

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL POPULATIONS

March 31, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 p.m. with the following Board members and Board support staff present: Shirley Brandman (chair), Laura Berthiaume, Phil Kauffman, Roland Ikheloa, and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Staff and invited guests: Michael Cohen, Candace Kattar, Frieda Lacey, Erick Lang, Felicia Lanham-Tarason, Susan Maina, Chrisandra Richardson, Stacy Scott, Steve Simon, Diego Uriburo, Lori-Christina Webb, Karen Woodson, and Carey Wright.

Minutes

The minutes from January 21, 2009, were approved, as amended.

Students Engaged in Pathways to Achievement Program (SEPA)

Staff explained that this career-based instructional program is for Spanish-speaking high school ESOL students who have experienced interrupted or limited formal education. Due to significant gaps in schooling and lack of graduation requirements, these students are eligible for SEPA from age 18 (by the end of their first year in the program) to 21. SEPA provides alternative instructional pathways that allows students to continue their education while preparing for work with critical literacy and vocational skills. During the first year, students learn English through a career exploration curriculum, Spanish Literacy for Native Speakers, math, and one career path in nail technology, construction, restaurant management, or automotive technology. At the present time, there are slots for 30 students.

In a discussion between the committee and staff, it was learned that

1. students are sought who fit the criteria
2. there are attendance issues with a high mobility rate
3. students come to the program with many social and emotional issues
4. the program completion rate is low (3 – 4 students last year)
5. parent community coordinators and school counselors are essential to the students and program
6. the hours of the program are being reviewed to provide flexibility for working students
7. the academic classes are differentiated depending on the student's ability
8. the program is aimed at preventing drop outs and giving students hope for the future
9. 30 slots are available per year, but the program will be expanded to provide a continuum of services
10. students and families have been surveyed to determine interest and need
11. there is an ongoing work group to monitor student progress

12. there will be an evaluation to determine if the program is making a difference

ACTION: If needed, the Board will support outreach through flyers or handouts. The committee will meet with SEPA staff after the evaluation has been shared with the Board.

Review of Briefs on ESOL Education

Staff presented a PowerPoint to the committee on:

1. Profile of Title I schools
2. Accountability for LEP
3. Enhanced ESOL staffing
4. 2008 ESOL and non-ESOL teacher surveys and results

There was a discussion on the exit criteria. Since there are no time limits to ESOL instruction, the exit criteria is essential. The state is developing a single data point to determine proficiency, but staff is advocating multiple data points since MCPS has a standards-based ESOL program with built in assessments. The committee agreed that the Board should work with staff to advocate for more than one exit criteria since MCPS serves more ESOL students than other districts.

The committee asked questions about Title I stimulus funds, principal allocations, and data collecting. Staff commented that data collection is ongoing and essential for decision making at the school.

The committee addressed the extra staffing for ESOL and wanted to know what the system had learned. Staff replied that the ESOL support teacher is used for reading and math. Staff thought it would be helpful to examine high performing schools and do case studies to determine the best practices for replication.

There was interest in the "pull-out" time and whether students would lose ESOL time as well as instruction time. Has staff considered an extended school day? Staff explained that Title I schools always have the option of an extended day. Furthermore, there are various ways for ESOL instruction to occur without pulling a student from another class.

The staff development of ESOL instructors have utilized volunteers to work on the web through a designated site. Also, ESOL teachers can work with non-ESOL teachers to collaborate with scheduling and the pace of instruction. Central office specialists are always available to help schools work on an effective program.

ACTION: The Committee and Board will work with staff to help advocate for multiple exit criteria. The Committee will ask the Strategic Planning Committee to review data points for exited ESOL students. The Committee

was interested in future ESOL research. ESOL staff will update the Committee on what needs to be done to meet students' needs.

Project Identity: Changing Latino Student Demographics

Identity staff made a presentation that included the results of a needs assessment done in 2006. Topics covered included:

1. time living in the United States
2. transitory nature of the population
3. socio-economic indicators
4. perception of safety
5. exposure to gangs
6. school connectedness
7. prosocial activities
8. family factors
9. parent supervision
10. individual factors
11. future expectations
12. drop out rates among Latino students

Discussion focused on the need to work effectively across agency lines to meet the needs of these students. The county executive has asked IDENTITY to chair a county-wide Task Force focused on addressing the safety and well being (academic and social) of Latino students.

ACTION: The Committee asked IDENTITY to share information about the Task Force as it becomes available so that the Committee can recommend and support MCPS participation. The Committee also agreed to facilitate work with Food Services, Communications and the Diversity Unit to encourage secondary students who are FARMS eligible but often reluctant to self-identify to apply for the assistance.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.