

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
January 24, 2008

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in work session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Thursday, January 24, 2008, at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Mrs. 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

ALIGNING INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS WITH THE BOARD'S ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

Develop, pilot, and expand improvements in secondary content, instruction, and program that support students' active engagement in learning.

- Expansion of Middle School Reform
- Update on Middle School Magnet Consortium
- Expansion of Middle School Magnet Consortium Programs
- Support for ESOL Students with Interrupted Education (SEPA)

DISCUSSION

Ms. Cox inquired about the Middle School Reform (MSR) and the need for staff development. How does this compare with the early childhood initiative? How much staff development is still supporting the early childhood initiative. How does the middle school differ? Were there best practices learned MS School Reform in a more fiscally responsible manner? Staff responded that there are components on which staff can build the MSR, such as the Professional Learning Community Institute (PLCI) which was highly successful in building leadership capacity. Also, staff learned that math content specialists were important as well as literacy specialists.

Ms. Cox remembered that was a reference for money for school staff to get together for collaboration. Staff replied that was for 75 hours for MSR to provide planning time. PLCI has a whole day for instruction and application.

For MSR, 141 teachers are certified in math and training is available, but not required. Is there anything in the budget that supports all middle school math teachers have content knowledge? Staff stated that new teachers are required content training. However, continued professional development courses are available for teachers to use to get training and build toward certification. These courses are currently under review for capacity, funding, and innovation in providing content knowledge.

Mr. Barclay inquired about the eleven middle schools that did not make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2007. Of the 14 middle schools programmed for MSR, he asked if it included all of the eleven schools. What are the trends, and how will the schools be targeted for improvement? Staff explained that schools will apply for MSR, and the Office of School Performance (OSP) has a process in place to address AYP.

Regarding MSR, Mr. Barclay wanted to know what are the measures of success. Staff explained that there were seven targets are key for success. In middle school, there is an expectation that students should be able to complete algebra by the end of eighth grade, perform at grade level, curriculum-based assessment, meet AYP, rigor across content areas, student engagement, as examples of the seven targets. Furthermore, the staff will continue to monitor the day-to-day instruction for rigor.

Mr. Barclay asked for the record what is student engagement. Staff replied that the teacher is a facilitator with students engaged in discussions with one another, level of questioning from the teacher to generate dialogue, and where students activity owning their learning. Ms. Cox stated that there are other measures that the system will be looking at to determine success, such as attendance and suspension rates.

Dr. Weast pointed out if there is not a distributed accountability system for each level which prepares the student for the next grade, the student will not be able to master the curriculum on or above grade level.

Ms. Brandman noted that when the Board speaks to the priorities there is a connection between all initiatives. For MSR, the budget has 23 new positions and 34 realigned for the nine additional schools. Where were those positions last year that will be realigned? Staff replied that the Accelerated and Enriched Instruction (AEI) math specialists and the math resource teachers.

Ms. Brandman asked if there was a timeline for the complete roll out of the MSR. Dr. Weast explained that MSR must be funded to do it right. Ms. Brandman recalled that MSR would cost \$332,000 for each middle school which does not include hours-based staffing for special education. Is there anything that will not be available that was in the pilot or Phase 1? Staff replied there is nothing deleted, but there will be adjustments when the implementation has been reviewed.

Dr. Weast pointed out that the funding in this budget is for nine MSR schools and three

middle school magnet consortium schools. Ms. Cox asked about the magnet middle school funding. Staff responded that there will be renewed federal funding and, if not renewed, 11.5 teaching positions will be eliminated.

Mrs. O'Neill understood that the county has limited funds. However, middle school is a critical piece where there is a gap. She wondered if the funds were better spent on MSR rather than parent outreach coordinators. She asked if there was a capacity in the system to increase the number of schools for MSR. Dr. Weast was concerned about the budget and funding for more schools to be added to MSR. Ms. Navarro thought that since MSR is a priority in the Strategic Plan, staff should have contemplated doing as many schools as possible as a way to strengthen student achievement. Staff listed the projects and initiatives included in the increase of \$10 million. Mrs. O'Neill pointed out that there were funds in the budget for lunch hour aides, assistant principals, and parent outreach coordinators. Obviously there is a need for these positions, but will next year have the same fiscal restraints? She offered that the Board has an obligation to middle school students to increase academic rigor. Dr. Lacey, deputy superintendent, and staff agreed that it was more of a capacity issue than funding.

Mr. Abrams commented on digitizing instructional material, and he was curious about training and delivery. For staff, there could be only a module or technique that is needed by the teacher. There could be an amalgam of best practices in order to replicate an ideal delivery system. Staff replied that there are ways to offer options on innovative instruction, and the leadership team is exploring a partnership. Ms. Navarro offered the topic as a worksession.

Mr. Barclay asked the cost per middle school for inclusion in the reform effort. What would be the cost to add 11 and 13 schools? What would be the trade-offs?

Ms. Cox wanted to know about the positions to support nine middle schools. If money is tight, she asked if there were other positions to help build capacity with the initiative without adding two more schools. In other words, adding more money to make it perfect to build capacity without expanding the number of schools.

Mrs. O'Neill stated that the bottom line for her was what it would take to support literacy and math in middle schools.

Ms. Brandman asked about the options for the middle school magnet consortium without the federal funding. Staff replied that there needs to be an evaluation to determine if there is a need to keep all the components of the model or can it be scaled back since everything is operational. As an example, the release time for teachers at \$700,000 could be reevaluated. Ms. Brandman thought this year needs to provide a model that can be replicated. She asked about the three coordinator positions, and staff replied that those positions are tied into the curriculum and professional development.

Use student, staff, school, and system performance data to monitor and improve student achievement.

- Update on the Kennedy Cluster project
- M-Stat
- Update on the Department of Shared Accountability

DISCUSSION

Ms. Cox asked the amount of for the planning of the Kennedy Cluster Project and whether that paid for the consultant and the consulting firm. She thought there was benefit in this partnership with the County Government, and she looked forward to reports on that each partner was providing.

During the M-Stat discussion, Ms. Cox asked for information on how much MCPS would need to spend to expand capacity to improve knowledge transfer processes.

Ms. Cox stated that she was pleased that the Department of Shared Accountability had a staff member to evaluate the implementation of Board Policies.

Mrs. O'Neill pointed out that the community is asking for evaluations on various initiatives. This is a very small department, and she asked if there were positions lost in this department. She was concerned about monitoring all programs. Staff assured the Board that the same number of positions were in the budget as in the past.

Ms. Brandman asked about the Program Evaluation Unit and the one specialist has been realigned from that unit. Staff stated that the level of organization allows skilled specialists flexibility within the unit.

Dr. Docca was interested in High School Plus, and she was looking forward to the upcoming report. Staff replied that there will be two briefs.

Ms. Brandman supported the flow and flexibility, and she suggested that future budgets should reflect this concept. In April, there could be a way to identify what would be evaluated if there was more capacity in this department.

Foster and sustain systems that support and improve employee effectiveness, in partnerships with MCPS employee organizations.

- Continuing and negotiated salaries
- Employee benefit programs
- Retiree health trust fund - OPEB
- Update on Organizational Development programs
- Professional Learning Communities Institute

DISCUSSION

Ms. Cox asked if there was a timeline to funding the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) requirement for retiree benefits. Staff replied that there was not a timeline, but it is guided by the prudent management and impact on the county's bond rating. Therefore, a joint county agency workgroup has established a five-year phase-in. Ms. Cox stated that there is flexibility since there is no requirement. If another option is viable, staff will make a recommendation.

Ms. Cox asked if there were improvements in the professional development for central office staff since there were no initiatives. Staff replied that there is a need to provide more training in supervisory positions. There is a workgroup looking into a plan.

Ms. Brandman inquired about dedicated resources to the co-teaching model especially in the 7th grade and how are allocations made since there is turnover in other grades where there are teachers who need to be trained. Staff replied that there is staff development in the building where the focus is the build capacity. At this time, staff is working on the list of courses that are mandatory for teachers.

Strengthen family-school relationships and continue to expand civic, business, and community partnerships that support improved student achievement.

- Parent Community Coordinators
- Update on the Parent Academy
- The Operating Budget Process and Community Involvement
- Support for students in readiness for the HSAs

DISCUSSION

On the parent community coordinator position, Mr. Cox noted that testimony from a number of different sources is that there should not be an expansion of programs and initiatives without evaluation. She was concerned that the implementation of some of these positions was inconsistent in some schools. She asked staff if this initiative is as effective as it could be with the addition of six more people. On the other hand, staff could take more time to develop a stronger program with training and evaluation which would be more successful. Staff stated that the cross functional teams are at the point this year to begin professional development in the schools to build capacity for consistency and coordination with other staff.

Ms. Navarro wanted to know where MCPS was on the one-stop shop for parents. There had been a discussion about combining units at Rocking Horse Road Center.

Mr. Barclay asked about the current comfortable with parent community coordinators and their ability to do the work as coaches in the school. What type of support or training do

these is needed? Staff explained that over the past year professional development has been a key component.

Ms. Brandman asked for a list of resources dedicated in the budget for HSA readiness.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JDW:gr