

APPROVED
24-1994

Rockville, Maryland
May 11, 1994

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Wednesday, May 11, 1994, at 7:40 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Carol Fanconi, President
 in the Chair
 Mr. Stephen Abrams
 Ms. Carrie Baker
 Mrs. Frances Brenneman
 Dr. Alan Cheung
 Mr. Blair G. Ewing
 Mrs. Beatrice Gordon
 Ms. Ana Sol Gutierrez

Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Paul L. Vance, Superintendent
 Mrs. Kathryn W. Gemberling, Deputy
 Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

Re: MEETING WITH MONTGOMERY COUNTY
 EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Fanconi welcomed members of the Montgomery County Education Association. She noted that the Board had received MCEA's agenda, and many of the issues they raised were issues that the Board discussed from a policy point of view and some issues had bargaining implications. She said she would turn the meeting over to Mrs. Phyllis Parks Robinson, president of MCEA.

Mrs. Robinson thanked the Board for coming out for one more evening meeting. She did not see this as MCEA's meeting but rather a meeting of people who made policy and people who worked for the school system. She did have one other item to add to the agenda which was their full retirement plan. Her first topic was improving the effective use of teacher time, and she had provided the Board with an MCEA briefing paper as well as a copy of "It's About Time," an NEA work group report on the use of teacher time.

She quoted from the NEA paper, "The assumption that teachers and their time use must be 'controlled' emanates from the historically low status of teachers and is related to issues of trust and respect." She pointed out that every part of a teacher's work day is controlled by someone else, and teachers had little time to do planning and to work with each other. This was a very significant issue for MCEA, and one they had raised in bargaining.

Mr. Tom Israel, executive director of MCEA, said they would be interested in the Board's reactions to the NEA report. Mrs. Fanconi commented that she had not had time to go through it and would appreciate a quick summary of the document.

Mr. Israel called attention to page 4 of the report which compared to American teaching and Asian and European teaching. In Asia it was a group effort, and teachers were in charge of classes only 60 percent of the time, or three hours a day, and the same was true in a number of European countries. This got to the view of the role of the teacher and the idea that the only real teaching time was when a teacher was standing in front of a classroom.

Ms. Gutierrez remarked that in the past several years as organizations had looked at themselves, a key component of that examination was to look at the professionals in the organization and focus on the empowerment of the individual. The current theory was that organizations functioned most effectively when these people were trusted, respected, and able to make decisions. Like Mrs. Fanconi, she had not had the time to review the report and would be interested in knowing what were the things that could provide more freedom of action or promote an environment with greater trust and respect.

Ms. Bonnie Cullison, treasurer of MCEA, stated that trust could be built if they were given flexibility and allowed to make professional decision. She was being told every minute what she had to do and that during her planning time she had to do everything related to teaching, and that planning time was not enough. The Board of Education made the decisions about how much time teachers had to be in front of children and how much time they had to prepare. If the Board adopted a new curriculum, she had to spend a lot more time preparing for her lessons and a lot more time gathering materials. It would be easier to teach rote memorization in mathematics, but in order to integrate math into multiple situations it took teacher time. She also worked as a speech/language pathologist and these people were only give one hour a week to plan and do the paperwork required by MCPS, the Maryland State Department of Education, and the federal government. When the art, music, and physical education staff were given only one hour a week to plan, the message to them was that these subjects were not important.

Mr. David Weisberg said he had been an Intensity 5 classroom teacher and an Intensity 4 teacher in a self-contained classroom. Now he was a resource teacher working with students in general education. It was his experience that there were major changes in the delivery of service. More and more students were not being identified as disabled but received services in the classroom. He had to tie these services to the curriculum across all grade levels, but he had no time to plan with the other grade level teams because he only had one hour a week. The regular teachers had more planning time and more access to materials. While they met state guidelines for case loads, this was an

average and there was a wide variation in actual loads with teachers functioning with loads above state regulations. These teachers might also be working in a school that was heavily impacted because more and more special education students were being educated in their home schools. This placed an additional demand on all teachers in these buildings, and schools needed more creative ways of dealing with this which required more interaction and more time to do that planning.

Mr. Abrams said he was hearing a mix of things, including planning time within the envelope of the school day and comparisons with other school systems. There were other elements that had to be considered because of cultural differences on how prepared students were and class size differences. Classes in Asia were twice the size of American classes. He asked whether class size was a barrier to providing what they wanted. The second issue was site-based management. If they moved to an outcome approach, did it matter what forms were submitted? Did site-based management have the potential for addressing this? The third issue was professionalism, and as a lawyer he could relate to this. In preparation for a hearing, litigation, or tasks in the legislative process, experience impacted on how much time he was going to need even if the process changed. He wondered about repetitive teaching of the curriculum even if changes were made. It might be that less experienced teachers had a higher requirement for planning.

Mrs. Robinson quoted from the NEA report, "The conceptualization of what teaching is has been shaped by traditions from the past. Schools today are a reflection of the organizational theories of Frederick Taylor and scientific management. Teachers, as well as other 'touch workers' on the bottom of the organizational pyramid, were expected to be 'doers.' Planning, decision making, problem solving, and other 'managerial' functions were reserved for higher levels of the organization. 'Teacher-proof' pedagogy and curriculum were determined by the decision makers." She continued, "Research concludes that collaborate time among teachers and other school personnel is essential in sustaining reflectiveness and collective self-examination so necessary for effective functioning, self-renewal and reform."

Mrs. Robinson commented that site-based decision making clearly reflected a new way for teachers to operate. The public and the members of the Board remembered their school days when the teacher did stand in front of the classroom. Today they were dealing with new waves of students with many challenges for experienced teachers. Having more experience did mitigate the situation to some extent, but their tasks were constantly changing. They were beginning to deal with students who brought challenges they were not prepared to deal with including alcohol, crack, and other abuses. This required more education, more training, and more time. The issues raised by Mr. Abrams should

be the topic of more frequent conversations. She believed that this issue needed a lot more discussion and encouraged the Board to utilize MCEA as a resource because their members had asked MCEA leadership to serve as a conduit to get these issues to the ears of the Board.

Mr. Kalani Smith said he would like to respond to the comments about professionalism and planning time and more experience. This was true to a point. The first year he taught he arrived at school two hours early and left two or three hours after school ended, but now with experience he arrived an hour early, left an hour after school ended, and took home two hours of work rather than three or four.

Mr. Abrams remarked that this was not much different from the experience of the clerk hired on the House Appropriations Committee. He brought this up in terms of the context of contemporary society. The nature of work was changing. Mr. Smith said that even if the curriculum did not change, he did not have the same students from year to year. Last year's lesson plan might not work with this year's students and with students who had special needs. Mr. Abrams noted that teachers had certain skills and had a better reach to some students, but their class make-up depended on the luck of the draw. He wondered whether technology today would permit them to do a better match of teaching skills with learning skills.

Mr. Weisberg replied that on the surface matching a teacher's style to students sounded like a good idea; however, one goal of education was to prepare students to live in an inclusive world. They did this by learning in a classroom with children of all types, and it sounded as if Mr. Abrams would be segregating children by their learning style.

Ms. Phyllis Jaworski remarked that in addition to planning time, teachers were concerned about control of time. At Kennedy High School, teachers were allowed to take this control. Study hall was now for only those students who wanted to study. Other teachers took advantage of this by providing other options. A teacher might have a discussion group on current events or a group looking at how to write college essays. The teachers had made better use of the time because they were empowered to do so. The liaison committee got together with the principal because study halls were not working, and it was decided that teachers could make better use of this time by selecting their IRA activities.

Mr. Abrams asked what would prevent this from occurring in all schools. Mr. Israel explained that most principals saw the IRA as theirs to dictate how it should be done. He wanted to revisit the question of professionalism because a fundamental way to improve the quality of the educational program was to allow

teachers more time to prepare and work as teams. A lawyer was not in court 70 percent of the time, but teachers were on stage 70 percent of their time. In regard to Asian classrooms, they were more homogenous which argued for more preparation time for American teachers. Teachers were subject to the dictates of the principal in regard to the IRA. There were half days built into the school calendar, and in buildings where teachers had input that half day was more meaningful. Middle level schools had lots of team meetings which took up their free time and was dictated by the principal.

Mrs. Gordon explained that the philosophy of the middle level school was to give professionals the opportunity to meet and discuss issues around their students. She would hope this was what was happening with that time, and if it was not happening, she would like to know why it was not. Mrs. Robinson replied that there was a big difference in giving people the opportunity to collaborate and mandating a meeting. This was another issue that needed more examination. Were they really meeting the goals of the mid-level policy?

As to experience decreasing the amount of planning time, Ms. Cullison commented that the more she knew, the more she needed to do. She had to find more materials and be more creative in order to improve her teaching ability. Mrs. Robinson added that teachers also need time to rejuvenate themselves.

Dr. Cheung stated that he had recently read an article that spoke to everyone's being a prisoner of time. They did not have enough time, and time was the missing element in the debate about learning. Schools and the people involved in education were prisoners of time, captives of the school clock and calendar, and the article suggested they look at new ways of using time not getting more time. He would like to hear how the time could be better used to maximize what could be done for students and staff.

Mrs. Robinson indicated that the next topic was about the long-range planning task force report. MCEA had been following this closely and had a member on the task force. They thought this was a great report, and it said things they had been trying to say to the Board for a number of years even before the Commission on Excellence report had been published a number of years ago. They needed to look at how they did things in MCPS, not only the issue of time. They had been talking about giving teachers professional consideration. Most teachers had been on the job for a number of years, and they had great ideals that the Board should listen to. She asked how the task force recommendations were going to be implemented. They would urge the Board to take a strong stance and move quickly on it. She asked Mr. Bill Brown, MCEA's representative on the task force, to give an overview of their work.

Mr. Brown stated that the biggest thing about the task force was the frustration of going through so much material that had been presented to past Boards and to realize that these issues were still being discussed. The site-based management process was one area that had been studied in depth to learn how the policy broke down. He felt that this issue would not go away, and this was the time to deal with it. The Board would be getting more background information from the task force, but they should not expect another report from the group. He believed that the report was a great tool to take to the community because this was an impartial outside group which that studied MCPS in depth before making its recommendations.

Mr. Mark Simon commented that he would echo Mrs. Robinson's praise of the report. To him it said that MCEA had consistently been ignored by the Board. There needed to be a culture change in MCPS, and it had to come not just from the Board but the Board in cooperation with other institutions. He felt frustrated because every overture that MCEA had made over nine or ten years had been rebuffed. MCEA had reinvented itself to become a change agent a decade ago and had taken up site-based management and evaluation. They needed to grapple with the year 2000 issues, but the message from Employee Relations was not to listen to MCEA because they were the union. For ten years they had been offering to work with the Board as partners, but the Commission on Excellence report was put on the shelf and the message from the central office was that there was no interest in change.

Mr. Simon said that to him the indication that the Board was serious about change would come when the Board agreed to sit down with MCEA and discuss the issues, particularly the Professional Development Institute. They needed to talk about how they could set up the institute and run it together. Reinventing the school system should begin with a new relationship between the Board and its employees. The question was whether they would be able to talk as people who were willing to work as partners or would they be treated as underlings in a hierarchy. The task force has cited Jefferson County, Kentucky as NEA's first learning lab. This had been proposed to the Montgomery County Board several years ago, but there was no interest.

Mrs. Robinson reported that Seth Goldberg had been chair of the site-based committee, and a number of MCEA members had worked on the original group. The issues raised by Mr. Simon had been considered many times by many people, and MCEA was tired of hearing about it and wanted to do something. She asked what the Board was willing to do.

Mr. Goldberg observed that he did not see any reason to believe that teachers were any more ready for educational reform than the leadership of the school system. The only way it would work

would be to get teachers and administrators in line. MCEA and the Board had no choice but to work together if they were serious about change. They wanted to support the Board and would be partners in getting the teachers moving. There was never any evidence of this intention in the site-based management policy. He said he felt the same way about this report as he had about the Commission on Excellence report, but that was ten years ago and nothing happened. He assured the Board that MCEA would not let that happen with this report.

Mr. Abrams stated that he did not speak for the Board, but there were two other players who needed to be included in that partnership -- parents and the financial establishment of the community. There was site-based budgeting that went along with site-based management. If the budget were not part of the process, change would be difficult. The question was how they constructed a framework that allowed this. He felt that a lot of the elements were right for change, but a couple were not. There was a lot of insecurity throughout Montgomery County because of the demographic changes in the county. For a long time he had used the argument that MCPS was excellent because of a demographic accident, but now they had to work for this excellence. Now they were competing with others for the resources. He wondered if they could look ahead rather than fighting old wars because the report was very exciting to him.

Mr. Simon did not think that all parties had to be involved because it would hamstring the process. If they wanted to move a process, the key parties had to come together first and they were the teacher representatives and the administration. On the issue of budget, if they moved to site-based budgeting without taking care of the climate in the schools the teachers and MCEA would resist it. A change in the climate was a prerequisite. Otherwise they would have a lot of little dictators with money to spend. Resources were key, but he disagreed that the resources were not there. They did have to work smarter, but he believed the resources were there to a much greater extent than the report allowed. The numbers about a shrunken fiscal pie were open to question. He said that MCEA would not be here raising this agenda if this were about old battles. They were extremely serious about moving forward with this because anyone who was in the classroom knew that change had to happen, and MCEA wanted it to happen right and to be a key component in that change.

Mr. Ewing observed that he had been in on a lot of wars while serving on the Board of Education, some long and some short, and some whose outcome was totally unclear. This was the nature of the culture in Montgomery County, not just in the schools but in the county as a whole. Board members had had great difficulty in reaching some kind of consensus about change and the mechanisms for change. He said it was hard to get the Board to agree on any

fundamental kind of change, witness the 12 years it took to get an early childhood education policy adopted. It was his view that it was not that the Board was unwilling to engage in serious discussions with MCEA and others but that the Board was engaged in addressing so many issues with such intensity that they had difficulty in focusing on key issues. He did not think they were bogged down in micromanagement, but they were involved in a range of issues. He tended to agree with Mr. Simon that the recipe for stalemate was to engage everyone at once because nothing would happen. On the other hand, the Board from time to time had called on outsiders to give advice. They had the Excellence in Teaching report and the Corporate Partnership report and now the report of the Long-range Planning group. He hoped that the Board would spend more time with each other, teachers, and other stakeholders to seek more consensus about the nature and direction of change.

Mr. Ewing said it was important to find a way to move from where they were. He noted that the math and science policy was genuinely revolutionary and the early childhood policy would be, if they had the money. However, they had not changed their mechanisms for decision making very much, and they had not found good ways to do that. He thought they were not going to do this by simply speaking in general terms. They needed to move from the general to the specific by discussing what they wanted to happen and what it would mean to change views about education. They lacked time to explore issues with stakeholders, and if they did take the time to talk to everyone, the greater the likelihood they would find that they had encouraged people to come forward with ideas that contradicted those of other groups. Therefore, the Board had to see that there were significant educational benefits in whatever changes were made. This was something the Board had to do on its own. Until the Board did this, it would be hard for them to engage in discussions with anyone with the prospect of any success coming out of that process. The Board did not know what it wanted to do and did not yet have a vision of how things might be. If they sat down with MCEA and MCCPTA, they might find eight different views among Board members on how to proceed. The Board itself needed to develop clear notions of how to proceed.

Ms. Gutierrez commented that as a Board they were not ready to take the step to engage in what was presented in the report. Transforming the school system was a major challenge and a commitment the Board would have to make. She envied MCEA because they could come to agreement on a unified position. She knew it was not based on one recent discussion but on years of considering the issues and necessary changes. She was frustrated by the lack of will of the Board to look squarely in the face of issues before it and to make the necessary commitments when there was some risk involved. She felt that the minute there was risk the Board tended to shy away, and coming up with consensus gave

the Board an excuse to continue the discussion but not take action. They needed to say what they were about as a Board and as a school system. If they were able to do this, they should because they were running out of time. If they waited for a foolproof plan, they would not succeed. All of these things had to do with real displays of leadership. MCEA was proposing that they engage in a real dialogue about the fundamental existence of the school system rather than an annual meeting with the Board. She reported that she had proposal different things that they could do as a Board, but the Board seemed to put up barriers.

Mrs. Gordon remarked that she shared some of the frustration. She had been on the other side of the table for a long time, and there was nothing new in the long-range report. It had been said time and time again. It had been brought to the Board by all of the stakeholders at various times. She did not see how they could ignore this. They had employees, parents, and the corporate partnership coming to them, and the Board had to take some action. This was the year to stop talking and do something. Not everything would work, but if they did not take the risk they would not know if it would work. Everyone had to make significant changes because their students, the county, the workforce, and the tools were changing. She did not see as many of the obstacles as others might. MCEA was facing these issues, and all of the other stakeholders had come to the same conclusions.

Ms. Cullison concluded that if the Board did not take action they would be taking a big risk. They risked credibility, being called intransigent and unwilling to move. The Board commissioned the report because it recognized there were problems. If the Board ignored the report, the public would know they ignored it.

Mrs. Robinson pointed out that the report suggested a meeting where everyone could come together in a forum on an employee/management partnership. They could also work together to formulated the professional development institute. Their colleagues in Kentucky had set a good example, and MCEA had many more examples of employees and management working together across the country. She felt it was about time they stopped talking about this and started doing it. If this was not going to happen, they were not interested because there were many more things they could expend their energy on.

Mr. Ewing noted that the Board received lots of advice. When they asked a group to be an advisory committee, they rarely had a clear notion of what they would come up with. Sometimes the Board was pleasantly surprised, and sometimes they accepted some, none, or all of the recommendations. He thought they need to have the time to come to some resolution on these issues.

Mrs. Robinson asked for feedback from the Board on the full retirement issue. They had received a letter from the Board, and they wanted to know what the issues were and when they planned to revisit this. Mrs. Fanconi explained that they did not feel they could implement the plan this year, and they had turned it back to the superintendent for consideration for next year. Mrs. Robinson offered their services in facilitating the process.

Mrs. Fanconi thanked the members of MCEA and noted that they had given the Board a number of challenges. She hoped they would receive the appendices from the long-range report within the month. Ms. Gutierrez was concerned because they did not have a timeframe for action and felt the Board needed to come up with an action plan for the report.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

PLV:mlw