



professional development opportunities; expanded strategies that were linked more closely with teachers' professional development and relied more heavily on peer judgments; improved salaries that were competitive with other school districts and other professionals with similar training and experience; increased flexibility for principals and teachers to set school goals, determine how the school was to be structured, develop and select curricular materials, and allocate resources to meet goals; and more effective use of teachers' time and energy for educating children achieved by reductions in teaching load and more extensive use of aides, interns, and student teachers to relieve teachers of noninstructional tasks and to help in the classroom.

The Commission recommended recruiting from the best teacher training institutions, reestablishing teacher centers for training student teachers, and one-time bonuses for new hires in shortage areas. It also recommended annual cost-of-living increases and periodic adjustments to the entire pay scale to keep comparability with business.

Other recommendations of the Commission were to have senior teachers as mentors with additional compensation for that role and time off, improve the training and working conditions to reduce the attrition rate for new teachers, and actively seek minority candidates. It also recommended changing the way of evaluating by having ongoing evaluations by mentor and principal for beginning teachers, less frequent evaluations by peers and linked to training for career teachers with tenure, and intensive evaluation leading to counseling and training for teachers having difficulty.

To implement these recommendations, the Commission urged the Board and administrators to involve the community and teachers; to set up a steering committee composed of six teachers and six principals to address these issues; to set up task forces on recruiting, training, evaluation and career structure; to appoint a senior administrator to oversee and shepherd the process; to initiate a pilot restructuring of ten schools to work out the details of what policies needed to be changed; and to evaluate that process and extend it year after year to other schools.

Mrs. Praisner thanked Dr. O'Keefe for his presentation of the report. She acknowledged, as had Dr. O'Keefe, the excellent staff work that the Commission had had and thanked Dr. Muir and his staff, especially Dottie Nenstiel who served as secretary to the Commission.

Dr. Cronin noted that one of the Commission's major issues was achieving change in the bureaucratic structure of the school system and asked how were they to do that. Dr. O'Keefe responded that the Commission agreed that that was the major thrust in the report. In terms of how to go about it, the thinking behind the suggestions in the report itself was something they hoped to go into in further discussions as the process went on and people encountered the issues that implementing some of the ideas would undoubtedly create. Dr. Cronin commented that the Board had received a very strong, very thoughtful and very forward-looking piece of work and he appreciated

what the Commission had done.

Dr. O'Keefe reported that one of the most difficult issues the Commission explored was the question of bureaucratic relationships and they heard regular and unsolicited concern from teachers and principals about the heavy load of central directives. In talking with administrators, what they heard was that those directives were recommendations, not mandates, and they were meant to be helpful and supportive, and the Commission sensed that there was a communication problem in the school system and the climate was one in which things that came from above were directives and they were interpreted that way even if they were not meant that way.

Dr. Shoenberg said that the report was an extraordinarily sophisticated piece of work and he, too, saw as the central issue, apart from some pieces that had very large dollar signs attached to them, the change in mode of thinking. He believed there were few who would disagree with the recommendations about recruitment, about induction of new teachers into the system and about the kind of evaluation changes that were needed. Dr. Shoenberg observed, if the Board were to undertake the kinds of changes suggested in the report to address a teacher shortage which might or might not last for a long period of time, they might find they no longer had a teacher shortage about the same time they had all the things suggested in the report in place. He believed the reason to do the things suggested in the report was because it made better sense educationally and not because there was a teacher shortage.

Mr. Ewing was immensely pleased with the report and with its analysis and recommendations, which was not to say he agreed one hundred per cent with all of them. He noted there was one area where there was a problem for the Board and that was in the realm of accountability. Because the Board didn't, as the report pointed out, have very good measures of what outcomes ought to be, there was a tendency on the part of the Board and administrators to manage inputs, to be very prescriptive about what people were to do, what activities they were to perform, what techniques they were to pursue in carrying out their duties rather than to specify much more precisely what results the Board would like to see achieved. The dilemma for Mr. Ewing was how to structure accountability in such a way that if the Board moved in the direction suggested by the Commission they would be able to retain a form of accountability which would satisfy both the Board and the community that they were managing the resources and the policies of the system wisely. He believed the Board would have to structure a form of accountability which would permit the Board to know what outcomes were resulting from the kinds of things proposed by the Commission. That meant the Board would have outcome measures to devise before they would be able to put everything else in place, so there would also be a timing question as well as a strategic question of how they would work out the accountability issues.

Dr. O'Keefe pointed out the Commission was not recommending a system in which there would be complete autonomy and flexibility at the school level. He stated there was a balance between flexibility and

rigidity and they were recommending a movement on that scale toward the flexible end, not a movement all the way to the flexible end. He asked the Board to ponder how the community now held the Board accountable in carrying out the Board's job because presumably that would be the same way the schools would have to be held accountable for their doing the job. He suggested that one avenue for exploration and thinking would be to ask how was the Board now held accountable and what was wrong with those same accountability procedures or strategies applied in heavier weight to local schools by their community. Mr. McFee added that the Board didn't have to think it was the only group that had to be held accountable. He thought the Commission was suggesting a much more decentralized process which would allow the local community to have a direct interaction around the area of accountability with the local school that served that community.

Dr. Darling-Hammond stated that part of what the Commission was suggesting was modes of accountability, one of which was to pay a great deal of attention to selection, induction training, and evaluation of people in a system so that the Board had absolute confidence that the people who were there could make decisions. She said the other part was to rely more heavily on procedures that were designed to prevent people who might be incompetent from performing incompetently, and the Commission was suggesting a number of ways in which the Board would put a great deal more weight on investing in and carefully selecting and training and evaluating people so that the level of confidence in their ability to perform would be much higher and therefore the degree of discretion could be that much greater.

Mr. Ewing's view of how the Board was held accountable was that Board members took actions to initiate policies and gave directives and when people asked them how things were going, they were inclined to tell them that the Board issued the policy and, if they were not doing it out there, that was their fault. The difficulty with that was it transferred the blame but didn't resolve the issue of why a child wasn't getting the educational services he or she needed. The Board needed a better way of going about that, but also it needed a better way of dealing with that in the local school as well, because the difficulty was that everybody could do that in a big bureaucracy where accountability was not pinpointed in an appropriate way.

Dr. Cronin commented that if they could change attitudes so that the decision point on most issues was the principal and the school with the system acting as a framework of support for those decisions, they could perhaps stop making (as one principal was heard to tell a parent the Board makes) kindergarten assignments.

Dr. Pitt raised the issue of more autonomy at the local school level. He saw part of the problem being that the citizenry had great influence on what happened in a school in Montgomery County and a school might see itself as doing what should be done and part of the community might see the school as not doing what it should do from their perspective. That created conflict; it was not always simple

and easy to determine who was correct. Some of that was resolved now by going to "higher authority" and having them take a look at it and make some decision.

Dr. O'Keefe responded that the influence that the school had on education had to be dramatically more than the Board or the administration because that was where education took place. It was difficult to educate large numbers of diversely qualified young people to a similar level of accomplishment and there were no prescriptions written somewhere that were simple ways to do that. That argued for a professional model where the person in the environment tried to make those decisions. There were always going to be disagreements and there would always be some parents who felt that approach was not the one they wanted for their child. One of the Commission's suggestions was that there was a way to deal with that within the public school system and that was the Board's policy of allowing the parents to shift their children to other schools.

The Commission's suggestion with regard to that policy was to make it an equitable and real policy. It was currently limited to those parents who could afford to provide transportation for their young people. The Commission would urge the system to look at the possibility of providing that option for everybody. They felt the most powerful accountability for a school was the accountability that private schools had where if people didn't think they were doing the job, they took their kids elsewhere and those schools lost students and they lost business and they eventually closed their doors. The temptation in a large system was to resolve conflicts by booting them upstairs. The temptation at the higher level was to take on those conflicts and to try to resolve them in the best interests of that school and its community, but that led to the kind of centralized decision-making defusion of responsibility that the Commission had encountered.

Mrs. Praisner stated that the one area where she had the greatest concern was the introduction of the transfer issue into the report because she didn't think it was responsive to the problem and personally did not see it as the solution to the issue addressed. She noted that when serving on task forces there was a great urge to modify the charge or go beyond the framework. She wanted to hear more of the rationale for the inclusion of that issue because she was hoping that it might suggest something that would make her feel more amenable to it, but unfortunately so far it had not. She had just spent two years working on the issue of principals in a state task force and she wondered about the principal as the educational leader of the school and the whole question of principals in the school system of the future as the Commission defined it.

Dr. O'Keefe thought that the direction that one found in the current broader discussion of the principal as the leader of the school underlay some of their recommendations. He thought it was just an area that they did not give a great deal of attention to in the final report but the model was there. When they talked about the school team, about the group of people in the school, they were talking

there about the principal. They also had identified a variety of roles that the principal would have in evaluation, in instructional leadership, and so on. They didn't pull those together because that did not become an issue. Part of an evaluation for a principal would be a professional development plan that would see that that individual had the opportunities for professional development to hone skills that were needed and to work on areas for growth, and he thought the conflict or the discussion about being responsive and working within the team at the school level was also evident in that area.

Mr. Tatel stated that as they looked at the question of how to attract and keep high quality teachers, one of their conclusions was that high quality teachers needed flexibility in order to respond to the greatly varied needs of the students of this county. Schools would emphasize different types of teaching techniques, emphasize different types of approaches to education; it would be a flexible system responding flexibly to varying needs. Once the Commission ended up with that model, it made no sense to them not to allow parents to select among those different schools. If a school with a particular teaching technique developed in one community and that particular school was of value to a parent elsewhere, it made no sense not to allow that parent to choose that school and they thought they were simply building on a system that already existed in the county. There were already quite a number of schools that parents could select among and the county did provide transportation. Those were the magnet schools and parents could within certain limitations select among any school so long as they provided their own transportation. All they were suggesting was that the Board think about the possibility of providing transportation for more kinds of choices so that parents could take advantage of what the Commission hoped would be a growing number of options within the county and the Board would be able to view it as one of many measures of accountability.

Dr. Diggs added that when the discussions of the Commission began to focus on the issue of increased parental options, they certainly felt it was critical that the Commission point out and make it very clear that Montgomery County should not engage in any kind of practice that would be translated into either the freedom of choice issues that followed the 1954 Supreme Court decision or the massive resistance that sprang up over the south. They felt that they would not be recommending any kind of increase in parental options that would go against the present guidelines that were drawn up to protect racial balance, so that if parents wanted to transfer their child to a school based on the fact that the program in a particular school or school district would be better suited for their child than the present school, that that would not be honored if it was going to detract from the racial balance that MCPS had so carefully worked out. Dr. Diggs particularly wanted to make sure that that was not misinterpreted and many of the other Commission members felt the same so that increased parental options meant just what it said in the report and should not be misconstrued for other reasons.

Ms. Blunt wanted to emphasize that the question of parental involvement or parental option was not raised to the level of recommendation by the Commission. She believed that it was important for the Board and for the MCPS to husband its financial resources and strength for those Commission recommendations that had the greatest potential for significantly impacting the issues identified in the Commission's charge. To date parents were asking some hard questions and they wanted certain assurances that their children would exit the public school system prepared for post secondary education and/or with certain marketable skills. She thought it was a given that student achievement always increased when parents were involved so if the Board wanted to do something really meaningful in the area of parental involvement, it might be important to offer workshops which would help parents to understand the importance of extending the learning environment to the home environment, showing parents how to basically help their children to deal with the curriculum.

Dr. Shoenberg's image of Montgomery County schools was that every elementary school was different and had its particular individual characteristics but they were all in the business of educating a full range of students. The particular characteristic that they had depended on the nature of the community -- frequently the socio-economic mix of that community, the principal, how long that person had been there, the kind of imprint that that person had been able to make on the community, on the staff, on students, on the particular mix of teachers that existed in that school -- whether there had developed a kind of general way of doing things that everybody bought into and into which anybody coming into the school new was socialized. He agreed that the Board needed to move far more in the direction of individual schools having a larger measure of determination over their own fate, the particular way they did things. He recognized that in a situation of limited resources, those degrees of flexibility were going to be limited by the number of teachers that one could make available to the school, the number of aides or the amount of money for purchasing textbooks or for other instructional materials, etc., but that most schools were still going to have to educate all kinds of students: children at risk, children who were slow learners but not handicapped in any identifiable way by the usual definitions, average kids, real bright kids. They were all going to be responsible for adapting the kind of education that went on there to individual situations as much as was possible. Dr. Shoenberg thought there would be another kind of specialization, a shift toward certain schools specializing in educating gifted and talented kids. There would be another school that specialized in educating at risk kids. There would be another school that specialized in educating kids who were slow learners but who were not identifiably learning disabled, so he expected that with free choice of movement they would get a kind of segregation of another sort and that was the kind of thing that bothered him.

Dr. Darling-Hammond said there were teachers who would like to stay with the same group of children in an elementary school for two or three years because that could prove to be far more effective than a structure that was already in place in the school and pretty much

mandated for the way in which they interacted with kids where they had to keep passing them on. There were teachers who wanted to organize a three-hour lesson in the humanities and there was a teacher in the county who did that to an oversubscribed course for a number of years. At New Hampshire Estates there was a professional staff to pupil ratio of 1 to 12 but the class size was up closer to somewhere around 25. Could a school like that decide that it was more worthwhile to have some classes of 12 than to spread out professional staff in such a way? Those were the kinds of thing the Commission was talking about. The movement of children could be controlled by Board policy. Equity concerns could be addressed by Board policy. The Commission was suggesting that the technology of schooling was probably the least well addressed by top-down policy.

Dr. Cody commented that there might be a tendency on everyone's part to take the general guidelines and think up ways they might be implemented that would create problems rather than meet together and look for ways in which they could agree on how those things might be implemented constructively. His general conclusion was that taken together it was the most constructive set of suggestions of fundamental improvement in public education that he had seen in a long time.

For Dr. Cronin the issue was that the Board must take some risks that things would be done differently from the way they had done it in the past. The Commission was asking if the Board was also ready to change its mind as they asked principals and teachers to change theirs. The Board was one of the players in that process. He wanted to know, at some point, the staging that the Board would start taking the report through its process, the cost in dollar terms and in staffing terms, and to have the superintendent give those for bringing people in who are not certified, internships, etc. There was a major issue of certification for teachers both at the state level as well as within the profession itself. There had to be some education of a world beyond the eight Board members. He saw the county executive and County Council who would be asked to bear those costs and the state board of education as being one of the elements in the certification and the standardization, etc. He wanted to know if they could ask the Commission to be part of an effort to bring that process to the county executive and County Council and perhaps later to the state level so that they could begin preparing the foundation that they would need later as they accepted all or major parts of the report and then went to the funding agents and the standardization agents.

Mrs. Praisner agreed with Dr. Cronin except for the last point. She hesitated to take things to bodies when they were not sure they were in agreement or even knew from having discussed them what the implications of those recommendations might be. She proposed doing something different with the report and that was to take parts of the report, discuss them at the Board table with members of the Commission to help to clarify and to discuss them, and also members of the senior staff and school system staff to try and respond, and see where they were so they had a better understanding of what was

meant and what might be the implications. As they defined terms, they needed to make sure that everybody had, if not agreement, at least some understanding about what they were referring to. Dr. Shoenberg hoped the Commission would be willing to continue working with the Board. He thought community members needed the opportunity to speak and talk about the report and he wanted to add to the list of folks who needed to be in on the dialogue, members of the community in significant numbers.

Mr. Ewing agreed with Dr. Shoenberg's suggestion of hearing from community and hoped they could arrange time in the not too distant future when they could do that. He also thought it would be important to have a timetable to let the Board, Commission members and public know when they could expect to deal with the issues. He was not suggesting there was a need to rush but they shouldn't dally either. He hoped the Commission would be willing to participate with the Board and that the Board would try to accommodate as far as possible the Commission members' busy schedules.

Dr. Cody said he would convey copies to the employee association groups and ask them to study it and comment on it because their in-depth involvement would be necessary soon.

Dr. O'Keefe indicated the Commission would be willing to engage in further explorations of the recommendations in the report.

Mrs. Praisner said the report had lived up to the expectations that the Board had when they chose the members of the Commission and she thanked them very much. She noted that she and Dr. Cody would work out a timetable for future discussions and get back to the members with that.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

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

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President

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Secretary

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