



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Havre de Grace drama production changes slated

Community members, health professionals, and school administrators collaborate for change

The Havre de Grace High School community will come together to implement an action plan developed to make necessary changes to the drama production entitled "Drama Therapy." After a concerned group of parents and teachers brought forth several issues regarding the drama club production, the action plan was developed and shared with the community to begin implementation.

The annual "Drama Therapy" production, now in its fourth season, grew this year from an evening production to include an assembly-like presentation during the school day. Concerns were raised regarding the process that led to the school-wide viewing of the production. In addition, the appropriate nature of the content, the degree of counseling service or direction provided, and the nature of the "pre-" and "post-" instructional activities were cited as potentially problematic.

The action plan will facilitate improvement of the production review process and will allow the community to collaborate for change. A committee of key stakeholders, including administrators, mental health professionals, teachers, parents, and community members, is being formed to execute the action plan.

Both the Harford County Public School system and Havre de Grace High School have recognized and accepted responsibility for errors in judgment and oversight in validating the materials. Policies and procedures will be reviewed, reinforced, and enhanced as a part of the committee's work.

Parents and community members came out on both sides of the issue. The Board of Education of Harford County and Superintendent Robert M. Tomback ask the community to work collaboratively and set differences aside in order to focus on the facts and restore the calm which will allow the rebuilding process to move forward for the benefit of the students, the school, and the community.

"We understand parents and teachers feel passionately on both sides of this debate," said Board President Mark M. Wolkow. "It is time to come together and work toward a solution that will not only benefit the students in Havre de Grace, but better serve all students in Harford County."

Recently, media outlets reported a statement made by State Delegate Rick Impallaria (District 7) which called for the immediate termination of Havre de Grace High School Principal Patricia Walling and the drama teachers responsible for the "Drama Therapy" production. In addition, he suggested that criminal charges be sought. While acknowledging the need for improved processes and communications, the Board of Education and the Superintendent reaffirmed their full confidence in the leadership abilities of Principal Walling and the competencies of the drama teacher, Mr. Mark Cummins.

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Harford County Public Schools

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“The Board of Education and I support Mrs. Walling, Mr. Cummins, and the drama teachers of Havre de Grace High with great conviction, we are certain that their dedication to students will help pull the Havre de Grace community together to the greater benefit of the students and the school,” stated Superintendent Tomback.

The committee will convene in March and will work collaboratively with the School Improvement Team in order to complete its work by June, 2010. While the “Drama Therapy” program will no longer be implemented in its current format, the work of this committee will determine the nature of changes and the instructional value of future productions. The work of this committee will also be reviewed by the Board and Superintendent for potential application to other assemblies and as a possible model for system procedures and protocols.

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