

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION AD HOC COMMITTEE**

November 16, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. with the following Board members and support staff present: Shirley Brandman (chair), Sharon Cox, Laura Steinberg, and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Staff present: Carey Wright, Gwen Mason, Judy Pattik, Holli Swann, and Steve Bedford.

MINUTES

The minutes from October 19, 2007, were approved, as amended.

ALIGNMENT OF GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFFING

Based on the Special Education Staffing Plan and input from the community, the committee continued to be interested in the development of strategies to allocate staff to schools, especially with least restrictive environment (LRE). The committee wanted to discuss this topic because there was concern among parents about staffing and the homeroom head count when it is above class-size guidelines.

Staff explained that there is a misconception about staffing, especially in the elementary schools. In secondary schools, there appears to be no class-size problem because the general and special education students are not counted separately. Furthermore, staff is allocated in tenths based on the students enrolled in specific classes.

In the past, one teacher would be added to an elementary school's staff if class size was over guidelines by one student. However, staff has come to realize that the students are grouped during the day and those groups do not exceed the homeroom enrollment. Therefore, elementary schools were over class-size guidelines on paper only based on homeroom count. When instruction begins, the class size goes down.

With the new staffing formula, the staffing is automatic and built into the budget. In the future, there will not be a need for principals to request additional staff. However, there is still a need for conversations with elementary school principals on how to shift staff for flexibility in instruction since this is a new way to utilize human resources.

Action: In February, the Office of School Performance will communicate the staffing plan to principals and the community.

HOURS-BASED STAFFING

Staff reported that there were a number of activities to assure success for those schools participating in the pilot. All of the pilot schools are monitored and supported with numerous on-site visits and a monitoring tool is being developed. Core content areas

are in place with interventions to assure academic achievement. Professional development is in place, staff is working with principals, and staffing is monitored.

Staff stated that there are 38 initiatives with project teams, and hours-based staffing is one of those teams. The team is developing a tool kit for the new schools to design a way for schools to get ready for hours-based staffing. Using special education teachers throughout the school is an effective way to utilize staff.

The committee thought there was a need for the Office of School Performance to know the issues in hours-based staffing. The committee was interested in the timeline for complete implementation and evaluation across the school system. Since there are very few requests for additional staffing with hours-based schools, the committee thought it would be beneficial to compare requests for staffing with non-hours-based schools. Staff commented that it is not added staffing, but how the principals utilize the staff assigned to the school. Staff stated that since the feedback is fabulous, they would like to move to seventh grade, but professional development must be mandatory.

The committee thought staff should communicate the success with hours-based staffing. Staff identified the challenges and developed a plan to address those challenges. It helps to build confidence with the parents and community when they know that staff is willing to change to a model that produces teaching and learning. The committee was anxious to see the monitoring tool developed by the project team.

Action: Return to the committee with a timeline and monitoring tool.

SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT AS REFLECTED IN CIP – APPENDIX B

The committee asked to review the above topic because it appeared to the community that there was a plan for Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD) programs in the schools. Staff explained that in the past the level of services defined the placement of the student either in their home school or a program in another school. With the LRE model, eventually all students will be educated in their home school with the IEP driving the instruction and services.

The committee thought it was important for community superintendents and principals to explain to parents how students receive services and instruction. Staff remarked that there is a need to think services and forget the little boxes of special education. Of course, there are some students that need too much support to be educated in their home school, but LAD students will be successful in their home school provided there is staff and supports.

The committee pointed out that this was a trust issue with parents. Committee members have heard stories about the teacher and principal not being aware of IEPs. What is being done to assure parents that the IEPs are being fulfilled? Staff explained that it is imperative that the staff works through the IEP, but in the home school there are content teachers to provide academic instruction to students. The special

education teachers work with the general education teachers to provide academics and services. Again, the committee thought there was a need to provide good communication to outline the services available and provided at the home school. The communication should be that the whole system is providing education services that are developmentally appropriate, and there is a strategy for delivering instruction to all students. Furthermore, there is a need to work with advocates in the community to educate them to build trust through models that work. The committee asked if the new model costs more, and staff reassured them that educating a student in the home school does not cost more.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUSPENSION DATA

This item was delayed until another meeting. Mr. Zagami will be invited to attend the meeting.

Action: Schedule item and invite Mr. Zagami.

TRANSITION OF STUDENTS – SECONDARY LEARNING CENTERS

Staff reported that there have been some added supports, adjustment of schedules, and after school activities. Staff stated that there will be a full report in two weeks.

Action: Provide report.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS AND FOLLOWUPS

1. Communicate with parents and principals on staffing
2. Return to the committee with a timeline for hours-based staffing
3. Provide report on Learning Centers

WORK PLAN

1. Review of Special Education Suspension Data (Report of September 19, 2007)
2. Collaboration formula for staffing from OSP and OSESS
3. Develop committee's charge and name
4. Pending evaluations (draft memorandum and schedule for committee)
5. Update committee on UDL as appropriate

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.