

APPROVED
39-1980

Rockville, Maryland
December 11, 1980

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Thursday, December 11, 1980, at 8:15 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Mr. Joseph R. Barse, President Pro
Tem in the Chair
Mr. Blair G. Ewing
Dr. Marian L. Greenblatt
Mrs. Suzanne K. Peyser
Mrs. Elizabeth W. Spencer
Mrs. Carol F. Wallace
Miss Traci Williams
Mrs. Eleanor D. Zappone

Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Edward Andrews, Superintendent
of Schools
Dr. Harry Pitt, Deputy
Superintendent
Dr. Robert S. Shaffner, Executive
Assistant

Re: Continuum Education

Mr. Barse stated that the first part of the session would be reviewing the answers to questions which had been posed to the superintendent and staff by Board members. He noted that they had received answers to almost all of the questions.

Dr. Hiawatha Fountain, associate superintendent for continuum education, introduced the managers for the Office of Continuum Education. He thanked the Board for giving them an opportunity to make a presentation this evening as well as on December 15. He said that his staff had been working around the clock preparing responses to Board questions because the questions came at a time when they were all working on the budget. Dr. Fountain explained that Continuum Education was a unique administrative entity because it had a semblance of program planning and a semblance of area organization. It did operate programs within individual schools and also operated adult education programs.

Dr. Fountain explained that they had to work with a lot of different people and sometimes they might be perceived as being a little bit pushy, but he felt that they had come a long, long way in the past 24 months. He said that when he came to Montgomery County there were some feelings about no one knowing where to focus, and they said they had to work together and they had done that. He felt that their marks with the principals were very high. He said that next they would be looking at the evaluation done by

the Portny people.

He felt that attitudes and misconceptions about the delivery system of Continuum Education had changed over the past few years. He said that the outgoing transfers in Category 15 were probably the most difficult to work with; however, he felt they were making some headway. He indicated that there should be more emphasis on monitoring their programs in the schools. He remarked that overall he would have to tip his hat to the office and staff.

On behalf of the Board, Mr. Barse thanked the staff for the extra hours they had put in. He suggested they turn to Mr. Ewing's first question. Mr. Ewing indicated that he had asked a question about nonpublic placement as to whether there was a steady decline in local nonpublic placements, and there was a steady decline. He said he had a follow-up question. He was concerned by the usage by the public schools of private programs which seemed to be steadily less able to perform the services because of fewer placements. Therefore, such schools as St. Maurice did not continue in existence. He wondered why they did not continue to make use of those facilities and services. He asked whether it was because they believed they should move all children into school-system operated facilities for cost reasons, program reasons or both. Dr. Fountain replied that his position had been if the program being operated in the private sector could be operated cost effectively it would coexist. He felt that they had done this and would continue to do this. He did not want to discuss the closure of St. Maurice because he did not think the public school system had a lot to do with that closure.

Dr. Henry Shetterly, acting director of the Department of Interagency Programs and Placement, commented that the general enrollment decline throughout the county had hit everyone. He said they had moved ahead with the expansion of MCPS programs, which was not to say that they did not need the private sector. He pointed out that they had over 600 students in private placements. Dr. Thomas O'Toole, director of the Department of Multifacility Programs/Alternative Centers, added that as they looked at the figures the changes were in the numbers outside of Montgomery County because they were getting the message from the state to bring the youngsters back. Dr. Raphael Minsky, consulting psychologist, Diagnostic and Professional Support Team, explained that the Maryland state bylaw provided for private placement only in the absence of a public program. Mr. Ewing commented that there was a perception held among some people that MCPS used the bylaw as an opportunity to create programs in the public schools that eliminated the need for private schools. They were deciding in every case that MCPS should do it and the private sector should not. He said it was not clear what they were doing. He felt it was important to come to grips with that as a Board policy.

Mr. Ewing said his next question had to do with how Continuum Education estimated its workload and, therefore, its costs and what estimates were utilized in budget development. He said the answer

was they did it the way the state said to do it, which was nice but did not tell him in an analytic way what was done. He said that there were questions posed regarding whether they could rely on the estimates of need and the numbers of children to be served. He said that the Board had questioned the estimates and had had to go back to the county for a supplemental appropriation. He realized that this was a complex business, but he felt it was an important issue. He suggested that they try to get to this before budget worksessions started. Dr. Fountain replied that the Maryland bylaw set the ratio for staff, and they had to project in each category the numbers of students and the level of service. Mr. Ewing commented that he was familiar with the ratios, and what was really at issue was the projection of the numbers of students which was not clear and the amounts to be budgeted for Category 15. He asked them to provide information on whether they made straight line projections, and Dr. Fountain agreed to provide this information.

In regard to Category 15, Mr. Barse said there were some questions raised as to whether the projections should be revised. He said they would be interested to know more about the methodology by which staff went about revising projections. The superintendent explained that the staff did not underbudget Category 15; he had made the budget cut because he was not sure they needed all the funds. Dr. Richard Towers, director of the Department of School-Based Programs, said that Level 1 to 4 projections were made by the area offices from data received by the schools. The data were collected centrally and compared with the previous year's experience. Then they put together the projection based on the ratio of teachers and aides to youngsters. He felt that in previous years their projections had been close. In regard to ESOL, they did not have as good a track record because an international crisis would result in youngsters showing up in this country. In other programs such as Title I and Head Start, it was how much they budgeted for. Dr. O'Toole said that in Level 5 they worked closely with the Centers for the Handicapped. In this case they were talking about 100 students from K to 12.

It seemed to Mr. Ewing that over time it ought to be possible for them to develop some methodology for projections. He felt it was urgent to move in that direction to know whether 10, 15, or 5 percent should be served or whether it was going to rise, fall, or stay stable. Dr. Fountain commented that over the years they had been pretty close and were getting closer now. He said that he had cut Category 15 even before the superintendent got to it. He indicated that the increase in costs over the past two years had been astronomical. Mr. Ewing was concerned that over the next several years the costs would rise as the population decreased, and the public would wonder whether the costs were justified.

In regard to the ARDs, CARDS, and SARDs, Mrs. Zappone asked what they could do to help smooth out the process so there were not some of the lags they had heard about. Dr. Fountain replied that the whole notion of 94-142 was only five years old. He said that if they looked at the evaluation of Continuum Education they would see

that MCPS was somewhat ahead of the nation in finding solutions to its problems. He said they were now looking at simplifying the process to have less time and fewer staff involved. He thought that they would always have the central CARD, but they would be looking at the ARD process. Mrs. Zappone commented that the classroom teacher who was the actual service provider felt left out of the ARD meeting. Dr. Fountain agreed and noted that not only that the teacher never knew what happened to the child. Mrs. Zappone inquired about a case manager who could follow the child from day one. Dr. Fountain pointed out that if they went to three administrative areas it would mean more schools for the case managers who were the pupil personnel workers. The superintendent said that he was hesitant to eliminate a layer for the next year. He felt that they should look at this whole question over the next year. He pointed out that there would be a major cutback in services because they would have three area supervisors instead of five.

Dr. Greenblatt pointed out that it was not Board policy which had mandated the specific levels of review. It was an internal directive. She wondered why eliminating one level would not reduce the workload. The superintendent replied that it was for that reason they were looking at the possibility of doing that; however, he was not sure that they would miss a careful look by doing this. Dr. Greenblatt explained that it was for this reason they requested data on decisions made at the school level and changed at the area or central office.

In regard to pull-out programs, Dr. Greenblatt wondered whether they were designating students as handicapped in too broad a term and whether they should be able to be handled in the classroom. She asked whether pull-out programs were the best set up for these children. Dr. Fountain replied that there was a national debate regarding pull-out programs. He said he had been working with Dr. Pitt regarding the identification of youngsters. They did have a large block of youngsters who were not identified as handicapped which tied into the national debate regarding speech and learning disabled. He felt they needed the involvement of a psychologist to determine whether a youngster was learning disabled in Montgomery County. He was not sure what information the areas kept regarding whether the youngsters could be served in the regular school. Dr. Pitt commented that they needed to work at the most direct level with the youngster which was the classroom. He thought there was a lot of room for improvement in that area. Dr. Greenblatt pointed out that if a child were pulled out for this program and that one he would never be involved in his own classroom. Dr. Fountain replied that they were very concerned about that. They were looking at the resource teacher to see whether it was better to prepare the regular classroom teacher to serve Levels 1 and 2. That would mean that the student would stay with his own classmates and the teacher would learn how to work with the handicapping condition. He said that if they went that route they would probably need more resources. Dr. Towers said the classroom teacher had to have some support because right now there was very

little incentive to keep the child in the classroom. He felt they needed to redeploy more of their current resource room teacher's time. It was a question of being more stringent about how decisions were made to allow the child to be labelled and pulled out of the classroom. Dr. Norma Edwards, assistant director of the Department of Multifacility Programs/Alternative Centers, recalled that last year the Board put back the positions for the mainstreaming coordinators to prevent youngsters from coming out of the classrooms. She agreed that there had to be an effort to train teachers.

Dr. Fountain reported that they were hiring resource room teachers right out of college and that teacher would not make it as a consultant by telling a 17-year veteran teacher how to work with a problem. For that reason, they pulled the children out of the classroom. Dr. Towers explained that over the years the concept of resource teacher was that of a master teacher giving direct services to special education children, diagnosing, and acting as a consultant to his or her colleagues. However, they had too many times employed teachers who did not have that experience.

In regard to Category 15, Dr. Greenblatt asked if someone could do an analysis on whether there could be limits on the costs of public services. They should look at what types of programs they were shooting for and whether they were trying to have Cadillac or Chevy programs for the handicapped.

Mrs. Spencer said her first question had to do with the diagnostic services they were providing to nonpublic schools. She also wanted to know about the nonpublic school committee and what authority it had. Dr. Fountain replied that the state had developed the procedures and they had sent letters to every private and parochial school in Montgomery County to invite them to a meeting to explain the law. There were about 75 representatives at the first meeting and 40 at the second meeting. Out of that came the committee. He said that they were negotiating with the private providers about a formula. Mrs. Spencer said he was implying that the private schools by their own grouping were selecting representatives to serve on this committee. She asked about EDGAR because MCPS was not obligated to use county funds. Dr. Fountain said that every child had to be screened by the public schools, but this was a local cost.

In regard to learning disabled students, Mrs. Spencer inquired about the percentage that they found to be improperly placed when they had the 60-day review. Dr. Towers replied that he did not have the data, but he would estimate that it was a very small percentage.

Mrs. Spencer inquired about the percentage of teachers who had received mainstreaming training. Dr. Stan Fagen, staff development consultant, replied that they were providing training at the orientation level in 46 percent of the schools. He indicated that they were focusing on the schools with special education programs.

Dr. Fountain pointed out that this training was voluntary, and therefore there may be schools with several special education classes that were not participating in the mainstreaming training. Mrs. Spencer said that they had not spoken to the problem of class sizes and how they should address this for the teacher with several mainstreamed youngsters.

Mrs. Wallace inquired about the percentage of the total students they had who were actually special education and under Continuum Education. She asked for a breakdown by program and where the youngsters were located. She reported that the superintendent had received a letter from the Frederick County superintendent who was concerned about the bylaw which was going to be more costly than 94-142. She hoped that they could get a response from staff and hoped that there were areas where they could support Frederick County. The superintendent replied that there were some areas and they could line them out for the Board.

Mrs. Wallace inquired about whether there were youngsters they were sending out for a residential Level 6 who probably should be in Level 5 with a family clause. She suggested that this might be an area that did need review. Ms. Judy Kenney, placement supervisor, reported that there were 18 families under the family clause. She said that there was a section in the bylaw regarding seeking appropriate sources of funding for that family placement. Mrs. Wallace wondered how many should be identified for that family clause and were not. She called attention to the variance of resource room numbers in the five areas. She said it was hard to understand that in Area 2 they had less than half of what they found in Area 4 in terms of resource rooms. Dr. Fountain replied that the resources were allocated on the basis of identified needs.

Dr. Towers indicated that several years ago they had a great many alternative teacher positions which served youngsters who were not doing well. Dr. Pitt explained that where they had a high level of alternative positions there were less resource room positions. He agreed to supply the Board with the number of alternative positions in those areas.

In regard to the meeting on December 15, the superintendent said they would start off with a presentation by the consultant. He asked that copies of the earlier study be provided to the Board.

Re: Election of Officers

The superintendent as secretary-treasurer of the Board of Education assumed the chair. He announced that all members were in attendance and all names were in nomination. Mrs. Spencer read the following statement into the record:

The media has determined that the voting members of this Board consist of a five-member conservative majority and a two-member liberal minority. On the basis of our record as we have voted for president, the real divisions appear to be far more complicated, consisting of a group of three members, a

coalition of two members and one member, and a third partition of one member and the student member. I have tried to maintain a neutral stance in an effort to allow the three-member and two-member groups, whose philosophy most often coincides, the opportunity to select officers acceptable to them. Nine ballots have been nonproductive.

The school system will continue to educate the children of Montgomery County regardless of the individual actions of the members of this Board. However, in the best interest of our students and staff it is incumbent upon all of us to come to some agreement and elect new officers for 1981. Therefore, I shall no longer wait for these five members to unify their stance, and on this ballot I shall not vote for myself. I recognize that such a move compromises my efforts to remain neutral, but I feel that I must do this for the students of this school system.

Board members from the two opposing groups have talked with me since last Tuesday, and various individuals have proposed a number of different possible solutions. I have weighed each of these, and have come to my own independent decision and will be voting according to my own best judgment.

The superintendent announced that Mr. Barse, Mr. Ewing, Mrs. Spencer, and Mrs. Wallace voted for Mrs. Wallace; Dr. Greenblatt, Mrs. Peyser, and Mrs. Zappone voted for Dr. Greenblatt; and Miss Williams abstained. Therefore, Mrs. Wallace was president of the Board. Mrs. Wallace announced that Mr. Barse, Mr. Ewing, Mrs. Spencer, and Mrs. Wallace voted for Mrs. Spencer for vice-president; Dr. Greenblatt, Mrs. Peyser, and Mrs. Zappone voted for Mrs. Zappone; and the student member supported Mrs. Spencer. Therefore, Mrs. Spencer was the vice-president of the Board.

Mrs. Wallace congratulated Mrs. Spencer and thanked all of those people who had supported her. She promised that she would work cooperatively with all members of the Board of Education for what they believed was in the best interests of the school system. She said her personal priority was to review and update all of the policies presently on the books, although it would take longer than the Blue Ribbon Commission. However, she believed that this would be a learning process. She said that finally she would like to make a commitment to the staff and public that the resolution on the books be implemented and that the evening meetings would adjourn by 11 p.m.

Re: Adjournment

The president adjourned the meeting at 10:15 p.m.

President

Secretary

EA:ml