Law of the State of Maryland requires that every child between the ages of 5 and 18 shall attend a public school regularly during the entire school year unless otherwise enrolled in private school or an approved home instruction program. It is the parent's duty to ensure that children are in school regularly and receive instruction as required. Children must maintain daily, punctual attendance. Parents/guardians are responsible for providing a signed, written statement accounting for the reason and date(s) of absence. Because your child's attendance is a serious matter, failure to respond to this letter can result in possible action directed against you including but not limited to a misdemeanor charge in District Court.

Current attendance records at 0430 Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visua:

Term 1		Term 2		Term 3		Term 4		Total	
Absent	Tardy	Absent	Tardy	Absent	Tardy	Absent	Tardy	Absent	Tardy
29	0	42	0	0	0	0	0	71	0

Baltimore City Public Schools is dedicated to ensuring that all students maintain good attendance, earn high school diplomas, and are successful in life once they graduate. We are more than willing to work with you on improving your child's attendance and recommend:

- Scheduling a conference with your child's attendance monitor to verify the type of absence, excused or unexcused
- Scheduling a conference with your teacher, an administrator, social worker, health professional or psychologist
- Requesting a Student Support Team meeting for support services and interventions
- Attending an IEP Team meeting to discuss services available for students with disabilities
- Contacting the Office of Student Conduct and Attendance for additional resources and community programs

While we understand that there may be times when your child needs to miss school, it is still your responsibility to ensure he/she is in school on time every day and to inform the school of the reason for your child's absence. Please note that virtual online attendance is mandated during COVID-19. If you are experiencing problems with your login, it is your responsibility to contact your school and receive the supports needed. 0430 Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visua **is committed to making sure your child succeeds in school, and coming to school every day is the first step toward achieving that success. For assistance please contact the Attendance Monitor at (410)396-7701.**

Sincerely,

Kamala Carnes,
 Principal
KHiller@bcps.k12.md.us

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 SCHOOL

Background: Media misnomers

- **High school students must earn the required number of credits to be promoted to the next grade level**
 - Per Board Policy IKEA-RA, students may not be promoted to the next course or grade level without the proper credits. Every year City Schools reviews student grade levels to ensure correct placement of students.
- **Students are not allowed to take certain advanced courses without passing the pre-requisite**
 - Example: Algebra I must be completed before Algebra II; foreign languages must be taken sequentially
 - English III can be scheduled before or concurrently with English IV
- **The “ranked 61 of 120” narrative is false and ignores context**
 - A ninth-grade cohort is comprised on both new students and students repeating the grade.
 - If a student is repeating 9th grade, he will have a GPA. However, that student's GPA would be compared to incoming students that do not have a GPA.
 - Depending on when the transcript is pulled, the repeating student would have an artificially-high class rank compared to new 9th graders that have yet to earn a GPA.

Budget is unrelated

- **City Schools does not have the 4th highest per pupil spending in the country**
 - The “4th highest” claim comes from 2015 census data that looks at only 100 large school districts by enrollment. There are more than 13,000 school districts in the nation; Baltimore ranks at about 2,400 in per-pupil spending in the overall group.
 - In an examination of the disparities in local funding between high- and low-income districts, the **Urban Institute** ranked Maryland among the worst nationally (42 out of 50) for providing higher amounts of funding to non-poor students, with fewer dollars being allocated to low-income students.
 - By the state’s own analysis, City Schools should have received **\$342** million more each year under the current formula.
 - **Baltimore’s per-pupil funding is lower** than the average in all of Alaska, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia.



On Track To Graduate initiative

City Schools has received a five-year, \$12.2 million grant from the from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

This grant will support the district's efforts to help first-time 9th graders stay on track to graduate.

- 9th grade is a critical period when lagging academically can impact a student's likelihood of graduating.
- **Focuses on the “ABCs” -- attendance, behavior, and core course performance -- is highly correlated with high school graduation.**
- Train teachers to better connect with students; use data to identify challenges to student success, and track progress as new ideas are implemented.
- 9th-grade students will feel more connected and heard in school, have more robust relationships with their teachers, and more access to the resources and programming they need.



9th grade promotion rates increase

**Ninth grade promotion
increased from
67.5 to 75.2 percent
over two years**

- Since SY 2016-17, 9th grade students have the lowest promotion rate of any grade level.
- To address the low ninth grade promotion rate and reflect current research, City Schools has started a 9th grade initiative, **On Track to Graduate**.
- In April 2017, City Schools revised the number and types of credits needed to be promoted at each high school grade level. **For 9th grade students, the requirement for promotion increased from four credits to five credits.**
- The intent of this policy was to help schools identify and inform students earlier in high school if they were not on track to graduate.



Dual enrollment

- **The number of students in dual enrollment increased from 345 in SY 2017-18 to 845 in SY 2020-21.**
- We currently have partnerships with BCCC, University of Baltimore, and Bard College.
- The Bard courses included “The History of Black Baltimore” and “The Big Sick: Global History of Disease and Medicine”

AP Update

3,164 unique students enrolled in AP courses SY20-21

Category	2016 - 2017	2017 -2018	2018 - 2019	2019 -2020	2020 -2021
Total # of Sections	125	127	139	165	231
Total # of Seats	2,644	2,931	3,192	3,812	4,911
Total # of Schools	25	24	22	28	28 + 1PTECH site
Total # of AP Teachers	72	86	84	105	150

2015 - 2019 “pass rate” = 31.1%
 2020 “pass rate” = 38%
 2015 - 2019 average score = 2.1
 2020 average score = 2.3

Prior to 2019, <12 teachers were formally trained by College Board annually

2019 50+ teachers formally trained by College Board
 2020 90+ teachers formally trained by College Board



College and Career Readiness

- Our Career Readiness Strategic Plan was developed over several years and recently shared with the board. This plan will align our Career and Technical Education programs with training that leads to high skill, high wage jobs. It will increase the number of CTE seats in the city from about 6,000 to 9,000.
- Our work-based learning team is developing partnerships with business around the city, building out career exposure, internship, apprenticeship, and work-study opportunities for our students.
 - Carver House – a partnership with MICA, Carver students, teachers, and alumni, and business partners to rebuild a vacant home across the street from the school. We will continue to develop programs like this through community and business partnerships.
- We continue to support our students with the college process, including starting a fall and spring School Day SAT in 2017-18, supporting college and financial aid application completion through citywide partnerships.

Individualized student plans

- Plan2BMore initiative
- Ensure that students get the opportunity to speak with an adult at least 2 times a year about their postsecondary plans and get support.
- Digital plan is being piloted by 5 schools.
- Focuses on grades 6-12.

Pilot schools

- Franklin Square
- Elementary/ Middle Alternative program
- Baltimore Design School
- Frederick Douglas High School
- Paul Laurence Dunbar High School
- Renaissance Academy
- Walter P. Carter Middle School
- Forest Park High School

Postsecondary Support

Grads2Careers

Matches recent City Schools graduates with workforce training programs that lead to jobs. **Served over 400 graduates as of November 2020.** Partnership with Baltimore's Promise and Mayor's Office of Employment Development

Navigator Center

Helps graduates who haven't found their next college or career step yet. Recent graduates can get personalized guidance and support toward their post-high school goals.

Make an appointment with our experts!

Join us for our inaugural year! Experts are available for weekly appointments or virtual drop-in hours at the following times:

- **Tuesdays:** 12pm - 6pm
- **Wednesdays:** 12pm - 4pm
- **Saturdays:** 10am - 2pm

Select an appointment by clicking on the button below. Please select the area of support most relevant to your needs.



Submit a College Application

Schedule an appointment

College Transition Help

Schedule an appointment

Financial Aid & Bill Pay

Schedule an appointment

Career Training & Workforce Development

Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

Military Inquiry & Enrollment

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Transcripts and GPAs

Help parents and families better understand how high school students are promoted, how GPAs are calculated, and how to get help.

- Current contacts with parents and community commentary indicate challenges in understanding the mechanics of these processes.
- High school students must earn 21 credits to graduate, and are only promoted when they earn the minimum credits required for a grade level
- **Reviewing potential changes to the student transcript to help families better understand GPA and class rank. Explore ways to better share this information with parents, especially those with limited access to technology.**
- Emphasize that a class rank listed on a transcript is only a snapshot at the time a transcript is issued.



Attendance and Truancy

Our mission is to promote attendance and address chronic absenteeism more broadly, with truancy measures as a last result.

We have added a second staff member in our attendance office to better assist families.

- The school calls the family to understand any issues. Outreach may also occur through emails, text messages, and sometimes social media when phone calls fail.
- If these outreach efforts fail, a home visit should be conducted to check on the student and arrange for a follow-up meeting with the school.
- If the absences continue, the school sends a letter to the family to notify the number of school days missed and attempt to set up a meeting with a school representative.
- If City Schools determines that the school has made every effort to work with the family but that the student has continued accruing unexcused absences, charges will be filed against the parent or guardian in district court.

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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