

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
November 2, 1987

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Monday, November 2, 1987, at 8:10 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Marilyn J. Praisner, President
in the Chair
Dr. James E. Cronin
Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo
Mr. Blair G. Ewing
Mr. Bruce A. Goldensohn
Mr. Andrew Herscowitz
Dr. Robert E. Shoenberg

Absent: Mrs. Mary Margaret Slye

Others Present: Dr. Harry Pitt, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Paul L. Vance, Deputy Superintendent
Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

Re: ANNOUNCEMENT

Mrs. Praisner reported that Mrs. Slye was ill with the flu and had sent her regrets. Mr. Vincent Foo, president of MCCSSE, explained that Ms. Marty Strombotne had also sent her regrets because she was ill.

Re: ANNUAL MEETING WITH MONTGOMERY COUNTY
COUNCIL OF SUPPORTING SERVICES
EMPLOYEES

Mr. Foo thanked the Board for their invitation to this yearly get together. At these meetings, MCCSSE tried to let the Board know about the concerns of supporting services employees. Mr. Foo commented that there were 5,700 supporting services employees working in a system whose focus was on the education of young people. Supporting services employees were the forgotten force that kept the system running. Mr. Foo stated that they tried to settle most of their problems at the bargaining table where both parties worked together to find solutions.

Mr. Foo noted that much had been made of a predicted teacher shortage, but he had not heard any concern about a shortage of workers and yet business was predicting such a shortage by 1990. He pointed out that retail merchants were having a hard time finding sales people and other businesses were finding it difficult, too. He wondered if the Board had given thought to how they would recruit new workers in service categories. For example, the superintendent was proposing building additional schools upcounty and would need to staff those schools and transport children. He remarked that "MCPS was a good place to learn" and he would like to see it "a good place to work." Mrs. Praisner reported that the Board had started looking

at the demographics this summer at a retreat. The county had a 2 percent unemployment rate which was low, and there was a need for people to fill jobs. The Board had looked at this as an issue but had not taken any steps. Mr. Foo added that he sat on the Private Industry Council, and they had discussed the need for more employees and for training of people.

Dr. Cronin asked if they had done anything about comparative salaries. Mr. Foo replied that data indicated that MCPS salaries were comparatively good. Dr. Pitt added that generally their salaries were higher than those of the surrounding school systems. In fact, the county Office of Management and Budget had done a salary comparison to this effect. Mr. Foo commented that at the bargaining table they had raised the issue of child care because many businesses were not providing this at the job site. He was disappointed that the Board of Education had not considered this because child care at the workplace did reduce absenteeism.

Re: VDT STUDY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Mr. Foo reported that during negotiations they agreed there would be a committee. He said that while there had been many studies done on VDT's, there was still not a definitive study. However, next year Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York planned to do such a study and wanted MCPS to participate in a pilot study. Mr. Foo said that this was now before DEA awaiting a decision as to the participation of MCPS. If MCPS participated, the project would start in several weeks and continue through the spring. At that point, the national study would be done. Mrs. Praisner asked that staff provide the Board with information as to whether or not MCPS would be participating in this study as well as the reasoning behind their decision.

Re: NEED FOR HEALTH AIDES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Mr. Foo said he knew that Board members were sympathetic to this issue, and he presented them with a copy of a letter from the staff of Galway. The staff wanted a full-time health aide because they had a population of 750 students. Dr. Pitt explained that health aides were financed by the county government, and this had been a problem for years. In the past the Board of Education had supported the Health Department budget. He said that the problem was they had so few health room aides that it was difficult to allocate them. Dr. Vance added that every year they reviewed this situation and worked with the area superintendents and principals, but there were not enough aides.

Dr. Cronin thought they were too polite and that it was time to push for health services for the schools. Mr. Ewing suggested that a three or four year plan could be presented which would spell out what the need was and how much it would cost annually to do something about meeting that need. Dr. Shoenberg inquired about the possibility of using the health room aide in an instructional role when they were not involved with health room duties. However, if MCPS started to do that, they would probably end up paying part of

the aide's salary which created another problem. Dr. Pitt agreed to look into developing a plan with the Health Department. He recalled that two years ago MCPS and the Health Department had presented a united plan, and he thought they could do this again.

Ms. Nan Whalen said that it would be difficult to pull out an aide from a classroom to provide health services. If the aide did not have classroom responsibilities, it might be possible to be a health room aide and do clerical work. It seemed to Mrs. DiFonzo that they all should go to the County Council and try to get more support for the Health Department. Dr. Pitt asked Dr. Vance to follow through on this issue.

Re: PAY EQUITY

Ms. Whalen recalled that she had raised this issue last year when MCCSSE met with the Board. She presented Board members with copies of her research. They had formed a pay equity study committee and she had been a member of the Montgomery County Pay Equity group. In her survey she reported that 90 percent of those responding felt that MCPS should study all classifications, and 69 percent believed there was discrimination against women and minorities. She thought it was time that MCPS looked at this issue because the county government was going to implement its pay equity study this March. Dr. Cronin called attention to a study he had done in 1979-80 when he had been a member of the county's Human Relations Commission.

Mrs. DiFonzo asked if staff could get information on the status of the county's pay equity study. Mr. Ewing hoped that they would look at the possibility of an MCPS pay equity study when they got the results of the county's proposed actions. Ms. Whalen said that she had hoped to have a price for such a study, and one group had offered to come out and talk about a study and make an estimate. Mr. Ewing suggested that they also look at what AASA and NSBA had on this subject as to what other school systems were doing in this area. Ms. Whalen knew of one Connecticut school system that had done this, but the system had only a small number of employees.

Mr. Foo pointed out that they were using the term, "pay equity," but the true term was "pay discrimination." This had been argued in the courts, and they had to look at whether this existed in Montgomery County. Dr. Cronin commented that there were two levels here. One was pay equity among individuals in some job category with the government, the school system, and private industry. The second was male/female and majority/minority percentages in certain jobs. He agreed that they should look at doing a study.

Re: WORKPLACE HEALTH PROBLEMS

Ms. Diane Davidson remarked that there were days that they worked with monumental tasks, knowing that what they did would shape lives. However, they were concerned about facilities at schools and other locations for the use of copy machines. This equipment was

frequently placed in whatever space was available without regard to the need for ventilation, lighting, work space, or convenience. She gave Board members a copy of a research paper on this issue. She said that the concerns were adequate ventilation and the increase in temperature when machines were being used. She noted that MCCSSE had sent out a survey which showed that the biggest problem was the need for adequate ventilation in the spaces where these machines are placed. In some cases, there might be an exhaust fan in the space, but for some reason the fan was not operable. In other locations, the rooms had no ventilation at all, and in those cases vents with grates needed to be installed. She said that many employees were afraid to complain about work conditions, and many principals did not want to submit work orders for this type of work. She asked that the Board look into these problems.

Ms. Davidson asked how a principal was allocated funds for minor building repairs. Dr. Pitt replied that the principal had to request work through the Maintenance Department. He also noted that the installation of exhaust fans was not minor; however, he would ask staff to look at the situation and see if repairs could be made to existing fans. He said he would also ask staff to look into where the situation could be improved.

Mrs. DiFonzo asked whether these complaints were being received from people in old buildings. Ms. Davidson replied that she had not asked about that, but she had asked about the size of the room where the copier was located. In one instance it was in the health room where there was no fan and no window. Mrs. Praisner agreed that the superintendent should look into the issue raised by Ms. Davidson.

Re: ICB WORK AND BUILDING SERVICE WORKER
IMAGE IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Mr. John Green stated that the outside use of schools had been a problem for years even before the ICB came into the picture. At this point he was not certain there had been a plan devised for solution that the building service workers would want to see implemented. On a short range he had something to offer, but he had not discussed this with Dr. Pitt and Dr. Vance. On the long-range, the building service workers felt that outside use of the schools had to return to MCPS, and perhaps they needed to go to referendum to get this done. In regard to the image of the building service worker, Mr. Green said that they had to do something about how the teaching staff, students, and community viewed the building service staff. He felt that the image of supporting services employees and building service workers in particular needed to be improved to make them feel they were part of the educational process. Mr. Green felt that building services workers were needed. When staff activities took place in the schools, the building service workers were not a part of the activity. Even when they were invited, many building service workers did not feel comfortable in participating. This feeling was very prevalent in the secondary schools and in some elementary schools. Mr. Green reported that they had asked a consultant to come in and assist with image building.

Dr. Pitt volunteered his assistance to help improve the image of building service workers. He knew that elementary schools had more of a family approach, but he had also seen secondary schools that did a good job in this area. In regard to the ICB issue, he reported that he would be making a recommendation to the Board in the near future. He would be recommending the employment of half-time MCPS workers to do this work rather than part-time people hired by ICB. Dr. Cronin commented that over a long period of time they had dealt with some subtle sexism and racism. When they talked about building service workers they were talking about a subtle form of racism, and he wondered how they would deal with this. Mr. Green replied that in his meetings with building service workers they were trying to come up with some solutions to this problem. Dr. Cronin suggested that he work closely with the superintendent.

Mr. Goldensohn commented that in all his years of attending PTA meetings, he could not recall the principal's introducing the secretary or the building service workers. He wondered if this wasn't one thing they could do. Ms. Davidson commented that in the six schools where she had worked she only recalled one person from the building services staff who had attended social events. She said that the building services and cafeteria workers did not feel part of the school. Mr. Green remarked that they did have a problem and had to address this. Mrs. Praisner suggested that working with the superintendent would be the best way to proceed. She recalled that the only time she had ever seen building service workers introduced had been at the elementary school. Mr. Green thought that the managers were included in activities, but other employees did not feel they were part of a school team. Ms. Whalen reported that in special education schools and programs, all employees were introduced and were invited to activities.

Re: MORE HOURS FOR SECONDARY FOOD SERVICE
MANAGERS AND CLASSIFICATION STUDY OF
CENTRAL AND SATELLITE WORKERS

Ms. Minnie Ziminsky reported that the food service program had changed tremendously over the last few years. Secondary managers were scheduled to work seven hours, but this did not allow them enough time for their activities including accountability. In addition, they now had central kitchens with different job responsibilities and skills required. She asked that there be a study of the positions.

Mrs. Praisner thought there was a classification study underway, and asked that copies be provided to the Board and MCCSSE when staff had the results. She asked about increasing the hours, and Dr. Pitt noted that it would cost more and cafeterias were supposed to be self-supporting. Mr. Foo pointed out that this was discrimination against a group of employees because no other group was under the gun to make money to pay themselves. He thought they should face reality and include these employees in the budget instead of singling them out.

Dr. Shoenberg asked about practices in other school systems regarding school lunch. Dr. Pitt replied that some operations were contractual, but most were self-supporting. He said that staff would provide information on this issue.

Re: VETERANS DAY AS A HOLIDAY AND
INSUFFICIENT ACCESS FOR THE HANDICAPPED
IN MCPS

Mr. Roger Robinette reported that on December 12, 1983, he had written to the Board of Education asking that Veterans Day be a school holiday. He had never received a reply to his letter, and Mrs. Praisner asked staff to check into why his letter was not answered.

Mr. Robinette commented that he was originally from Pennsylvania where Veterans Day appeared to have more significance as a holiday. He cited statistics about the contributions of Veterans and noted that MCPS had not planned programs in its schools for Veterans Day and had nothing planned for ROTC groups. Mrs. Praisner reported that they had asked Dr. Pitt to send out a memo encouraging Veterans Day activities. Dr. Pitt added that they had sent the memo, but they had not thought about ROTC groups having a program which was a good suggestion. Mrs. Praisner recalled that the ROTC program was not run by the school system; therefore, the superintendent could only suggest they consider a program. Dr. Pitt indicated that he had also said students could have excused absences on Veterans Day to attend programs. Employees would have to take leave.

Mr. Robinette inquired about access for handicapped veterans to get into the schools. Mrs. Praisner replied that MCPS had a comprehensive program to do this. Dr. Pitt added that all new schools and renovated schools were accessible to the handicapped. They were pretty far along in their plan to do these modifications. Mr. Robinette inquired about the cost of these modifications; and Mrs. DiFonzo explained that it would vary from school to school. One school might require that one step be chipped away but others might need more extensive modifications.

Dr. Cronin admitted that he was torn about Veterans Day. He thought they needed to have the students in school with veterans coming in to talk about the horrors of war, not the John Wayne heroics but the reality of body bags and wheelchairs. He felt that they had an obligation to teach students about war, and Mr. Robinette pointed out that they had not been doing that. In Pennsylvania there were community activities at 11 a.m., but in Montgomery County it was business as usual. He felt that if they were going to have students in uniform they should have Veterans Day activities. Dr. Pitt explained that the ROTC programs in the schools were handled by people being paid by the military; however, they might want to make suggestions to the national ROTC program on this issue.

Mr. Ewing noted that when this issue came before the Board because of

Delegate Hixson's proposed legislation, they had found that state law required the school system to have appropriate exercises on Veterans Day. He thought that they might not have paid attention to doing this on a regular basis, and he suggested following up on Dr. Pitt's memo on this subject. However, this did not settle the question of what an appropriate exercise should be. He was bothered that holidays tended to become opportunities for stores to have sales, and he worried that fewer children would get introduced to the meaning of the day if it were a holiday. He supported Dr. Pitt's plan to provide excused absences for students if their parents requested permission to ceremonies.

Dr. Pitt reported that his memo had just gone out. He would be surprised if they had 100 percent cooperation, but he intended to continue to pursue this. He agreed with Mr. Ewing that this should not be a holiday. He was himself a veteran, and he noted that veterans were divided as to whether the day should be a holiday. Mr. Robinette presented the Board and superintendent with a poster from the veterans, and Mrs. Praisner thanked him on behalf of the Board and superintendent.

Re: USE OF LEAVE BY TRANSPORTATION PERSONNEL

Ms. Marian Hobb reported that because of a shortage of bus drivers, many drivers were doubling up to get the job done. Now they had been told they had no right to use their personal leave. She suggested that one way to get more drivers would be to change the four-hour positions to five-hour positions. In addition, they should think about paying substitute bus drivers when they were in training and also think about hiring permanent substitutes.

Dr. Pitt agreed that hiring drivers, especially in Area 3 was a problem. This was related to funding their work hours, and he pointed out that they had been cut severely by the County Council in this area. In regard to the use of leave, he suggested that it was appropriate for Ms. Hobb to bring this issue to Mr. Cooney or Dr. Vance. Mr. Ewing wondered if they could check with other school systems to find out if they were facing the same problem and how they were solving it. Dr. Pitt agreed to have staff check this out. Mrs. Praisner thanked Mr. Foo and members of MCCSSE for their presentation and discussion.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 10 p.m.

President

Secretary

HP:mlw