

APPROVED
26-1985

Rockville, Maryland
April 24, 1985

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Wednesday, April 24, 1985, at 8 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Dr. Robert E. Shoenberg, President in
the Chair
Dr. James E. Cronin
Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo
Mr. Blair G. Ewing
Dr. Jeremiah Floyd
Mrs. Marilyn J. Praisner
Mrs. Mary Margaret Slye

Absent: Miss Jacquie DUBY

Others Present: Dr. Wilmer S. Cody, Superintendent of
Schools
Dr. Harry Pitt, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Robert S. Shaffner, Executive
Assistant
Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

Re: Meeting with Montgomery County
Association of Administrative and Supervisory
Personnel

Mrs. Diane Ippolito, president of MCAASP, thanked the Board for their willingness to meet with her association. She noted that 90 percent of the personnel eligible to participate in the organization were members, and the vote to accept the new contract with the Board was unanimous. They saw 1985 as a turning point in their history because of increased enrollment, the building of new schools, and the hiring of new staff. They were pleased with the direction the Board and superintendent had taken in leading education in the county and felt that the priorities sent a clear message to the schools. She indicated their full support of Board of Education policies and assured the Board of her association's support and cooperation.

Dr. Shoenberg commented that the Board was sensitive to and appreciated the support they had received from principals and supervisory personnel. He said they had heard comments about schools having control over their own destiny and about issues which took away that control, and he asked for MCAASP views on this subject. Mrs. Ippolito thought that one positive thing was the minigrants which gave a measure of control to the local schools. As they moved down the road to implement Board priorities, the minigrants gave the schools a sense of "buying into" the priorities by determining what the local school thought was best for their students. Dr. Floyd pointed out that the minigrant program was minuscule compared to the rest of the budget and asked why Mrs. Ippolito had given that program emphasis. Mrs. Ippolito explained that the program gave people the

feeling they had some impact in terms of their own ideas on how a program should be implemented. Mrs. Kitty Derby added that the minigrant was directly related to a Board priority which was clear in its direction and intent. The resources to support the priorities were there; however, as they revised the curriculum the supports and resources were not always there.

Dr. Robert Anastasi thought that another important issue was the additional half-days of in-service which enabled staff to plan together during the day. Mrs. Ippolito said that it was a help to get people out of their own schools to find out what was happening in other schools and to share ideas.

Dr. Shoenberg stated that the Board was getting comments about the Academy proposal which contained funds for substitute time to take teachers out of the classrooms. Mrs. Derby remarked that there was a feeling out there in the public that unless students were face to face with a teacher, learning was not occurring. Many educators believed that because teachers had time to plan and to share, the quality of their teaching was enhanced. In addition, they had a fine screening system for hiring substitutes and substitutes were all professional teachers. Mrs. Praisner thought that MCAASP could help them with this because MCCPTA had questioned the Academy and the substitute teacher provision. Dr. Pitt said they should have done a better job of explaining because the perception out there was that there would be a massive infusion of substitute teachers in the schools. Mrs. Slye remarked that the public concern went beyond substitute days, and she thought that MCAASP could help the Board communicate to parents the value of the half days. She suggested that perhaps the teacher visiting another school could report back on that experience. Dr. Cody commented that it was the use of the term "half day" and suggested they use "early dismissals" because the time was really not a full half day.

Dr. Cronin inquired about the negative issues. Dr. Anastasi replied that there were a number of things they had no control over. One was the largeness of the school system, and he pointed out that they had cut back on administration because it was an easy target. Now this was catching up with them because he was not sure the present areas were manageable in the sense of providing good communication. For example, he pointed out that they had to include timely evaluations in their latest contract because it was almost impossible for one area person to do these evaluations. Dr. Cronin asked if it would be possible to devise a system which would bring in different evaluators, and Dr. Anastasi thought it would be possible although implementation of a new system would take time.

Mrs. Derby spoke of the problem of lack of flexibility in scheduling the area in-service days. Ms. Sally Walsh added that it was impossible to schedule all the high school teachers of one subject at one time because of the organization of the half days. Dr. Pitt pointed out that in 1971 there were six areas and now there were three with a growing student population and the same responsibilities for staff. Dr. Cody remarked that without redefining some of the

areas roles they would continue to have a problem because, while the area superintendent now had 50 evaluations, adding more areas would give the area superintendent 35 evaluations which was still too much. Mrs. Praisner noted that the Board would be discussing area organization this summer. Mr. Ewing added that the previous Board had wanted to have a small number of areas with supervisory functions which left people without a clear understanding of their roles. It seemed to Mrs. Ippolito that a good model was the secondary resource teacher who assisted teachers as well as the principal. She suggested that the area supervisors could assist in principal evaluations. Dr. Shoenberg believed that if they were going to make any significant change in and improvement of schools, the real change had to come at the level of instruction. He said that they could tinker with the curriculum, but they knew less about what went on in the classroom than anything else in the school system. They had to keep the connections between the curriculum as it was designed and as it got delivered, not in the sense of uniformity but to make sure instructional practices were appropriate.

Dr. Cronin inquired about the teacher evaluation system as to whether it was sufficient to identify the good and to help the weak. Mrs. Derby replied that it was fine for both ends of the spectrum, but they needed help with the middle group. Dr. Cronin said they kept hearing about the difficulty in getting rid of a poor teacher. Dr. Neil Shipman replied that it was not the fault of the evaluation system but rather the appeals and technicalities that had to be followed.

Dr. Anastasi said they really felt the cuts in administration at the school level. Mrs. Derby thought that the curriculum coordinator positions would help, but she worried that it would go the road of the elementary school counselors. Dr. Shipman suggested that they needed to do the curriculum coordinator position right from the very beginning. Mrs. Praisner recalled that during the budget she had suggested two models for the curriculum coordinator, one assigned to a school and one assigned to two different schools. Dr. Anastasi felt that he would rather wait and have the one coordinator full time. Dr. Shipman felt it would not work as a half-time situation. Mrs. Praisner pointed out that if they had both models they could explain how it did or did not work.

Mr. Ewing commented that they would continue to have trouble in adding administrative people to the budget. He believed that the previous Board had made too heavy a cut in administration. Dr. Pitt thought that the administrative positions would have to be sold to teachers as well as other citizens. Dr. Shipman remarked that teachers at Fox Chapel viewed the coordinator position as the best thing in the school in ten years. Mrs. Ippolito suggested using the secondary resource teacher as an example to sell the value of the curriculum coordinators at the elementary level. It seemed to Mr. Ewing that this argued for attempting to explain in an articulate way how complex it was in a big system to get program delivered at the classroom level.

Dr. Shoenberg stated that in a system with one high school, change was not a problem, but in a county school system people expected the same program from high school to high school. They were stuck with the fact that anything different was seen as a variation from the basic program. He wondered whether they had a public and a school system willing to move in that direction. Mrs. Derby thought that growth should facilitate changes. Dr. Shoenberg recalled that they had had different models in elementary schools such as team teaching, but everyone wanted to close in the open classrooms and they were pushed toward uniformity of program.

Dr. Floyd remarked that as an outgrowth of the push toward excellence in education they were facing the notion of a teacher teaching two or three classes and aiding other teachers. He thought that they would see more of this and that it probably would be more acceptable to the teacher organizations. This was under the rubric of "master teacher" and involved curriculum development and year-round salaries. He remarked that if Boards of Education did not create such a position they would be told to do so by state legislatures. Dr. Cody suggested they could approach this from the point of view of the high school resource teacher. A regular elementary school teacher could be designed as a resource teacher with half-day teaching responsibilities. Dr. Pitt recalled that this was the first model they had approached. He felt that if they were going to have supports in the schools it would have to be in the model of a teaching colleague who did not teach all the time.

Mrs. Derby asked about flexibility in a school to reorganize the staff to free up a half-time person. Dr. Shoenberg recalled a plan whereby elementary school children moved from teacher to teacher for a half day which made it possible for someone to teach for half a day. He said that having one teacher skilled in mathematics teaching math only made a difference in the skills of the children. Dr. Shipman remarked that because of the size of his school a lot of that was happening; however, next year with fewer students the practice would stop. He felt that elementary school children were not comfortable in moving from teacher to teacher.

Dr. Anastasi commented that because the curriculum coordinators were teacher positions he did not think the concept would be hard to sell to the teacher organizations. This would be a career ladder, but the teachers would still remain in the teacher unit.

Mrs. Praisner remarked that it was hard to convince people why it was harder to teach now. Remarks were made that "a good teacher could teach any group of kids." However, teaching was a hard job today because students were more difficult to handle because of other influences on their lives. Dr. Pitt added that they were asking the elementary school teacher to teach a much more sophisticated curriculum with more math and science.

Dr. Cronin reported that the Board had discussed alternative budget formats with inputs from schools. He wondered what input MCAASP would want to provide. Dr. Shipman replied that he was not sure it

was possible in a system the size of MCPS to provide school-level input. He recalled that when he was in Frederick County each school had built its own budget from specific guidelines. Mrs. Derby pointed out that there were certain givens that made them a school system. These givens bound them in ways that made it difficult to have flexibility. For example, if a school had a teacher skilled in art, they might not want to have an art teacher assigned to that school. Dr. Pitt explained that they had tried some of that flexibility; however, when they departed from standards they tended to lose staff through County Council budget cuts.

Dr. Cody commented that he had had experience in allocating by units to schools with choices being made at the local level. However, as school communities changed, there were complaints about why the neighboring school had this kind of staffing and why they had that kind of staffing. He noted that the State of Florida had mandated local school councils with faculties and parents making the choices from guidelines. Dr. Shipman described the process that had been followed in Frederick County, and Mrs. Slye asked whether this put the principal in the role of being a financial manager. Dr. Shipman agreed that it did, but he pointed out that he did this now by basing his financial management on the instructional needs of his school. He recalled that a few years ago they had talked about giving the area associate superintendents more control over the budget. The areas could play more of a role in controlling budgets for individual schools.

Dr. Cronin stated that there were some principals whose strong point was communication and others who were not strong in communication. He wondered how they helped the weak principal in communication. Dr. Shipman replied that principals were willing to be evaluated but the evaluation had to take place. Dr. Shoenberg said that even if people were told about their weaknesses they did not change very much. Dr. Shipman thought that something could be done about principals in improving certain skills such as communications. Mrs. Derby added that in her evaluations she always identified the items she felt she had to work on. When she evaluated teachers, she did the same thing by identifying areas where growth was needed. Dr. Shipman suggested that all principals should be evaluated the same way that Mrs. Derby had been.

Dr. Pitt recalled that at one point there were 12 administrative areas. Now an area superintendent had 50 schools, and administrators had to be evaluated every three years, two years in a row if they were new principals. This required a significant amount of time if the area superintendent was to do a full evaluation and spend some time with the principal.

Dr. Shipman commented that the county did do an excellent job of training future principals. Mr. Fess asked whether the training produced a Montgomery County style of administrative uniformity, and Dr. Shipman disagreed because of the differences in the personnel being trained.

Mrs. Praisner reported that she was serving on the Commission for School-based Administration which was looking at accreditation, training, selection process, training on the job, and the job descriptions of principals. She asked for MCAASP's perceptions of the role of the principal and indicated that the Commission would be forming subgroups which would need volunteers.

Dr. Shoenberg stated that the Board had met with a group of junior high school students who had talked about the pressures they were under to achieve academically, and he wondered whether MCAASP saw that increased pressure on students to succeed. Mrs. Ippolito replied that they did see this at the high school level where there was competition for acceptance into college. Mrs. Slye remarked that these students spoke about sixth grade and eighth grade being major steps in their academic careers. They viewed these grades as the linchpin on which they had to hang their entire lives. They faced increased pressure as they entered the high schools. Mrs. Ippolito commented that she saw this pressure at the end of the tenth grade. Some of this was manifested in the growing use of alcohol which led to serious problems. Dr. Shipman saw this in the elementary schools as the pressure of society on these children to succeed. Mrs. Derby saw a problem with increased graduation requirements and putting more and more on these children.

Mr. Ewing said that parents worried about it being tougher for people to succeed with the same level of education as they had. The awful part came when parents and schools put undue pressure on children to achieve what they could not achieve. Mrs. Derby remarked that the American economy had begun to value certain job skills that were different from credentialed work. She suggested that perhaps they had to look at more vocational training. Mrs. Praisner did not see that happening in Montgomery County. Mrs. Derby disagreed and suggested that there were people out there that the Board was not hearing from. She was concerned because she did not see joy in children. Mrs. Slye saw a growing need for the skilled technical worker, and she suggested that as the economy changed this type of position would become more acceptable. Dr. Pitt remarked that they had had the concept that success was related to a white collar highly academic group, and children in Montgomery County grew up with that view.

Ms. Walsh observed that they had talked about students feeling this enormous pressure. She thought that they did not have an atmosphere where it was okay to make a mistake or okay to be silly. Teachers were not willing to try new ideas and to take risks.

Dr. Shoenberg thanked MCAASP for their remarks, and Mrs. Ippolito said that they would be sharing the results of the meeting with their membership, especially the feeling of trust and mutual cooperation with the Board. She reported that Dr. Anastasi would be the new president next year, and she thanked the Board members for their support.

Re: Adjournment

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m.

President

Secretary

WSC:mlw