

March 20, 1995

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
March 20, 1995

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Monday, March 20, 1995, at 8:40 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Beatrice B. Gordon, President
 in the Chair
 Mr. Stephen Abrams
 Dr. Alan Cheung
 Ms. Wendy Converse
 Mr. Blair G. Ewing
 Mr. Reginald Felton
 Ms. Ana Sol Gutierrez
 Mrs. Nancy King

Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Paul L. Vance, Superintendent
 Mrs. Katheryn W. Gemberling, Deputy
 Mr. Larry A. Bowers, Acting Deputy
 Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

Re: ANNUAL MEETING WITH MCCPTA

Mrs. Gordon welcomed members of MCCPTA to the annual meeting with the Board of Education.

Mrs. Luella Mast, president of MCCPTA, suggested that next year the Board schedule three meetings with MCCPTA, one in early fall, one in the winter, and one in late spring. She was very positive about MCCPTA activities this year with the exception of their not having an area vice president for old Area 2. She provided the Board with samples of their meeting agendas and noted that they had borrowed some ideas from the Board including the designations of information, action, and discussion as well as the consent calendar.

Mrs. Mast reported that they did circulate all correspondence to keep their executive board informed. They had an outreach effort with the Chinese community to get more parents involved with their local PTAs. They had made an extra effort to get chairs for all their committees and had broadened the topics considered in delegate assemblies. In addition, they had held an officers retreat which enabled them to do some restructuring and add more vice presidents, and in May they would meet again to focus on their administrative structure. They were using technology to communicate with their clusters, and they continued to work on Spotlight and would be starting to use bulk mail for this publication.

Mrs. Michelle Meier, child care committee, explained that their goal was to promote readily available quality child care services before and after school. They were concerned about children going home to an empty house and about children needing care on early release and professional days. They used the committee as a source of information on child care in the county and communicated with the Board, County Council, county government, and

other policy makers in the community.

Mrs. Meier stated that they wanted to highlight the critical need for child care in the county. The committee described what was working well and where there were gaps. They worked with parents because of problems in the quality, affordability, and availability of child care. Parents now knew what steps to take to improve services offered at their school, and the committee worked with child care providers to help solve some of the problems families were facing. However, in a recent report they learned that about 15 child care facilities operating in MCPS could be displaced because of increasing student enrollment, and the committee would continue to work with the policy makers to resolve this issue.

Mr. Walter Lange, middle school committee, reported that they had held a successful middle school forum on February 28. A number of principals were present to give an overview of the policy and its implementation. They were fortunate in getting the program televised and rebroadcast. One thing that was clear was middle school principals needed support and teachers needed training to implement the policy. They were concerned about the broad variability in the implementation of the program including concerns about grouping practices and teaming. Ideally there should be 120 students with four or five teachers, but they had heard about teams approaching 200 which detracted from the learning process because the program depended on close personal relationships between staff and students. Another piece was mid level athletics because of the variability in the delivery of the intramural program. Mr. Lange stated that the key point was that they needed additional support to implement the mid level program.

Speaking for the technology committee, Mr. Lange commented that he was participating in the technology user review board. They had held only one meeting although there was supposed to be one a month. He had recently seen the Corporate Partnership discuss the need for milestones and resources. He believed that the community was concerned that MCPS was committing more than could be delivered in the global access plan. They wanted to see more access to the learning resource hubs. Senior staff had said that the hubs were up and running, but apparently access was limited because of a licensing issue. He thought that if everyone could dial it this would build credibility.

Mrs. Mary Meyerson, parent involvement committee, stated that yesterday's newspaper had an article about the importance of parental involvement in the success of children. Her committee needed to work out how this involvement happened. She was receiving a lot of phone calls from parents who wanted to know how they could be involved and how they found out information. She remarked that unless you knew the questions, it was difficult to get the answers. PTA asked her about broadening their membership to attract non-white parents and males. She brainstormed with the parents about the needs in their community and their demographics. She agreed that local PTA and MCCPTA needed to work on ways to make this happen. It took time for change, and they could not expect to see results overnight. In her own community, it had taken over a year to get this involvement. The second part of her job was to put PTAs in touch with each other. She would love to have a way to communicate easily with non-English speaking parents. While MCPS ESOL staff had been wonderful in providing support, there was only so much they could do. In her own community they had been able to identify Spanish and Korean parents to do translating for them.

Mrs. Charlotte Joseph, training committee, started with some of the questions she used in her training and pointed out that two million children were being raised by grandparents, 18 percent of the world's population was white, and only 25 percent of U.S. households

had a child in school. These questions gave them one reason for starting the training program. They trained new PTA officers and ran workshops on advocacy. They also assisted parents by phone and in workshops. The most popular workshop they offered was on homework. She explained that it was their mission to encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools, and her committee had been working in cooperation with other MCCPTA committees on removing barriers to parental involvement in education. They also worked with MCPS staff on training, and several weeks ago they had done a training session for B-CC High School staff at the request of the Coalition. However, their primary training was offered for PTAs on bylaws, elections, time management, and divided communities. They discussed goals and establishing a plan for meeting those goals.

Ms. Converse asked if the discussion on intramural sports was in place of an interscholastic program. Mr. Lange replied that as to the reinstatement of interscholastics, the staff felt that because of the budget and middle school philosophy, that was unlikely to occur. The problem was that intramural sports were not strongly supported or participated in.

Ms. Converse asked if they had a student liaison with MCCPTA. Mrs. Joseph replied that in the past there had been a representative from student government, but not recently. Mr. Lange felt that at the local schools there was active participation.

In regard to child care, Mr. Felton asked if there was much discussion about that care being offered in the school or just about having more providers. Mrs. Meier replied that for a lot of families the preferred location was the local school because it allowed children to participate in afterschool activities. However, if the quality of a program was high and transportation was available, parents would support a program in a different location. She pointed out that there were some geographical locations where no child care was available; however, about 70 elementary schools had school-based child care.

Mr. Felton asked if they had any examples from this past year where parent involvement increased and where this could be tied to a specific action. Mrs. Meyerson replied that it had happened in Gaithersburg and at her home school where they had increased Hispanic participation through a multicultural event. She was now seeing a difference in the color and texture in the halls as well. Parents were volunteering more frequently and were more likely to come on open house days; however, this increase in participation had taken a lot of hard work over a year's time. They now had some Asian families participating, and they were working to improve more black families. She agreed with Mr. Felton that sending out materials in the native language and the ethnic festival had made a significant difference because people wanted to know what was coming up and where to ask their questions. They had to know that their lack of English was not a barrier. She personally tried to use her limited skill with Spanish to communicate with families which helped to break down barriers with them.

Mrs. Joseph reported that Gaithersburg High School had held an articulation meeting. They provided interpreters and child care and invited parents to have dinner with the teachers. Over 350 people showed up and stayed for the meeting. She felt that people would turn out if they had a good program to attend.

Ms. Gutierrez hoped that they were working with the ICB on child care issues and encouraged MCCPTA to work closely because ICB approved the program. They also facilitated health care and the provision of subsidies for parents. She knew how difficult it was to get a program going, and they had to work closely with ICB to accomplish this.

March 20, 1995

She was delighted to hear about MCCPTA's training and would be interested in learning more about the work of their committees, perhaps through written committee recommendations.

Dr. Cheung commented that if they kept children occupied, children did not have time to get into trouble. Many Asian families did just this with afterschool activities and week-end school. Mrs. Meier remarked that she was a big supporter of afterschool enrichment programs. In fact, the program at her school was threatened because of population growth, but parents petitioned that the program remain. Dr. Cheung suggested that they might want to consider using older students to tutor and mentor younger students. If the economic situation improvement, the older students could be compensated for their efforts. He said that to teach was to learn, and they needed to encourage children to do just that.

Mr. Tom Hill, long-range facilities planning committee, stated that First Call was going to bring people together. It was in the prototype schools and was going to grow, but the board needed to put more money into this and buy more equipment. His committee had a forum in December on global access and one in January on modernizations. On April 26, they planned to have a meeting on consortiums because of the interest in BEKS. On May 10, they intended to hold another forum on the capital budget.

Mr. Hill explained that after these meetings he wrote up draft position papers and shared them with others by fax. Then after a number of revisions, the papers went to the MCCPTA executive board. Next year they planned to get more delegates involved in this process and to lobby to be more effective. He had had to learn about global access and communicated with principals, PTA presidents, and media specialists. In fact, he had been conducting meetings on Sundays in his home.

Mr. Hill stated that they needed more time with the capital budget in order to lobby. For example, when the capital budget came out in November they had only 14 days to develop a position. He suggested that staff should work on these issues over the summer in order to give PTA some idea of where they were headed. He looked upon this as site-based management because they needed to know where MCPS was coming from and have a dialogue. They did not need to wait until November 1. They could be working with Chambers of Commerce over the summer to educate people about global access and what was meant by a school modernization. He would like to sponsor a tour for business people and county leaders to see their schools and what their taxes were going for. He and others would be willing to lobby for more funds if they knew what they were lobbying for. For this reason, the Facilities Assessment with Criteria and Testing (FACT) program was important. They needed to do a better job of communicating and educating so that PTA could lobby neighbors and senior citizens who did not have children in the public schools. FACT would determine how much a project was going to cost and what needed to be done. He knew that Baltimore had a two-year facilities cycle, but Montgomery County's capital budget changed from year to year. It would help them with planning to have a two-year budget which would allow them to build more consensus, get more money, and spend it wisely.

Mrs. Gordon asked if they still had the May facilities meetings to talk about cluster issues. Mr. Bowers replied that there would be a meeting on May 10. Mrs. Gordon recalled that in the past these meetings had been done by areas. People would get together and talk about issues in Blair, Springbrook, Kennedy, etc. to know what the capital budget might contain. Mr. Hill said that the May meeting would cover the growth communities and the

March 20, 1995

established communities, but they had no plans to do it by area. Mrs. Gordon asked if MCPS was planning to do this, and Mr. Bowers replied that they would work within the structure of the meetings they had scheduled. He would sit down with Mr. Hill to plan this in an effort to get more interest and more involvement.

Mr. Felton asked if there had been serious discussions about a capital budget beyond the one-year funding. Mr. Abrams reported that this had been discussed, but he did not see any real movement toward multi-year budgeting. Mr. Ewing added that the Board now had a long-range planning subcommittee, and he anticipated that the committee would look at these issues. He invited Mr. Hill and others to attend these sessions. The Board had adopted a resolution to move in the direction of a much closer correlation between the capital and operating budgets, and he agreed that they needed to focus on the multi-year budget issue. He invited people to attend the May 1 meeting of the subcommittee.

Mr. Sheldon Fishman stated that they needed to gather data and get at the substance of the issues. For example, 87 schools needed to be modernized but only 24 were on the list of modernizations. They had been trying to do four schools a year, and they needed to be doing 18. Mr. Hill added that next year they planned to work with Howard, Frederick, and Anne Arundel counties on facilities issues. Ms. Gutierrez asked whether the PTA could lobby, and Mrs. Mast explained that this was not really lobbying, it was educating people. Ms. Gutierrez requested that any position papers developed by MCCPTA be faxed to the Board as well.

Mr. David Koss, operating budget committee, stated that it was interesting that a discussion of the operating budget would be concluding this evening's discussion. A discussion of the various substantive issues needed to done in the context of how much money there was to spend. They were living in a mature county, in a mature state, and in a mature country where the fiscal situation was a tight one. The political move to expand the revenue base was not as it once was, and the budget was being scrutinized in a way it had never been before.

Mr. Koss stated that in 1993-94 their executive board and delegate assembly adopted the Compact, which reaffirmed positions MCCPTA had taken for several years. It was an operating document from which MCCPTA positions were derived, and if the Board looked at MCCPTA's budget testimony they would see it fell from these principles. Many of them chose to live in Montgomery County because of the public schools, and they were concerned that their children be educated as well as they could. Not only did their children deserve the best, but parents must demand the best in terms of the public schools.

Mr. Koss stated that their first principle was that MCCPTA would not support any budget that increased class size or otherwise failed to honor their priorities. They were in a time when they had to look carefully at the building blocks of the budget used to operate the schools. They had long believed it was essential to keep actual and average class size down, and this required a careful look at the underlying assumptions of the budget. They had to look at the school system creatively and from the bottom up. They had to find a way to allow the county executive, the electorate, and the parents to understand the budget and to debate everything that went into the budget. He hoped that they would be able to look at the FY 1997 operating budget as soon as possible and even before the end of this school year.

Mr. Koss said MCCPTA believed that the Council must raise the spending affordability mark to realistic levels to permit the development of budgets that include the cost

increases reasonably necessary to provide high-quality education during rapid student enrollment growth. They believed the increased level of compensation agreed to by the Board for employees was fair, and that the Council could accept this recommendation. At the same time, MCCPTA would argue that increasing class size should not be the result of agreeing to increased compensation for employees. MCCPTA called upon the Board to modify the way in which future contracts were negotiated to ensure greater public accountability during collective bargaining. Other counties were doing this, and Montgomery County should consider it.

Mr. Koss reported that MCCPTA was calling upon the Board of Education to explore the use of incentive in future contracts. They strongly favored true site-based management. MCPS must alter its budget process so that information provided to policymakers and the public fostered critical analysis of educational costs. Long-range planning was essential for the operating and capital budgets. Mr. Koss said that efficiencies had been recommended by the Corporate Partnership and others, and when these were made they should be put on the table. Reports should not sit on a shelf and gather dust. They needed to take these reports a lot more seriously because he did not think the fiscal situation was temporary. He thought it was the new reality for the next generation. He did feel very positive about this Board of Education, the superintendent, and the staff and believed they had done a lot of good work in the budget process.

Mr. Abrams stated that while it was nice for MCCPTA to talk about squeezing more out of the budget, he would like some specificity. As far as the recommendations of the Corporate Partnership, most recommendations were being implemented with the exception of the one on contracting out transportation. However, this recommendation was to "explore" this possibility, and the Board had done that. He agreed with MCCPTA in terms of more accountability in subsequent negotiations. He thought there had to be a recognition of the cycle in negotiations. There were differences in the process when the full contract was open versus a reopener for salary purposes.

Mr. Abrams remarked that he was strongly supportive of global technology because it offered a different approach to providing instructional services. It changed the role of the teacher from sole provider of information to that of manager of education. This had ramifications for the class size issue, and he was not sure that MCCPTA fully explored that relationship. He would presume they were focusing on class size not because of size but because they wanted to ensure the delivery of a solid education, and he would presume if there were other ways of delivering this education that were more cost effective or contemporary that MCCPTA would consider them. Mr. Koss replied that clearly any change in class size would have to run parallel with an increasingly technological mode. If everything were on the table and they saw a clear plan of moving to a different modality of instruction, they would consider this. But as long as they were in a prototype situation on technology, they would want no changes in class size. Mr. Abrams said that MCCPTA was taking a position to focus global access on the high schools first which would suggest they were moving beyond the prototype situation. They also had the consortium, and he thought that at least at the high school level PTA would probably be less concerned about class size and more concerned about the introduction of technology.

Dr. Cheung commented that when they talked about class size, they were emphasizing more individualized learning for the child and more interactions between teaching and learning. A smaller class size did not necessarily mean the child would learn. It depended on the programs in that class. A Council member had asked about the cost benefit of global technology, and Dr. Cheung had told him that they needed the equipment before

they could see the programs. Dr. Cheung noted that years ago a secretary needed a typewriter and carbon paper, but now that person was supported by a computer, a fax machine, a copier, etc. Although the equipment costs were higher, today's secretary was much more productive. He pointed out that it took lead time for global technology, and when they completed their plan in six years they would have to ask for more because the technology would be obsolete. He thought that they would see a payoff in a few years with an increase in productivity and learning, but this was difficult to measure.

With respect to recommendations from committees, Mr. Ewing said that the Board asked for recommendations, listened to the recommendations, and implemented those that seemed reasonable. There were times when the assumption was made that an advisory group knew more than the Board and the school system. These groups did have a different perspective, and that was the value of a committee. Nevertheless, it was not appropriate to expect that everything a group said should be implemented. He noted that there were disagreements among Board members, but these were resolved by majority vote.

Regarding fiscal reality, Mr. Ewing said it was the political will and climate and what money was available, and it was a function of the Council, the executive, and the state to decide what the fiscal reality was. The question for the Board was the extent to which they wanted to provide an alternative version. In the fall they heard from the county that the fiscal situation in the county was bleak. The intention of all of this was to ensure that the Board offered budgets that were within some reasonable limits; however, in the spring, the revenue estimates rose which permitted the Council to appear to be more generous in the spring. This was part of the great quadrille of the budget process--two steps forward and two steps back and three to the side. He said that they had to recognize that the decision about what was available was not only a function of that game but also of what it was that other people might take as an alternative view. For example, why should they assume that it was certain that the Council would allow all of the excise taxes to expire. If they did not allow them all to expire, the entire school system budget request could be funded. Mr. Ewing thought this was a good idea.

Mr. Ewing stated that the result of the Duncan budget, if approved, would force the Board, the community, and others to come to grips with what might be a Hobson's choice between class size increases and no compensation increases. The Board had been there before, and it was not pleasant. PTA had said that if it came to a choice, compensation should lose. He hoped that it did not come to this. They had to be prepared to examine the budget carefully. He had been a teacher and had not taken a class of more than 15. He believed in lower class size, and while they could not prove the relationship between academic achievement and class size, they should be sensitive to the needs of that teacher. It was easy to say there could be savings in the budget, but previous cuts had eliminated theaw options. Mr. Ewing did not see that there was flexibility left to permit them to make easy choices. There would have to be program choices. He had proposed that they limited their contributions to the unfunded accrued liability account as a nonrecommended reduction, but this was fiscally irresponsible and something that could be done only once. He thought that all options for reductions were unattractive, but unless their budget was funded they would have to face some of these choices.

Mrs. Mast hoped that MCCPTA had given the Board some information to work with. PTA was growing stronger, but they could not do this without the help of MCPS staff. She thanked the members of the Board for the opportunity to meet with them this evening.

March 20, 1995

RESOLUTION NO. 225-95

Re: CLOSED SESSION - MARCH 20, 1995

On recommendation of the superintendent and on motion of Mr. Abrams seconded by Ms. Gutierrez, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

WHEREAS, The Board of Education of Montgomery County is authorized by the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and Title 10 of the State Government Article to conduct certain meetings or portions of its meetings in closed session; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education of Montgomery County hereby conduct a portion of its meeting on Monday, March 20, 1995, at 9:40 p.m. to discuss personnel matters; and be it further

Resolved, That this meeting be conducted in Room 120 of the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, as permitted under Section 4-106, Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and State Government Article 10-501; and be it further

Resolved, That such meeting shall continue in closed session until the completion of business.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

PLV:mlw