

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
February 1, 1984

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Wednesday, February 1, 1984, at 8:20 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Marilyn J. Praisner, President in
the Chair
Dr. James E. Cronin
Mr. Blair G. Ewing
Mrs. Suzanne K. Peyser
Mrs. Odessa M. Shannon
Dr. Robert E. Shoenberg
Absent: Dr. Marian L. Greenblatt
Mr. Peter Robertson
Others Present: Dr. Wilmer S. Cody, Superintendent of
Schools
Dr. Harry Pitt, Deputy Superintendent
Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

Re: State High School Report

Mrs. Praisner stated that this discussion was part of the Board's overall discussion regarding the purpose and direction of the high school in the state and in Montgomery County. The meeting would include a preliminary discussion of the state commission recommendations because comments had been requested by March 1. Mr. David Fischer, staff assistant, would survey Board members and draft a general statement for adoption on February 14.

Dr. Shoenberg stated that what the Board had before it was titled "volume one" because it was the beginning of a series of reports from the state. Montgomery County would conduct a symposium on what citizens felt were important considerations for their own secondary schools. The symposium would start on April 5 and perhaps continue to April 7. The purpose of the symposium would be to share views, not on what should be done, but rather what people should be thinking about and focusing on. It would not be the intent of the symposium to generate additional plans for action. It would be an opportunity for people to sit down and talk together in small sessions. The symposium would be by invitation to about 150 people including students, faculty, staff, and parents.

Dr. Cody reported that there were a number of high school principals in the audience. He had asked Dr. Richard Deasy, assistant state superintendent for instruction, to give a brief overview of the report to the Board. He said that at a meeting several weeks ago Dr. Deasy had presented some of the rationale behind the recommendations in the state report.

Dr. Deasy explained that the commission consisted of 20 people, and

he was the only state department person. There were five task forces with one or two state people on them. Over the life of the commission 150 local school persons would be directly involved in the work of the commission. He said that it would be about six months before any action by the State Board on the various recommendations, and local boards would have an opportunity to testify. They probably would not see implementation of the recommendations until September a year from now.

Dr. Deasy said that the commission in its work had addressed five major themes. The first was the purpose of the high school, and the answer was captured in the Maryland statement on the public high school. It was their view that the purpose of the high school was to challenge and help all students to grow intellectually, personally, and socially. They later affirmed the primacy of intellectual development. Every student upon graduation should be successful in life, willing to take the next appropriate step into work or study, be a responsible citizen, and live a productive life. He urged the Board to study that statement because out of that statement flowed everything else.

The second theme they dealt with was how long was the high school. They stated that it was four years, which was a public policy statement. They thought the best that could be done for adolescents was four years of public education. Everyone was concerned about the problem of the upper years of high school. They knew, for instance, that half of the seniors in the state were not in school at any given moment.

Dr. Deasy said their third theme was what should be required in those four years. They answered the question in two ways, what should be required of the student and what should be required of the rest of them. They tried to avoid being punitive toward students and the punitive tone that those running the schools were responsible for the alleged failures. They were saying to fulfill purposes in today's world they needed to explain to students what was required of them to be successful in those three ways. They stated that students were now required to attend school for four years and pass the competency requisites adopted by the State. Thirdly, they reaffirmed the Carnegie credits as a requirement. They did not change the number of Carnegie credits, but they restructured them. They did say that students should earn those credits at the rate of five a year. This was to make strong each of the four years of high school. He noted that school systems were split half and half on six- and seven-period days. It was their judgment that if students had to earn five credits a year, they would take a full load. In a six-period system, they would take six, and in a seven-period system, seven. That would calculate to students taking 24-28 courses. Therefore, the state requirement would promote full enrollment in a range of courses.

In regard to the 20 credits, Dr. Deasy explained that they were recommending the state specify 14 and the LEA specify 3. In their calculation it would leave the student selecting 7 or 11 courses

depending on whether it was a six-period or seven-period school. Within the 14, they urged mathematics be increased from two credits to three credits. They were also recommending there be a fine arts requirement. They wanted students not to be able to perform but that the mode of expression through the arts be accessible to the students. They felt that students should learn how to study, how to use computers in appropriate ways, and learn how to think critically. They deferred to the curriculum task force the content questions of the courses and what should constitute, for example, four years of English. In regard to schools, they expressed the need that schools make clearer to students the content of courses, the objectives, and standards set.

Dr. Deasy explained that if the purpose of school was to challenge and help every student they had to deal with students being able to rise to their own level of capacity. They felt that some mechanism was needed to challenge students to rise above the minimum level. This led them to accept the recommendation for the advanced diploma. He said that the advanced diploma in its requirements was not quantitatively significantly different than the standard diploma. However, they were saying that these courses needed to be courses at or above grade level. They did not envision every single course would be an advanced course. It was left to the local school systems to specify the specific courses. In addition, the student had to have three credits above the 14 specified by the state from the menu of school subjects, vocational programs, and computer studies. The mathematics had to be at Algebra I or above. In addition, students would have to maintain a 2.5 grade point average across their courses on a scale of 4.0.

Dr. Deasy reported that the final theme touched upon the students who in fulfilling a special education IEP would not complete their diploma requirements. It was their view there be a Maryland high school certificate for those students. Secondly they recognized the ability to conduct an alternative strategy for a group of students which got them to the same learner outcomes by a different route. He referred to Wilde Lake High School in Howard County which was on a competency-based system. Then they also looked at early college admission, early admission to a technical program, tutorials, correspondence, and evening high schools. They added to that the possibility that a student could take a single college course where the course was not offered in a high school.

Dr. Deasy said that as they put upon students some additional challenges some caring adults will have to help them. Therefore, they had a task force looking at guidance and counseling services. The second underlying theme was the concept that the learning of a young person was not entirely the school's business alone. They thought they ought to continue to structure ways a student could continue to learn in the community from interning at NASA to a vocational/cooperative program. He noted that the state superintendent had his own recommendation speaking to that issue.

Mrs. Praisner thanked Dr. Deasy for his excellent presentation. She

suggested that the Board focus on two diplomas, the certificate for certain students, limits to the number of courses, the courses themselves, the advanced diploma, and the community service recommendation.

Mrs. Shannon asked whether a student had to apply in the ninth grade to be a candidate for an advanced diploma or whether it was a result of courses taken in the four years. Dr. Deasy replied that a student might not decide that issue, but having taken courses at or above grade level and maintaining a 2.5, that student would be eligible for the advanced diploma. However, there would be students in the eighth grade who would decide to pursue the advanced diploma. Mrs. Shannon asked why they saw a need for two diplomas. Dr. Deasy replied there was a need to challenge students to take more difficult courses and to motivate them to go for that challenge.

Dr. Shoenberg commented that he was concerned about the assertion that high school ought to be four years without any particular justification for this. He saw that as a recommendation made out of expediency. He saw this as four years defined as time, which led them to define requirements in terms of time rather than competency. He did not see how the school public would have a chance to debate that issue. He did not understand why, given the fact with a six- or seven-period day it was easy enough for a student to earn the 20 credits in three years, it was necessary to say that the student at the end of three years had not graduated from high school. Instead, they allowed for early admission to college but said the student had not graduated until the fourth year was completed. Dr. Deasy explained that the thinking that went into the last point looked into the evidence about the transition problem. There were a lot of students who because of the lack of challenge of the final year did not maintain their skills in jobs or college. It was felt necessary for all students to have a robust four year program. In regard to Dr. Shoenberg's first point, he felt they were putting in front of the public a set of proposals that would encourage debate.

Dr. Cronin remarked that he needed some more pieces before he could really comment on these proposals. He saw them reaffirming their traditional base and taking their basic curriculum and moving them slightly sideways. He saw the need for basic skills, for content knowledge, higher level learning skills, better knowledge of self, and for a place of self in the world. He thought that all of those were traditional in the educational process. He would like to see what the curriculum task force was recommending because content of courses was one of his first concerns. He asked how they would get the state or the various LEAs in the state to agree on content. He thought it was disturbing that each LEA would be determining what the content of a basic diploma would be. He wondered what they would be doing with that absent a set of statewide criteria. He suggested that it would require a restructuring of the methods by which they delivered education if they were to put most of this into a total comprehensive picture for their students. However, he was

not sure the budgetary implications of this and whether funds would be available for computers, fine arts, and community services. Therefore, he needed to see what they would do with the content and change their methods of delivery.

Mr. Ewing commented that he had a variety of concerns. The key question was what it was they wanted students to know, what they should know, and what they should be able to do. That raised questions about content and skill preparation in the high schools. It seemed to him the paper in front of the Board made a leap from that question to the conclusion that two diplomas were needed plus a bunch a course requirements. He felt there was something missing in between and perhaps the curriculum task force would supply this. He suggested they think about what students should do with their high school education. In Montgomery County, most students would go to college and take a professional or semiprofessional job in the future. He thought it mattered less what subject matter students learned and more what skills and capabilities they acquired. He was much more interested in having students learn how to acquire, organize and use knowledge and articulate their thoughts clearly and precisely. He asked if they believed giving students 14 credit hours would result in their acquiring these skills.

Mr. Ewing was not sure that saying all courses should be on grade level was sufficient to understand what they were trying to get at. In regard to mathematics, it was important for students to know something about the history of, nature of, and development of mathematics. Whether they needed to know algebra was for him an open question. He wondered whether they weren't approaching some of these issues the wrong way. As for the two diplomas, he said they were justified on the basis of being an incentive, but for Montgomery County he would have to ask, "motivation for whom?" He pointed out that in Montgomery County 70 percent of their students went on to higher education.

Mrs. Peyser was glad to see the state moving in this direction because it was a tremendous improvement. She did support the idea of having an advanced diploma, but she did not think this would have a great deal of meaning in Montgomery County. She did not consider a 2.5 average advanced. She was shocked that they did not include in the basic diploma or the advanced diploma a requirement for a history of some country other than the United States. She also thought they should require a foreign language for all students, and most definitely for the students receiving the advanced diploma. In regard to the advanced diploma, they seemed to be saying everything would apply to the advanced diploma other than physical education or home arts. She thought this should be defined. She thought that Dr. Cronin's memo addressed the issue of courses being at or above grade level in a brilliant way. She pointed out that students were now allowed to take Algebra I over a two-year period and receive two credits for it. She thought that Algebra I was a one-credit course no matter how long it was taken. She also shared Dr. Shoenberg's concern that some students should be able to get a diploma after three years.

Mrs. Peyser asked whether the state did not allow students to take high school courses in seventh and eighth grade to have the courses count toward the diploma. Dr. Frank Carricato reported that the task force had had a heated debate on that subject. The issue came back to the four-year high school with a body of knowledge at the high school level. In many counties there was a concern about youngsters accelerating into a high school program and the quality of the courses they were taking. Dr. Deasy added that for example if a student took math in these grades, it was incumbent on the high schools to offer that student three additional credits in mathematics. It was his own view that Carnegie credits were structural features to hold in place a time for taking subjects and not rewards for taking courses.

Dr. Shoenberg reported that he was on the curriculum task force. He said there were other hints of curriculum in what the specific requirements might translate to around the state. The curriculum group had been looking at frameworks in science and social studies. He commented that there were two ways in which one could have approached the structuring of the requirements. They could specify the competencies and then go on to determine an enormous variety of structures through which those competencies might be achieved. In his view that would break down the compartmentalization of the curriculum by discipline. The task force was conscious of that and had addressed itself to the whole question of forcing interaction among subject matters. He thought that Montgomery County could start to think about this and the kinds of skills they wanted students to have. Dr. Shoenberg called attention to Recommendation 11 which did leave open to them to structure a curriculum that would lead to the same kinds of outcomes but allow them to think about education in a lot of different ways. He hoped that in their high school symposium they would give this careful thought. His concern was that they try to think about how they could get out of a curriculum that locked subject matters into watertight compartments.

Mrs. Praisner said she would have liked to have seen something different come out of the process and agreed that perhaps Recommendation 11 was their avenue. She recalled that in 1978 the MCPS senior high school study group had started to approach some of these issues. However, they had these recommendations before them and would have to respond to them. She hoped that Montgomery County would convey their desire to have some of these other things take place. She had concerns about the implications of some recommendations for the staff in the schools, especially principals and counselors. She shared the concern of not understanding how the advanced diploma was going to motivate students if they were not in it ahead of time. However, if this were the case, she had a problem with it because it then separated students. She also thought they were going to have to respond to the state superintendent's proposal of 100 hours of community service. She reported that she and other Board members had attended a meeting of other boards of education and there was a uniform concern about paperwork, the process, and

monitoring of the 100 hour proposal. She asked high school principals to react to the recommendations.

Mr. Joseph Villani, principal of Blair High School, commented that from an administrator's point of view he liked the recommendations as presented because they helped provide targets and guidelines for students. He liked the idea of students taking a full course load in high school. He thought that the assumptions in the preamble had been effectively implemented by the recommendations. He felt that a lot of positive recommendations would come out of the curriculum and instructional services task forces. Ms. Ann Meyer, principal of Gaithersburg High School, asked whether college representatives were consulted on the matter of the advanced diploma. She recalled that when they had talked about granting additional points for honors courses the college admissions officers seemed to be opposed to this and different diplomas. Dr. Deasy explained that some college representatives had been consulted. Ms. Meyer asked whether they were supportive of two diplomas, and Dr. Deasy replied that they were supportive. Dr. Carricato reported that they had tried to get preferential admission to the University of Maryland for the students receiving the advanced diploma; however, while it was supported as a motivating factor, it was not a ticket to anything.

Mrs. Praisner asked whether they were making the assumption that students needed to be motivated to take courses. Dr. Deasy replied that high schools principals did consider that to be a problem. Dr. Shoenberg explained that courses for the advanced diploma were not necessarily honors courses. He said that vocational courses must be the last three courses of an approved vocational program. It said to him that there were courses that were not social studies, mathematics, or English that were considered to have academic rigor.

Mr. Steven Dickoff, principal of Paint Branch High School, was concerned about the five credit per year compartmentalization. He asked how much a student could take and absorb in one day, and he suggested that four credits per year might be enough. He now had students working several periods a day on noncredit computer courses, and he would have to tell them that this would not count. He was concerned about monitoring the 100 hour requirement if the program was after school. He also felt that students needed more than two credits of science and was concerned about health education because sex education and drug abuse education were important.

Dr. Deasy explained that in regard to the five credits, they were not saying these had to be courses. Mrs. Shannon asked whether they considered the possible impact on the dropout rate of requiring five credits in the senior year for students who needed time for requirements placed on them by family situations. Dr. Deasy replied that they had five schools they visited routinely and talked a lot about the impact on groups of students. They did consider that issue, and the task force felt that administrators might be challenged to come up with offerings to hold the potential dropouts. Mrs. Shannon inquired about exemptions for hardship

cases. Dr. Deasy thought they could deal with the student who needed to work. Mr. Villani noted that Recommendation 17e covered this.

Dr. Joseph Dalton, principal of Wheaton High School, was concerned that student could go into the senior year with 21 credits and have to take five credits. However, another student could graduate with fewer credits. On the positive side, he saw many seniors who needed only one credit and planned to coast during their senior year. Dr. Jerry Marco, principal of Walt Whitman High School, did not think their young people were lazy or not motivated. He pointed out that the recommendations applied to jurisdictions across the state, not Montgomery County alone.

Dr. Cronin asked whether there was a problem in implementing the recommendations in a 7-9, 10-12 organizational pattern. Mrs. Praisner thought that this was no problem because the ninth grade options were limited. Dr. Cronin asked about staffing implications for Recommendations 7 and 9 and whether they could implement these in September, 1984. Dr. Cody replied that they had not checked the data on the recommendations. He knew there would be an impact because of students' taking five courses per year. Mrs. Praisner commented that other school systems saw a move toward a seven-period day for all students in the state. She said that students wanting to take the advanced diploma would have to have access to these courses.

In regard to the 100-hour requirement, Dr. Cody reported that several high schools in the state had implemented this and the problems had evaporated. Dr. Cronin asked that staff provide responses to the Board's questions in writing. He did not see how they could increase math and fine arts offerings without adding staff. In regard to the 100 hours, Dr. Shoenberg said he oppose its implementation because it was too loose. It would be his notion that the community service requirement be a course and a part of the fabric of the educational experience.

Mr. Ewing asked that the Board be provided a response to all of the recommendations. He asked whether the commission had dealt with the question of the funding impact. In regard to the advanced diploma, he was still not persuaded by the arguments about motivation. Because the diploma was not tied to college admission, he was not sure it would motivate students. He hoped that the principals and community would comment on that argument. He was bothered by the notion of the four-year requirement. He thought they needed flexibility when they were dealing with a student body which was learning more and more quickly.

Mrs. Shannon was pleased to see the attention given to the arts but was curious about any discussions they had on the foreign language requirement. Dr. Deasy replied that while there was no recommendation there was discussion. They felt that adding requirements would get them into swapping requirements. They concurred about the lack of language proficiency in the American

public, but they felt that not all students needed a foreign language. In addition, the evidence suggested that students did not become proficient in foreign languages in the high school.

Mr. Sandy McDonald, pupil personnel worker, was concerned about certain handicapped students and why they would be getting a certificate. Dr. Deasy explained that these would be Level 5 and 6 handicapped students. Their IEP was geared more toward their level of needs, and for that student fulfilling that kind of program was a significant achievement. However, there were many students receiving special educational services who could fulfill all the requirements for the diploma.

Dr. Pitt commented that they now staffed on the basis of 30.2 to 1 at the high school level, and they made an assumption that a certain number of students were not in academic classes every period. They assumed that 30 percent of the students would not be taking a seventh class. Given this, they would have to look at financial implications of the recommendations.

Mrs. Praisner thanked Dr. Deasy for his presentation and thanked staff and principals for their comments.

Re: Adjournment

The president adjourned the meeting at 10:45 p.m.

President

Secretary

WSC:mlw