

APPROVED  
40-1980

Rockville, Maryland  
December 15, 1980

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Educational Services Center, on Monday, December 15, 1980, at 8:05 p.m.

Roll Call Present: Mrs. Carol F. Wallace, President in the  
Chair

Mr. Joseph R. Barse  
Mr. Blair G. Ewing  
Dr. Marian L. Greenblatt  
Mrs. Suzanne K. Peyser  
Mrs. Elizabeth W. Spencer  
Miss Traci Williams

Absent: Mrs. Eleanor D. Zappone

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

Re: Continuation of Discussion on  
Continuum Education

Mrs. Wallace announced that this was a continuation of a meeting which had started on December 11. She introduced Dr. Patricia Bourexis, project director from Stanley E. Portny and Associates, the consultants on the external evaluation of Continuum Education. Dr. Bourexis explained that the study was an actual implementation study which looked at procedures regarding special education programs, movement into programs, and progress of the children in the programs. She said that it was relevant for her to think in terms of a child as he or she was taken into special education. She indicated they tried to look to understanding what was going on as it was going on. She explained that they relied on convergent data collection techniques which enabled them to say with great certainty what they had found. They looked at student records to see what they could find about practice. They let some of that data inform them about what they wanted to look at in case studies.

They constructed two surveys regarding generic service providers, and they asked some questions about initial placement, services and reevaluation. They had another survey for parents and students.

Dr. Bourexis stated that in all of those activities they relied on samples which were of sufficient size to state their findings. Mrs. Wallace asked whether Board members had any questions regarding the process. Dr. Steven Frankel, director of the Department of Educational Accountability, explained that this was the first demonstration of a collaborative study. Mr. Barse asked

whether they ever had conflicting readings on the techniques used, and Dr. Bourexis replied that they did in the first substudy on initial placement because 15 of the 17 parents remembered being contacted regarding assessment yet on the survey only 38 percent of the parents remembered being contacted. She was sure that the majority of parents were contacted in writing, but at least one or more were not contacted which gave rise to an area of concern.

Dr. Bourexis stated that in formatting her findings and recommendations it was presented almost as a force field because there were many positive findings but there were gaps in practice. In the initial placements, the children identified were assessed fully prior to their placement. In most cases, but not all, the parents were contacted for their permission, and in most cases parents were contacted regarding the results. There was one exception to the process which was the involvement of the regular classroom teachers. She said that the law clearly stated that the teacher most familiar with the child should be part of the committee. She indicated that they had queried people on what the meetings were like and most participants found the meetings to be open. When they went to the student records, they were convinced that the dominant factor was the articulation of the student's special educational needs. They did not find a systemic bias operating regarding cultural background, race, or particular handicapping conditions. They found that the committee decisions seemed to be made by consensus.

Dr. Bourexis said they found the IEPs were written for children prior to placement. The exceptions were emergency placements, and the IEPs were developed shortly after placement. In most cases, the parents were pleased with the ample opportunity for involvement. On the negative side of that, parents were not always contacted regarding assessment and the classroom teachers were not necessarily involved. She said they had delved into committee deliberations and had a professional bias about the kinds of things that should be discussed. There were three things that were not always discussed.

The first was alternative placements which might be appropriate, and they felt there should be evidence that a number of programs were considered. Secondly, they could not document that mainstreaming had been considered for the children. Thirdly, there seemed to be some problem with the parents understanding their due process rights. In regard to the 60-day review process, Dr. Bourexis said they found that those reviews did not always occur and, if they did, they were much less standardized than in the case of the initial placements.

They recommended implementing standardized procedures and some standardization regarding case management. She said that they were disappointed with what they found in the student record files. She indicated that federal and state statutes required an LEA to evaluate its implementation of the law. If they were to strengthen the systematic monitoring of placements, the gaps would disappear.

Mrs. Wallace stated that the next area was program delivery. Dr. Bourexis reported that MCPS as most school districts did not have as specifically designed procedures for delivery of services as they should have. The guiding question was whether children's IEPs were implemented fully. In 20 percent of the cases, they were not.

In some cases special education or a related service was not being provided. She explained that their work was exploratory, and the Board might want to consider going in the direction of a long-term evaluation. They found some reasons for failure to implement an IEP. In some cases they were told that the specialist to deliver the service was not available. In some instances they found an absence of curriculum and materials for use in the classroom by the regular teacher. There was confusion among service providers as to whether special education or regular education should provide the service. In some settings there was unavailability of the most appropriate service. There were instances where a regular education classroom was not available and mainstreaming was not carried out.

At the secondary level, they found instances where children were listed as needing services of a technical nature which were not available. Because not all programs were available, tradeoffs were being made and the child's program was not being implemented. Dr. Bourexis commented that the monitoring rested almost entirely with the special education teacher. The regular teachers did not participate in the monitoring, did not participate in meetings, and were not informed of the results of these meetings. In many cases people told them there was insufficient coordination of the IEP delivery across service providers. They inquired about in-service training and found that from the perspective of staff that most in-service was fragmented.

Dr. Bourexis recommended that they implement children's IEPs completely. There was a need for the county to continue and intensify its efforts to develop more special need programs to meet the specialized needs of its population. She felt that the need was there, and that it was real and continued. She recommended they monitor program delivery because it was not sufficient to monitor just placement. She said there were at least three different procedures relating to reevaluating. The first was an annual review of every child's program and progress. The second was a more complete re-evaluation every three years, and the third was an unscheduled review midyear when a child was not making progress.

In regard to case management, Dr. Bourexis said they had to insure ongoing communication regarding the child's placement and a transition of the child into a new placement; however, that was the point when communication did break down. She said that sometimes the IEPs were changed without going back to the committee structure. They needed to carefully consider reevaluation needs in all three cases and whether there might be a way to more effectively organize this. The other item was public versus

private placement. They had hoped they would be able to look very closely at this, but they realized they could not and suggested that this be the next study. Dr. Frankel added that they were anticipating an RFP for the second year of the study which would concentrate on the private providers.

Mrs. Spencer commented that Dr. Bourexis has spoken of the need to improve delivery of programs. In some situations there were not the personnel available to carry out the IEP. On the other hand, they were faced with difficult fiscal circumstances. She wondered whether they had any suggestions regarding improvement of the delivery of services. Dr. Bourexis replied that they had an absence of a procedures monitoring system. She also felt they might have a resources gap with people being underutilized. Dr. Frankel pointed out that there was now a split responsibility for students in Levels 1 through 3. He suggested that the way to resolve this was to make decisions as to who was responsible for what.

In regard to the role of the regular teacher, Mr. Barse said their findings were that they did not serve on placement committees. He wondered whether they could shed some light on why they had not been participating enough. Dr. Bourexis replied that a lot of it was just time and access. She said that all of their personnel were stretched thinly and were teaching all day. It was hard to support release time for teachers to serve on committees. She reported that in Boston they were able to get people in before and after school.

Mr. Barse asked whether they had an idea of the magnitude of the resources required. Dr. Bourexis replied that there was a Stanford University study which got at this issue which she would recommend for Board review.

The superintendent remarked that as they looked at more systematic procedures, they did not have a more systematic use of the staff they had now. Mrs. Wallace commented that in a five-year period they had a 33 percent total increase, but in special education it was a 94 percent increase. She said they had to look at what in regular education had been impacted by the special education increase. She asked about the costs of additional state regulations. Dr. Joy Frechtling, director of the Division of Program Monitoring, replied that there was a financial impact at the lower age levels.

Dr. Bourexis stated that they had some critical problems there that would not go away, but they were solvable. Many of these could be solved through a reallocation of resources. Mr. Ewing remarked that he was not altogether clear about what they were implying about case management. Dr. Bourexis explained that they were talking about case managers for students. Adequate case document would be one outcome. She would like each child to have an adequate process, well documented, and in the time lines allowed. She would like to insure that parents had been communicated with

adequately. When the child changed placements, she would like to insure the transition was orderly and that written information was available and communication was adequate. It seemed to Mr. Ewing that this managerial problem might be one amenable to applications of concepts developed in other areas such as human services. He thought there might be plans that could be examined. Dr. Bourexis felt that a lot of issues could be ameliorated through better case management, but that was not all of the problems. They had some practices that had not been solved by case management. She said that one of the first things she would go to was the model of case management used in human services areas. She agreed that there were models worth investigating. She pointed out that Dr. Fountain, Dr. Frankel, and Dr. Frechtling were nationally known experts who could help the Board in this area.

Mrs. Spencer inquired about the Boston model. Dr. Bourexis explained that in Boston a person with no teaching responsibility was assigned to a building. In Alaska the resource room personnel taught half time and did administrative work for the rest of the day. In regard to due process rights for parents and the participation of parents on placement committees, Mr. Barse asked what their recommendations might be. Dr. Bourexis replied that an explanation was provided but it was almost one of a laundry list of things being taken up. Part of this was jamming a lot of things into one meeting with parents. She said that parents had to decide whether the placement was appropriate and whether they wanted to start due process. For that reason, they were recommending that alternatives be considered. She said that the process could be intimidating and the parents reluctant to say they did not understand what was happening. She felt they needed a comprehensive explanation of the programs in MCPS and some people or places parents could turn to.

In some school systems they had hotlines, parent advocacy groups, and a person similar to an ombudsman. She said they did have a handbook, but many parents were not familiar with it.

Mrs. Spencer said mention had been made that parents' rights were being violated. She wondered about what rights parents did have to modify their child's placement or conversely how does the system protect itself when parents move against the recommendation. Dr. Bourexis did not agree that parents' rights were violated. Mrs. Spencer remarked that if they rigorously did the 60-day follow-up they would unearth more of these. Dr. Bourexis replied that if they carried this through they would have the parents at the table again and looking at real performances. She reported that 90 percent of the parents had been to the school for at least one meeting regarding their child. She said 45 percent initiated the meeting and 35 percent were contacted by the school; therefore, parent involvement was there.

Mrs. Wallace remarked that the ARDs and CARDS have a specified list of people that have to be in attendance. She wondered how they could avoid intimidating the parents. Dr. Bourexis said she had

seen a difference in the level of intimidation when someone had taken the time to meet previously with those parents. Mrs. Wallace asked whether involving the regular classroom teacher would help. Dr. Bourexis agreed that it would. She said that parents would feel more comfortable if they knew there was one MCPS person to whom they had previously related who would be attendance. She indicated that this was where the case manager came in. She reported she had seen the continuum education handbook given to parents after the meeting.

Mr. Ewing inquired about next steps regarding the findings and recommendations. The superintendent replied that they had had the report for only a week or so. He hoped that their next steps would be taken before final action on the budget because they had nothing built into the budget request to address these additional recommendations. He agreed that they would prepare a general reaction before budget adoption and would have a paper by mid-January.

Mrs. Wallace said they had touched on duplication in the initial placement. Dr. Bourexis explained that it existed particularly in the documents and forms. Mrs. Wallace asked whether it was in the procedures and whether they could see streamlining the ARDs, SARs, and CARs. Dr. Bourexis said they had streamlined some of the documentation but they still had some duplication out there because people were being asked to fill out the same information more than once. When they got to reevaluation, people said there were not any reevaluation procedures and did the same things they had done in the initial placement proceedings.

Dr. Frankel reported that in about 50 percent of the cases the paperwork records were not complete. Dr. Bourexis said they were also concerned that the children's records were not following them promptly and being completed. She felt that the evaluation and meeting summaries needed to be pulled together. In most schools the records were stored in various places, but they should be able to pull information together and get a Gestalt on a student so that it could be passed along.

Mr. Ewing asked when they would get to the question which this study was not designed to address which was how effective were the services that they were providing. Dr. Frechtling replied that they were doing this in pieces regarding studies that were looking at particular programs. They were looking at Mark Twain and Phoenix in small very tailored studies. Mr. Ewing pointed out that in the end these would have to be integrated. Dr. Frechtling replied that they were trying to get some broader policy studies to improve the whole system and also to look at individual programs. Mr. Ewing thought it was important for them to think about the need to communicate publicly annually on what and how well they were doing. The problem with individual studies was that the public was not able to pull them together. Dr. Frankel commented that individual case studies run \$1,000 to \$5,000 per case, and he agreed that they had a long way to go in looking at management and

policy issues. It seemed to Mr. Ewing that they were not going to get public understanding unless they were able to report to the public in simple English about what it was they were doing.

Mrs. Wallace indicated that she would like to have information about specific programs before they got into the budget sessions. Dr. Bourexis commented that she was struck by the absence of evidence of a systemwide evaluation and a collection of data about what was happening out there. She encouraged the Board to explore some mechanism to get the data to make decisions. The superintendent reported that they used to have annual reports. He was recommending that each department prepare a two- or three-page document about problems and successes. These would be instituted in the summer of 1981. He felt that it was good to have a broader view, and he said that by and large the report before the Board was saying that Continuum Education was doing a pretty good job. He thanked Dr. Bourexis for her look at Continuum Education. On behalf of the Board, Mrs. Wallace extended thanks for the work done by Dr. Bourexis.

Re: FY 1982 Capital Improvements  
Program

Mrs. Wallace reported that the superintendent, Dr. Rohr, Mr. Wilder, Dr. Fisher, Mr. Fess, Mrs. Spencer and she had attended the meeting in the morning with the County Council. The superintendent said the Board had approved four projects in priority order. The Council's original motion was to approve all projects as submitted; however, this was amended to delete the Woodward auditorium. Therefore, they now had a difference between the Board and the Council regarding the projects, and IAC procedures called for the Board and Council to agree to a package to be submitted to the state by January 1.

Mrs. Spencer wondered whether they could come back with an additional request if they went along with the three projects. Mr. Wilder indicated that following the completion of the master plan they could ask the state for additional planning funds or ask for a supplemental appropriation from the county. Mrs. Spencer indicated they could go with four and see what happened at the Council, go with three with a cover letter, or just go with three and indicate they would be back for a supplemental. Mrs. Wallace pointed out that they could go back and include Woodward and let the Council know where they stood.

Mrs. Peyser asked whether the Council had deleted Woodward because of the master plan. The superintendent replied that there would be no state funding beyond the \$10 million. Mrs. Wallace added that one Council member had said why should it be included, and she had replied why not. Mr. Barse recalled that last year it was not included in the request to the state. Dr. Rohr indicated that later they requested funds from the Council and the project was deferred to 1983. Mr. Barse felt that they should follow the same pattern again. He thought that by May they might be able to say

they had made the fundamental decisions regarding the master plan.

He felt they should put the request in for FY 1982 local funding and accede to the Council's request not to transmit Woodward to the state. He asked whether they could make some fundamental decisions about high schools by May 15. The superintendent replied that it was possible, but they really expected to make decisions in the fall. Mrs. Wallace said they could request local funding with the caveat that funds would not be released until decisions on closures had been made.

The superintendent explained that the Board could adopt a resolution regarding submission to the state but leave Woodward in the local request. Mrs. Wallace suggested that this item be put on the Board's agenda for December 22.

Re: Adjournment

The president adjourned the meeting at 10:25 p.m.

President

Secretary

EA:ml