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STATUS: APPROVED
PLACE: ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND
DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 1991
TEXT:

pointed out that improved minority education went hand in hand with improved education for all students.

Dr. Moone felt that Dr. Gordon needed to be applauded for his dynamic study, and the Board needed to be complimented for their initiative in bringing Dr. Gordon to Montgomery County. The study was an empirical one giving people an understanding of the ethnic problems existing in Montgomery County and the nation. It went into what was happening in MCPS and came up with hard-hitting recommendations. He hoped that the budget would not be a stumbling block to these initiatives.

Mrs. Diane Jones introduced the following members of the African-American subcommittee: Harold Aikins, Karen Kaiser, and Tom Evans, their chairperson. Their focus was implementation strategies and how the recommendations might be realized. They felt it was important for MCPS to review and increase affirmative action efforts aimed at increasing the number of African-American teachers and administrators. There should be a top-down management approach to facilitate accountability in meeting the established objectives for student achievement. She said there should be more autonomy for schools to develop objective criteria within overall school system parameters. Parent-teacher-administrator committees should be established as a management tool.

Mrs. Jones recommended that throw-away courses such as Introduction to Algebra be eliminated. There should be mechanisms so that each student would be known and followed throughout his or her academic career. Consideration should be given to heterogeneous grouping of students. There should be interdisciplinary staff teams involving all employees in the schools to assist counselors in advising, mentoring, and encouraging students. They should consider using home rooms to accomplish this objective. They recommended that the SIMS system be expanded and that clearly established penalties be established for staff and school failure to meet objectives. They believed that multicultural material should be infused into the curriculum. They stressed that the presumption of competence syndrome had to be eliminated. White students were presumed to be competent until proven otherwise, but African-American students were presumed to be incompetent until proven otherwise.

They recommended a renewed focus on staff development and the establishment of a mentoring program for staff. African-American teachers should be assigned to task forces, work groups, and committees. There should be an expansion of staff involvement in cultural awareness programs and activities.

Mr. Aikins pointed out that many of these suggestions could be implemented at little or no cost. Although they focused on African-American students, these were things that would be

helpful to all minority students and to students in general. They would really like to see more accountability on the part of the system from the top down. It was time to try to develop a plan to resolve these problems.

Mr. Evans added that they concentrated more on heterogeneous grouping rather than tracking. They supported the requests of staffs for more school-based management. If staff had more control of grouping and kept up with the students from the ninth to twelfth grades, this might give them more assurance of accountability. This would be good for all students.

Dr. Moone recalled the recommendations to take some initiatives about black males because the black male situation in America was a crisis situation. They had met with Dr. Gordon yesterday and while he did not get into that in his report, there were implications there. The school system was going to have to take some initiatives and for that reason they had requested the assistance of Tom Evans, a dynamic member of the school system. He cited statistics about black males and incidents in MCPS.

Dr. Moone asked that they address the issue of black males. Some schools were already doing this, and he cited the program at Wootton High School for black male students that had already transferred to other schools and other states. Watkins Mill High School now had an active group, and they wanted to see this program in other high schools and to have the Board tell principals to set up similar programs.

Ms. Sunny Lee, chair of the Asian-American subcommittee, introduced Dr. Mildred Morse and Alka Wali. The group believed that Dr. Gordon's findings were accurate and pinpointed the major concerns that should be addressed. They highlighted the statement that the Asian-American community should not be regarded as a monolithic unit with uniform needs. The most recent immigrants, particularly refugees, needed language acquisition, social adjustment, and basic education. They might need a higher level of parent outreach and involvement. Asian-American students born in the United States or having English as a first language needed to develop a strong cultural identity.

Ms. Lee noted that to date ESOL program had been perceived by MCPS as a solution to the problems of Asian-American students; however, ESOL did not address the total social and economical needs of this community. There was no transition from ESOL into the mainstream educational program, and as a result students failed when confronted with the regular academic program. The needs of Asian-Americans not in ESOL were not being addressed.

They believed that the Board must articulate a set of expectations through which they would hold staff accountable for the attainment of results with respect to the education of all

Asian-American students. The believed that all students would benefit from the increased presence of Asian-American professionals, and this could be accomplished through recruitment and promotion efforts. However, recruitment was difficult because the pool was small; they should implement innovative strategies to nurture the interest of MCPS Asian-American students in educational careers. MCPS should also encourage the use of Asian-Americans as role models within the schools. All students would benefit from knowledge about Asia and its peoples.

Efforts to increase sensitivity to diverse Asian cultures should be more widespread. This should be part of the curriculum and not just on special days during the year.

Ms. Lee said they were aware of the fiscal crisis but felt that this should not be allowed to impede the efforts to improve the quality of education for students. They believed all students would benefit from a program structured to meet the special needs of disadvantaged groups. The goal of the subcommittee was to develop specific action items to assist the Board to achieve these educational reforms using existing resources inside MCPS and the county.

Ms. Lee reported that Dr. Riley Chung had provided her with a report in which he pointed out a lack of role models in MCPS and in the county. A commitment should be made to recruit Asian-American teachers and to provide opportunities for those interested to get into administration. They needed to speed up the mainstreaming process for new and needy immigrants. Needs should be met when these students arrive. The more concentrated the initial effort, the sooner the students would adapt to the system and the less the burden would be on the school system. There needed to be a continued emphasis on ESOL educational services, and resources needed to be provided to ESOL. They should look for ways to tap into resources in the community such as the Chinese-American tutorial programs. Other language groups should be encouraged to support their own programs. There needed to be better tracking of exiting ESOL students, and there should be a better exit test to insure that ESOL students were ready to tackle the regular program. There had to be a tracking system for these students when they were mainstreamed, and this system could provide feedback for improving the ESOL curriculum.

Dr. Moone encouraged them to visit schools and ESOL programs as he had done. He was impressed with the programs, but he had gained an insight into how much needed to be done. He also pointed out that the committee's subcommittees were not formed along racial or ethnic lines. For example, he was on the Hispanic subcommittee, and Dr. Morse was on the Asian subcommittee.

Mr. Edgar Gonzales, chair of the Hispanic subcommittee, introduced Patricia Puertas, Lee Ingram, Jim Fernandez, and

Silvio Zuluaga. While there was a need to improve the academic achievement of Hispanics overall, the school system should be about the improvement of the academic achievement of all students. When they looked at Montgomery County and students who were not achieving there were a lot of minorities, but there were also white students. These students needed to be helped as well. They had to help everyone who had a problem in society.

Mr. Gonzalez reported that this summer the committee would be providing the Board with a report regarding the six areas listed on pages 101 and 102 of the Gordon report. In regard to achievement and accountability, they were supportive of the need for accountability on the success of Priority 2 and other efforts. Everyone from the Board of Education and the superintendent on down should be accountable in one way or another, and there should be continuous follow up. They believed that the public dissemination of achievement goals should be continued. There should be special recognition of those in the system who are essentially supportive and successful with their programs.

Mr. Gonzalez said that Dr. Gordon had pointed out there was a need to change attitudes at the principal and teacher level. The subcommittee agreed that there needed to be a change of attitudes at the PTA level and in the minority communities. They had to develop expectations on a school by school basis. The Burning Trees and the Broad Acres might have different expectations, but there was a need to improve in all schools. There had to be better evaluation, more than just test scores. They had to have better tracking so that adjustments could be made on a timely basis, not when it was too late.

He called attention to a recent newspaper article about changing demographics in Montgomery County. Minorities now constituted 28 to 29 percent of the total population in the county, and the needs within the public school system were changing dramatically as a result of the population change. Things they had been doing for a lot of years to be the top in the nation might not continue to be effective because their population was changing. Approaches and solutions must change.

Mr. Gonzalez said they had to look at existing criteria for entrance level. Children were being placed according to age. That might have been effective in the past, but that was not the case with new populations. They had 15-year-old students who could not read in his or her own language, and it did not make sense to put them in tenth grade to study physics. They had to reevaluate the concept of retention. MCPS studies indicated that if a child did not have a certain mastery of math by the sixth grade, he or she was doomed. The United States would never be competitive if by the sixth grade 60 percent of the students could not become scientists.

Mr. Gonzalez pointed out that there were many high schools and middle schools in Montgomery County where 30-40 percent of the student body was Hispanic. If they didn't speak English, they should be taught content courses in their own language. Skills in English would come later. They were suggesting pilots in some key schools to see if this approach was successful. It had been successful in other school systems. They had the teachers, and it was not a question of more money, but rather of regrouping resources.

He indicated that they needed expanded access to the Edison Center as well as bilingual staff in that facility. A lot of Hispanics dropped out of school because they had no hope. They had to be taught something they could understand or else they would be lost. They needed a systemwide program of Spanish for native speakers. A lot of the community did not know how to read and write in their own language. He suggested that they needed video tapes for Hispanic and Asian families to show them how to help their own children.

In regard to the ESOL program, Mr. Gonzalez said they supported Dr. Gordon's recommendations. There was a need to review the goals, the organizational structure, the leadership, and the programs of ESOL. The way they were doing things might not be the best way. The ESOL programs had to be held accountable, and there was a need to reevaluate the entrance and exit exams. Students were leaving ESOL before they were ready. This deprived other students because the teacher did not know how to handle the ESOL students. They needed tracking and tutoring for these students.

Mr. Gonzalez agreed that there had to be more intensive efforts to recruit Hispanic teachers. The hiring practices of MCPS were impeding their recruitment program which was in competition with those from other jurisdictions. They had to review MCPS hiring practices and the cost effectiveness of the recruiting teams. They had to have a support system to help these new teachers or they would lose them to other school systems where requirements were not as great. They also had a need to identify Hispanic teachers who had the potential to become managers. These people had to be mentored and have to have access to the assessment centers. There was a need for bilingual psychologists, and the Board needed ombudspersons to do independent evaluations and to provide direct communication to the Board. Finally, there was a need to review the goals of human relations and the comprehensiveness of the approach to Priority 2.

Mr. Fernandez pointed out that two years ago the committee had submitted a thorough report concerning the topics in the Gordon report. He encouraged the Board to keep their report in mind. Ms. Puertas pointed out that most of their recommendations were

cost effective and would not cost more money.

Mrs. Fanconi asked for the assistance of the committee regarding the budget. She requested support for the Board resolution which spoke to the need for increased revenues and overriding Question F on property taxes.

Dr. Moone stated that the school system had been a failure in terms of predicting the numbers of minorities in the county other than blacks. In 1970 no one had predicted they would have 55,000 Hispanics in the county or 46,000 Asians. In addition, there were 65,000 blacks, and all these numbers were expected to grow by the year 2000. There may be other refugees coming because of the situation in the Middle East and in Germany. They had to be prepared with long-range planning, and the community was looking to the Board of Education. The Board had to appoint a new superintendent of schools to implement the Gordon recommendations. Dr. Moone thanked Dr. Pitt for all of his initiatives over the years and the efforts he had made to bring about equality among the races. He recalled that 15 or 20 years ago he had worked with Dr. Pitt to put out the fires around the county.

In regard to the Board of Education, Dr. Moone reported that the community was at the saturation point on the Gordon report deliberations. It seemed to him that the Board was going in slow motion regarding the recommendations. The Board had the Gordon report and recommendations from years of previous reports, and at this juncture they needed specific steps. The choice of steps was the responsibility of the Board of Education. He commented that this was a challenge that should not be taken lightly. Minority achievement must become a major priority. They needed someone to take the reins from Dr. Pitt and implement the recommendations. He noted that the committee had already communicated its views on the superintendent selection process. He pointed out it took a good three years for a superintendent to become effective in a school system as sophisticated and as complex as MCPS.

Dr. Moone commented that Dr. Gordon was correct in taking the position that it was not his role to set priorities for MCPS. Dr. Gordon was available for consultation, but the burden of proof rested with the Board of Education. He urged the Board to do something and not just go through the motions. If they continued to be spinning wheels, students would continue to be hurt in the process.

Dr. Morse stated that each of them was concerned about the education of children in Montgomery County period. They had a particular interest regarding the diverse range of students and the educational needs of those groups. Those groups had different ethnic backgrounds and different educational needs.

They wanted the Board to know the diversity of the student population in Montgomery County, but this was the second issue. Their primary concern was the education of all students, particularly those with special needs. She suggested they examine the different approaches to problems that had been occurring throughout the county. They might look at the lower end of the achievement scale and make improvements there. Those improvements would impact all children, regardless of race or ethnicity. She pointed out that native Americans were not represented on the committee, and they wanted the committee to be representative of the total minority population of the county.

Dr. Morse declared that there had been comments about professional staff needing improved competence in the area of working with diverse ranges of students. Dr. Gordon saw this as a paramount need. The committee had unanimously endorsed Dr. Gordon's recommendations, and the committee felt it was important for the Board to know their perspectives with respect to the report. They would welcome the opportunity to learn the Board's point of view with respect to the Gordon report as well as predecessor reports. The committee would also welcome guidance from the Board as to how they could serve their best interests in moving forward with their work.

Mr. Ewing thanked the committee for their reports and remarks. The Board greatly appreciated the time and energy the committee had taken to develop these recommendations. He remarked that the Board was proceeding at a pace that for some was too slow and for others caused immense anxiety. He was hearing from people who were not in agreement with everything in the Gordon report. The Board had to take account of what people said, and it had to make its best judgments about what was going to work. He thought they had to be careful as they went about this task so that what they implemented was going to work and was supported by large numbers of people, not just the minority community. This was critical to their success and was one of the reasons for taking some time and debating the issues with care.

Mr. Ewing pointed out that the Board had a book of not just the Gordon report but previous reports including the NAACP study on the black male and the report on Asian-American students. The Board needed to take account of all these reports as it developed a carefully considered plan. They were going to try to do that within three months. He did not think this was an undue amount of time given the complexity of the task and the fact that there were differing points of view. For example, he was not sure it was going to be easy to get five votes for everything in the report. They needed to go through a process which generated support, and if they moved too quickly they would find themselves divided and that would divide the community further. He wanted them to be cautious and deliberate, but he wanted them to get on with it. For that reason, they had a schedule that spelled out

what they were going to do so that recommendations could be fully implemented in the fall. They had to be careful about taking actions before the budget was final because they might act on a plan that raised expectations but was unsupported by resources.

Mr. Ewing said they hoped to appoint a new superintendent by May 1, and the new superintendent should have an opportunity to look at their draft plan. The new person would be here for four years and should be committed to the plan. He did not think there was anyone around the table who didn't want to make progress in this area. However, Board members needed more time to reflect on and debate these issues. He wanted them to understand that the Board was going to get there, but they probably wouldn't get there much before May. The superintendent search, the capital budget, and the operating budget were very demanding in terms of time.

Ms. Gutierrez commented that it was important that they focus on the right priorities. While she was frustrated about the situation, the problems were not easy ones and to resolve them would take effort. She agreed with Mr. Ewing that the Board had set itself a deadline which is something the Board had never done before. While she wanted them to take action, precipitous action would only add more to the problem.

Dr. Cheung was impatient about taking actions to improve the achievement of minority students as well as all students at risk.

He thought that Dr. Gordon's recommendations went straight to the core of their educational structure and programs. However, they wanted to do the right thing and make sure their actions did not generate problems worse than what they had tried to resolve.

He appreciated the leadership of the committee and their strong recommendations. He hoped that the Board would continue to work with the committee to resolve these issues. Mr. Gonzalez noted that Los Angeles had just elected an Hispanic member of the Board of Supervisors, and to paraphrase her, they were here to work with the Board, to resolve the issues that were facing them together. Dr. Moone said they looked forward to the worksessions with the Board, and he thanked his committee for working together so cooperatively.

Mr. Ewing thanked the committee for their work.

Re: FACILITIES ISSUES

Mr. Ewing explained that four votes were needed to adopt an alternative to the recommendations of the superintendent. He announced that Mr. Chang had left the meeting to study for examinations.

RESOLUTION NO. 178-91 Re: BOARD ALTERNATIVE - BLAIR CLUSTER

On motion of Mrs. Fanconi seconded by Mrs. DiFonzo, the following

resolution was adopted unanimously#:

RESOLVED, That the Board of Education adopt the following alternative for the Blair Cluster:

A boundary change out of Rolling Terrace into Highland View and the removal of the sixth grade at Rolling Terrace into Eastern Intermediate School.

RESOLUTION NO. 179-91 Re: BOARD ALTERNATIVE - BLAIR CLUSTER

On motion of Mrs. Brenneman seconded by Mrs. DiFonzo, the following resolution was adopted unanimously#:

RESOLVED, That the Board of Education adopt the following alternative for the Blair Cluster:

An option that more evenly distributes the ESOL, minority enrollment and free and reduced lunch populations among Northwood, Eastern, and Takoma Park middle schools.

RESOLUTION NO. 180-91 Re: BOARD ALTERNATIVE - FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

On motion of Mrs. DiFonzo seconded by Mrs. Fanconi, the following resolution was adopted unanimously#:

RESOLVED, That the Board of Education adopt the following alternative for the French Immersion Program:

Allow enrollment in the French Immersion program to expand to two classes per grade, beginning with kindergarten and first grade in September, 1991.

RESOLUTION NO. 181-91 Re: BOARD ALTERNATIVE - WOOTTON CLUSTER

On motion of Mrs. Brenneman seconded by Mrs. Fanconi, the following resolution was adopted unanimously#:

RESOLVED, That the Board of Education adopt the following alternative for the Wootton Cluster:

Begin the reassignment of the Gifted and Talented program from Lakewood to Cold Spring in 1991.

RESOLUTION NO. 182-91 Re: BOARD ALTERNATIVE - WOOTTON CLUSTER

On motion of Mrs. Brenneman seconded by Dr. Cheung, the following resolution was adopted with Mrs. Brenneman, Dr. Cheung, Mr. Ewing, Ms. Gutierrez, and Mrs. Hobbs voting in the affirmative; Mrs. DiFonzo and Mrs. Fanconi voting in the negative#:

RESOLVED, That the Board of Education adopt the following alternative for the Wootton Cluster:

Assign the River's Edge community from Travilah Elementary School to Potomac Elementary School.

RESOLUTION NO. 183-91 Re: BOARD ALTERNATIVE - WOOTTON CLUSTER

On motion of Mrs. Fanconi seconded by Mrs. DiFonzo, the following resolution was adopted unanimously#:

RESOLVED, That the Board of Education adopt the following alternative for the Wootton Cluster:

Continue the assignment of the four houses at the corner of Travilah and Stoney Creek Road to Travilah Elementary School.

RESOLUTION NO. 184-91 Re: BOARD ALTERNATIVE - WOOTTON CLUSTER

On motion of Mrs. Fanconi seconded by Mrs. Brenneman, the following resolution was adopted with Mrs. Brenneman, Dr. Cheung, Mr. Ewing, Mrs. Fanconi, Ms. Gutierrez, and Mrs. Hobbs voting in the affirmative; Mrs. DiFonzo abstaining:

RESOLVED, That the Board of Education adopt the following alternative for the Wootton Cluster:

Develop a plan to relieve overcrowding at Stone Mill Elementary School.

Re: A MOTION BY MRS. BRENNEMAN TO
RECONSIDER THE ASSIGNMENT OF
WOODWARD STORE ROAD FROM STRAWBERRY
KNOLL TO GAITHERSBURG #9 (FAILED)

A motion by Mrs. Brenneman to reconsider the assignment of the Woodward Store Road area from Strawberry Knoll to Gaithersburg #9 failed with Mrs. Brenneman, Mrs. DiFonzo, and Mrs. Hobbs voting in the affirmative; Dr. Cheung, Mr. Ewing, and Ms. Gutierrez voting in the negative; Mrs. Fanconi abstaining.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 11:25 to an executive session on personnel matters.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

HP:mlw