

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL POPULATIONS

May 9, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. with the following Board members and Board support staff present: Ms. Shirley Brandman (Chair), Ms. Laura Berthiaume, and Mr. Phil Kauffman, Laura Steinberg, staff assistant, and Glenda Rose, recorder.

Staff members that were present: Dr. Karen Woodson, Ms. Lori Christina Webb, Ms. Jodi Silvio, Ms. Sylvia Morrison, Mr. Erick Lang, Ms. Chris Richardson, Ms. Brenda Wilks, Ms. Maureen Ryan, Ms. Deloris Harris, and Mr. Sherwin Collette.

Minutes

The minutes from March 14, 2011, were approved.

Meeting materials are available hyperlinked to the agenda which is on the web at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe/meetings/SPEDdocs/2010-11/2011-0509/050911Agenda.pdf>

Multidisciplinary Education Training and Support (METS) Program

Dr. Karen Woodson explained that METS was designed to meet the linguistic and academic needs of English language learners who have had limited or no previous schooling or significant schooling gaps due to interrupted or disrupted education. She reported that while ESOL enrollment is increasing, fueled primarily by U.S. born students, METS enrollment is on the decline. She said this is primarily because fewer families with METS eligible students are moving to Montgomery County and because a strengthened METS curriculum has resulted in students more quickly exiting the program.

Because of the underutilization of METS resources, staff said that efforts are under way to serve elementary school METS students, to the extent practicable, in their own communities, rather than in centers, consistent with research and benchmarking with other districts. A robust discussion followed about the challenges and opportunities associated with both keeping a consolidated number of centers versus serving students in their home schools. Committee members voiced concerns about staff development, demands on homeroom teachers, and student socialization if METS centers are eliminated. They said they understood the need to save resources, but questioned why a different model was needed, given the positive student outcomes associated with the center model. Additionally, they also expressed concern about the timing of the change and lack of opportunity for public input. Staff said that they would take these concerns back to leadership.

Home and Hospital Teaching (HHT)

Mrs. Brenda Wilks provided trend data on the number of students and reasons for receiving HHT. She said that delays in getting HHT started can be attributed to processing the form requesting HHT, matching students with the appropriate content teacher, as well as challenges of coordinating meetings between the HHT teacher and student's counselor. She acknowledged that the current model is antiquated and that

efforts are already under way to create a new paradigm. As a first step, the form is now available online so that a parent can trigger the request directly if the request is for a physical/health reason or for an emotional condition.

Additionally, alternative instructional delivery models are being explored by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO). Mr. Sherwin Collette said that his staff is looking at distance learning models, with careful attention being paid to ensuring an interactive environment that will engage students and one in which the teacher will be in a facilitative role. Benchmarking has shown some districts are using Skype, some are teleconferencing, while some are employing other web-based options for HHT. OCTO has initiated a small scale pilot to improve access to HHT, as well as to improve instructional opportunities. The pilot is an initial essential step, but with no expectation of full scale implementation in the immediate future. Rather, the focus will be to identify barriers and challenges to success with a gradual ramping up of a new model, based on the pilot experiences.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.