

APPROVED
4-2008

Rockville, Maryland
January 23, 2008

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in a work session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Wednesday, January 23, 2008, at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Ms. Nancy Navarro, President
in the Chair
Mr. Steve Abrams
Mr. Christopher Barclay
Ms. Shirley Brandman
Ms. Sharon Cox
Dr. Judy Docca
Mr. Ben Moskowitz
Mrs. Patricia O'Neill
Dr. Jerry Weast, Secretary/Treasurer

Absent: None

Pledge of Allegiance

Overview of the Superintendent's FY 2009 Recommended Operating Budget

- Revenue issues
- Enrollment Changes
- Program reductions and realignments
- Productivity improvements

Re: **DISCUSSION**

Ms. Cox asked staff about the special education projections for next year. Staff replied that the forecast is based on a peak and average enrollment during the preceding year.

As a follow up to the hearings, Ms. Cox asked about the reduction for language immersion programs. Since two positions will be lost, how many are there all together? Staff replied that there were 30 positions at the elementary level. Also, staff is reevaluating positions for special programs and if the need still exists.

Ms. Navarro noted that there were specific immersion positions identified. The positions in immersion are there to help students perform since there is a variance of proficiency at the school level. There are formative assessments that need to be translated.

Ms. Brandman wanted to know if there will be a change in class sizes due to the reduction in release periods. Also, the positions are still being used to support changes in the

magnets. Staff replied that the intent is not to increase class size and take positions away that have class assignments. In the case of the secondary positions, positions have remained in the magnet and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs.

Ms. Navarro thought that part of the discussion is to understand what goes into deciding the budget. There could be the argument that this is not the time to be adding the parent community coordinators. The Board needs to be very strategic on its decisions given the fiscal climate.

Mrs. O'Neill thought the work sessions would consider very few positions. The entire Board realizes that the fiscal situation is dire and last longer than this year. The board's number one priority is to protect a quality education for every child. Every position and every function needs to be evaluated. Ms. Cox stated that it was her concern that the public understood the impact and rationale of budget reductions.

Regarding speech/language pathologists, Ms. Cox wanted trend data on enrollment and staffing projections.

ALIGNING INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS WITH THE BOARD'S ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

Organize and optimize resources for improved academic results.

- Increase in number of focus schools
- Lunch hour aide coverage of recess
- Guidance counselors
- Elementary school assistant principals
- Overview of business operations
 - ✓ Transportation
 - ✓ Financial Management
 - ✓ Maintenance

Re: DISCUSSION

Mrs. O'Neill noted that counselors had been added to the budget; however, the strategic planning forums had testimony from students about the need for more high school counselors. She asked for a list of schools, enrollment, number of counselors, and ratio of students to counselors.

Mr. Abrams inquired about the elementary school assistant principals. If there are fewer resources, the real challenge is at the school in terms of having the ability to react to changing circumstances through managerial interventions. The completion of the increase in assistant principals would be practical. Staff agreed with Mr. Abrams assessment of the situation. Mr. Abrams wanted to maximize the system in order to react to changing

circumstances in a resource limited environment, and the assistant principal positions should be filled sooner rather than later. Staff replied that this gives the system the ability to enhance programs and allows a variety of things, such as student support.

Mrs. O'Neill stated that she appreciated the need for assistant principals at the elementary level. There is a big difference between one assistant principal at a large elementary schools versus adding an assistant principal at a small elementary school. Dr. Weast replied that the collaboration of staff determined the roll out for increasing assistant principals.

Mrs. O'Neill pointed out that this is a recommended budget for the Board's consideration with stakeholder input. When the Board approves the budget, there could be changes. Ms. Brandman asked what schools would receive the 10 added assistant principals, and the size of those schools.

Mr. Barclay wanted a conversation on the focus schools, and one of the issues to support teachers through training and development. He noticed reductions in the Skillful Teacher Project and instructional specialists. Staff stated that there is efficiency of professional development and when and if teachers take advantage of this service. The Skillful Teacher training will become more customized. The savings is not a reduction in the work, but in efficiencies. Mr. Barclay thought the evaluation should look at the effectiveness of the Skillful Teacher training.

Ms. Cox was interested in training for lunch hour aides. Since lunch hour incidents are low, she asked if the incidents could be mitigated with training or increase in staffing. Staff replied that the testimony was for structured professional development. The vision is for coordination with counselors for classroom management, safety, and anti-bullying awareness.

Ms. Cox was interested in how counselors are assigned to schools. Is it by number of students and/or needs of those students?

Align rigorous curriculum, delivery of instruction, and assessment for continuous improvement of student achievement.

- Special education - hours-based staffing, LRE support
- Technology systems
- Poolesville High – whole school magnet and extended day phase in
 - Grade 11
- IB Diploma Program at Kennedy and Seneca Valley high schools

Re: **DISCUSSION**

Mr. Abrams asked about the IB diploma programs, and what is the capacity to transfer into

the schools. Staff replied that it is a policy issue, and staff is sensitive to the issue of drawing students from other schools. As more IB programs are created, the students will remain at their home school. In the meantime, if one school is opened to enrollment, the other schools may need to be opened to IB enrollment. Ms. Cox noted that the Transfer Policy is hardship and not for program transfers.

Mr. Barclay thought that the Middle School Magnet Consortium had a larger number of slots from outside the area. He understood the concern for attracting the “high fliers” to another school. In the consortium, there is a choice process. Ms. Navarro though there was a need to have a comprehensive look at this situation.

Dr. Docca stated that Rockville and Watkins Mills high schools want to keep the IB, and that is a reason they want it opened to other students. Staff replied that the new IB programs are promoted that they students are not forced to get an IB certificate, but can take a course or two much as advanced placement. The IB Program is a whole school improvement and spread the concept across all classes. Ms. Navarro thanked staff for their efforts in advancing the IB program systemically to provide rigorous instruction.

Ms. Cox noted the realignments in the areas of technology within the budget with all the supports to increase efficiency.

Ms. Brandman asked about the staffing decisions in special education for a total increase of 30 positions. She wanted to know how that number was calculated. Staff replied that the children receiving more than 15 hours already in least restrictive environment (LRE A), and OSP has added positions based on current class size allocations in general education encouraging co-teaching with special educators.

Ms. Brandman remarked about the middle school report pilot, and those schools were able to have hours-based staffing. Since there will be nine more schools, Ms. Brandman asked how three more hours-based staffing schools were ascertained. Staff replied that the decision was made on the schools that were not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for special education only.

Mr. Barclay asked the status of the Financial Management System and if there is any savings that will be realized. Staff replied that the work continues and feedback has been received from stakeholders to identify areas to be strengthened. Some suggested enhancements have been released with the support of the integrator.

Ms. Cox asked about the Entrepreneurial Fund and whether MCPS had the ability to market services to other agencies, such as graphics and publishing. Staff stated that services are provided for fees to many organizations.

Expand and deliver literacy-based initiatives from pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 to support student achievement.

- Update on literacy-based resources
- Update on High School Plus
- Updates on Academic Intervention Programs for Students
- PBIS – Positive Behavior Interventions and Support

Re: **DISCUSSION**

Ms. Brandman noted the demographics and allocations supporting literacy. She asked if that staffing was adequate. Staff stated that at this time the staffing is adequate because the system is in the initial phases of adding literacy coaches. The evaluation to ascertain if the positions are effective must precede assignment of additional staff. Furthermore, the testing of students will provide information on the effectiveness of these positions.

Mr. Barclay noted that students have made incredible gains in reading in K-2. However, as students move through the grades, their reading does not remain at a high level. When there is a literacy coach, should the student progress in assessments, such as MAP-R? Staff replied that a student can make progress but not jump ahead because there is an expectation of growth. The system has not at this point tied expected growth to a literacy coach.

Mr. Barclay wanted to know how MCPS measures the success of the literacy coach. He was concerned about how effective the system can be with students who are severely underdeveloped in reading skills. What is remediation? Dr. Weast stated that the kindergarten students are instructed in reading; however, there are students that move into the district later in the school careers who are not functional readers at grade level. Therefore, the system supplements beginning in Grade 3 with math and literacy coaches. MAP-R drills down to the interventions required for those students. Finally, the interventions are very intensive and expensive, and it is difficult to maintain that capacity based on the number of children enrolling with critical needs.

Ms. Cox thought that literacy coaches work with staff members; therefore, there is no direct correlation between a child's progress and a coach. However, there could be a correlation between the cohort that a teacher has and the support from the literacy coach resulting in gains for the students. Staff replied that the coaches would be in content areas, and the model described is correct that a coach works with the teacher to provide support and strategies for instruction.

Ms. Cox stated that the Office of Organizational Development has a model for the evaluation of instruction and academic performance. Since the literacy coach is support for the school staff, the way to look at the efficacy of the position would be similar to the way we measure the effectiveness of staff development.

Ms. Navarro thought the importance of staff development as it relates to the student

achievement. When sending the message to the state and County Council, the Board needs to connect to all of these aspects to student achievement. It is challenging to deliver rigorous education when there are issues of mobility and poverty. With flexibility, the system has been able to adjust to the student. The nation is looking to Montgomery County because there is achievement, and as leaders understand resource allocations. The in-depth conversations must continue.

Ms. Brandman pointed out that the Middle School Reform has five literacy coaches for Phase 1 and for Phase 2, there will be two more coaches. Mr. Barclay was concerned that there is a huge need and the system must get it right. Dr. Weast agreed that once the gap is closed there must be interventions as the student progress since the consequences are intensified. Mrs. O'Neill thought that the Board must advocate for these children. Ms. Navarro agreed and pointed out that there has been increased community advocacy for the children who have needs because of mobility, poverty, and ESOL.

Ms. Brandman noted that PBIS is for elementary as well as secondary students, and she asked who the leaders are in the schoolhouse. Staff replied that the principal meets with staff to get buy-in because it is a school-wide program, but it does require a coach which could be a counselor or staff development teacher, for example.

Ms. Brandman asked if the system was able to attract the teachers needed and whether there were budget implications for High School Plus. Staff replied that the system is on course and the program has exceeded expectations. There have been positive gains with the students in the first marking period; however, there still is a challenge recruiting staff.

Mr. Barclay asked what the process was for assuring that the students knew that High School Plus was an option. Staff stated it has to be scheduled when the school knows what the need will be and who the students are in order to provide the right classes and teachers.

Ms. Cox remarked that a question that has been raised by the community is the number of instructional specialists in the system. There has been some realignment and the title is shared by many professionals but there are very different roles. Staff replied that the specialists write curriculum, support ESOL instruction, support consortium office and vertical articulation, and offer expertise in several areas of instruction.

Ms. Cox stated that there could be a theme of instructional specialists is bridging the information between central office and the schools. Staff replied that is part of their jobs and professional development; furthermore, the pay classification does not describe what a position does in the system. They also assure that the curriculum is standardized throughout the system.

Ms. Cox thought it is important to make the operating budget more transparent that shows support for schools.

The work session ended at 10:25 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JDW:gr