



school-based decision-making pilot program. They had three members on the committee: Seth Goldberg, Sue Richardson, and Phyllis Robinson.

Mr. Goldberg reported that his committee was excited and enthusiastic. They felt that in going ahead with this program, MCPS was creating an opportunity for teachers to become involved in decision-making. The other piece of this was the process of having MCEA, parents, administrators, and supporting services personnel coming together and dealing with some different concepts and trying to come to some mutual understandings. He reported that 25 pilots were submitted which was a good number given the short time line. Another encouraging aspect was that every one of the pilots really tried to get at the concept of local decision-making. He said that even the pilots that did not show good flexibility showed good thinking about what the community was about and how the program might be improved for the students and the community.

Mr. Goldberg reported that some of the ideas that were not accepted would be good minigrant applications. He felt that there were a lot of bright and creative people in the school system who would come up with good ideas if given the latitude to stop and think about what they were doing. During the next semester, the pilots would be "fleshed out." All of the pilots required some training in shared decision-making. He indicated that many of the pilots emanated from small groups of people in a school and frequently these people did not have full-time classroom responsibilities. Next semester these people would involve the full participation of people in the classrooms. There would have to be consultation and team building, and next semester he expected to see a joint commitment on the part of MCPS and MCEA in continuing this effort.

Ms. Richardson added that a lot of schools were talking about this process. They were hearing from people that even if they did not submit a pilot, they were going to try some things next year. Ms. Robinson added that with the involvement of the community, professionals, support staff, and administrators this had opened up new avenues for communication.

Dr. Cronin recalled that when the Board had approved this there was a risk-trust factor. The risk was in funding it and the trust in believing they would have quality programs.

Mrs. Praisner reported that she had attended meetings and had read articles on school-based decision-making programs. In many cases, the expectations for success were so great and were expected early on so that schools defeated themselves. In some jurisdictions, the pilots were kept minor in the first year. It seemed to her they were saying they were not going to experience crawling before they walked because of the high quality of people in MCPS. She thought they had to be cautious. It was critical that people not expect too much, and that the press and public did not start reporting on the beginnings of these pilots. They needed to make sure they recognized there might be failures in this process.

Mr. Goldberg explained that he had some of the same concerns about reporting outcome evaluation. They were not going to have outcomes in the first year. For example, they would not see a difference in test scores. These pilots would require a lot of nurturing. Dr. Pitt agreed that there might be failures, and it would take all of them working together to be successful in this venture.

While he had not seen any proposals, Dr. Shoenberg hoped they did not focus on process as opposed to focusing on some kind of educational change. He realized that one purpose of the effort was to change some processes with the goal of trying to teach students in some more effective way. Mr. Goldberg explained that unweighted evaluation criteria was used with the pilots. They considered the educational value, the impact of shared decision making processes, and the management model proposed.

Dr. Shoenberg asked if it would be possible for them to bless a pilot that did not have an educational outcome. Mr. Goldberg replied that at this point, especially in the secondary schools, they did have proposals where the content was nonspecific. The proposals set up sharing decision making to look at the various aspects of the school and to determine from that what changes would make sense. In that case, they would accept a proposal which did not tell them what the school proposed to change.

Dr. Shoenberg noted that what they approved this year would set a pattern for what comes after. He was concerned about the pattern they set and what was the sort of thing that got approved. He commented that his opinion would not enter the decision-making process at all. The end result of this ought to be to change the way they taught students and make it more effective. He hoped that in each case that it was clear that if it did not happen at this stage of the process, it would be clear how it was going to happen at the next stage for that particular school. Dr. Cronin said he would accept a proposal that had a strong change in process which could then lead to some educational changes. He would accept the change in process as an end in itself.

Dr. Pitt remarked that this was one of the goals he had been interested in and had encouraged. They did not run a school by a vote, but teachers did need to have meaningful input into the education of children. He did not know any more than the Board did, but he would hope there would be some changes. More importantly, he hoped it would develop so that teachers felt themselves to be meaningfully involved.

Mr. Simon commented that they were talking about a different process in the school which distinguished this from other efforts like minigrants. Beyond that, there was agreement that what would happen would improve the quality of education.

It seemed to Mr. Ewing that the proposition they were testing here in the pilots was the proposition that a new way of involving teachers

would have an impact on the quality of the outcome. If it did not, they had to examine it to see if there were other benefits that made it worthwhile.

Mr. Goldberg explained that what they were doing in Montgomery County was different from what had been done elsewhere. The Board and the superintendent turned over defining what shared decision-making ought to look like to a committee. There had not been an exhaustive debate of what the Board and the superintendent thought about what shared decision-making should look like. Dr. Pitt commented that in most places shared decision-making efforts had been made from the top down which was a real risk.

Mr. Simon stated that their second issue stemmed from anecdotal information from their members. There appeared to be an increased emphasis on standardized test scores, and the issue was nationwide. To some extent, the situation in Montgomery County was influenced by actions the Board had taken. He and his executive committee were in a lot of schools and at their assemblies and leadership retreat, they had received a lot of feedback on the use of standardized test scores. Teachers were changing how and what they taught by taking vocabularies from sample tests and using this information as a way of improving test scores. Many elementary schools were setting aside one hour per day to drill students on test taking skills. There were test pep rallies in a number of schools, and some schools used the test taking booklet as the curriculum for a week. They also had the issue of who was exempted from these tests which seemed to be a little uneven. He reported that in some schools they had created a position to help children who scored low on tests, and because the school's staff allocation had not gone up, this had affected the work load of the other teachers. Teacher aides were now used to focusing on particular students and their test scores. Resource teachers were using their resource time to remediate students.

Mr. Simon cited an article which listed what happened when school systems put a heavy emphasis on test scores as an accountability measure, and he indicated that this was a good description of what was happening in MCPS. The feedback he was receiving from teachers was that something was going on, and it was dangerous. MCEA had asked teachers to keep journals on how what they were doing was changing and how the reactions of the students were changing. They were going to survey their membership to get a more scientific sense of the extent of the problem.

Mr. Simon explained that they hoped to get together with seven of the Maryland jurisdictions including Boards of Education to address this issue in a conference format. The systems in the Washington metropolitan area might be able to get together to raise sensitivity to this issue on a national level.

Dr. Cronin hoped that if Mr. Simon had serious concerns on this issue he would communicate directly with the superintendent. Dr. Pitt commented that there was a national emphasis on CAT scores and pressure to have minority students score higher. In Virginia a state

scoring system was being developed similar to the CAT. In Maryland, two commissions had talked about what measures should be used to judge how students were doing. There were national discussions about entry examinations from junior to senior high school. Some jurisdictions were saying that they would take students back if they did not meet expectations after passing certain examinations. He explained that CAT scores measured certain competencies, and a lot of people argued that they should teach the skills measured by this test. There were other school systems that did just this using computers and other support systems to get better scores. He believed that if a student did poorly on some of the skills in the test, then that student had to be taught those skills. He did not believe they should regulate for all students because 80 percent of their students were above measures on the CAT. He said that nationally they were looked at accountability measures that were relatively simplistic. He thought it would be interesting to see what the state task force came up with, but he thought the bottom line would be entry-level and statewide with some efforts to put funds into places scoring low.

Mrs. Praisner reported that there were Maryland state plans to change the CAT. Mr. Simon said they recognized the trend, and what they were expressing was their frustration. He felt that there had to be a counter to that trend, and it could not come from teachers alone. It had to come from teachers, boards, and community.

Dr. Shoenberg said that the first thing they had to say was what the test tested was not what they ought to be teaching. He thought Mr. Simon was arguing was that it was too limited a measure of what they should be teaching, and he agreed. Most of these tests were multiple choice because they could be given to large numbers of students. He suggested that they had to do something about this and find other measures they were willing to accept. No one was going to escape accountability, but the question was what other forms of accountability would they like.

Dr. Pitt said the state school performance task force was trying to focus on other measures. However, when they came up with something, he saw a much more structured approach statewide. The question he had was what use would be made of these results.

Ms. Phyllis Cochran said she was not comfortable with the choice of the test because their curriculum did not get to so much of what was in that test. Therefore, if a teacher wanted students to do well, they had to race through to cover that material. She also pointed out that the criterion-referenced tests they were using were taking passages from the G&T novels. The children in the G&T groups had read and discussed these novels, but the same time was given to the below- and on-grade level students. Dr. Pitt explained that the CRT's were designed to measure the maximum aspects of the curriculum to let teachers know where children needed improvement. They were never designed to be used as a measure of success for the child. The rest of the country used these tests to measure success or failure in terms of some artificial definition. They were much like all other

normed tests. Dr. Pitt explained that the CRT's were to be used by the teacher and not by the school system to determine how well a teacher succeeds with a particular child. This was quite different than using a test to measure some level of expectation that all students meet. This was essentially what a normed national test did or statewide criterion-referenced tests did.

Mr. Ewing commented that in the last decade there had been a massive shift in direction of emphasis on standardized tests. This was accelerated by a whole range of Board policies starting with 1979 but not stopping with 1982. This was encouraged by the way in which Priorities 1 and 2 were stated. He was worried that students would be ill served by a process that focuses exclusively on taking tests. This led students to believe that the only thing important was getting answers right on multiple choice and true/false exams and that learning how to reason was not important.

It seemed to Mr. Ewing that it was important to have in place some strategies to deal with this. They kept being told that some day they were going to have these marvelous criterion-referenced tests to fulfill that need. He suggested they might be better off to look for something else, and there was nothing wrong with relying on teacher judgment. He thought that this emphasis on standardized tests undercut the whole movement toward reform. It removed the teachers from the business of being professional and making judgments about what was happening in education.

Mr. Simon explained that their objection was not to accountability or to testing. The issue was this trend of undermining all their other efforts. There was a pressure to achieve these false objectives, and teachers were less and less able to deal with creative ways of encouraging learning. They would like to have an all-day conference to look at the problem and come up with alternative measures.

Mrs. Praisner reported that last year she had served as president of the National Federation of Urban-Suburban School Districts which included 25 or 30 districts with a student population of 25,000 or more. She had surveyed school superintendents and Boards about a variety of issues to see where the organization wanted to go. She had asked if there was a national issue that the Federation might be involved in. One issue was an alternative to standardized tests, and of those returning the survey, there was considerable interest. In networking with those members, they might find a way of generating some clout out of that group.

Mrs. Praisner said that last week she had attended an educational leadership conference for the state. They were talking with Dr. Shilling about his initiatives. Participants were asked to list three of their priorities, and she had listed finding alternatives to standardized tests. There was some sentiment for that as well. She thought the Maryland Associations of Boards of Education might be interested in working with the Maryland State Teachers Association on that issue. She cautioned that if a conference were held that it not point fingers at local school districts. She noted that in Maryland they only had 24 school districts, and they could get people into a

room to talk about these issues. They also had lots of people being concerned about that, and they did not have a state-mandated curriculum. She thought it was possible to move on this issue in Maryland.

Dr. Pitt reported that there was a national assessment going on, and the mathematics was the first area. The scores were going to be for internal information, but Montgomery County reported every score. There were still jurisdictions in the state that did not report scores. Education was a function of the state, and Montgomery County was part of the state of Maryland. When the state dictated a form of accountability, they were going to have to meet that form of accountability.

Mr. Park remarked that it was very clear that among teachers and school boards there was a concern. However, it was a real problem when they started seeing students become alarmed about the amount of emphasis being put on standardized tests. They now had fifth and fourth graders comparing CAT scores, and morale was being destroyed among students and the learning environment was being destroyed. Students were becoming conditioned to multiple choice tests and did not know what a real essay question was. If this trend continued, the students would be ill served.

Mr. Simon said they were hearing more about staffing ratio problems. These included speech and language, ESOL, art and music, psychologists, and physical education. There was a lot of discussion about a proposal to weight class size for mainstreamed students. They recognized that this was a cost item. Although the numbers might not be increasing, the difficulties of teaching were increasing.

Ms. Bonnie Cullison commented that the county was lagging behind in some areas. In special education areas they were not meeting the needs of students. Frequently ESOL, art, music, and physical education teachers were traveling between schools. The ratio for speech and language was 59 to 1, and that was an average. With the amount of planning required for these diverse groups and the travel time there was not enough time to provide an adequate program let alone a quality program.

Dr. Shoenberg reported that there was a survey done on learning disabled students, and Maryland had the highest percentage of students who were identified as LD. The national organization suggested that these students should be in a regular classroom and were being over identified. The state argued that they were being much more aggressive in identifying these students. He thought that in a number of areas including speech and language they were not lagging behind but forging ahead in the number of students they identified.

Ms. Marsha Smith stated that during the last few budget cycles successful attempts had been made to decrease the numbers of students in academic classes in the elementary schools. As a result students

in secondary schools had been displaced disproportionately into art, music, and physical education classes. Academic classes had limits, but there were no limits to those particular classes. This was happening in J/I/M schools predominantly. Mr. Ewing thought it would be useful to have this information. Dr. Pitt did not believe that physical education class sizes were going up, but they could look at it again. They had added 67 teachers to reduce large classes in academic areas.

Mrs. Praisner suggested they might need to look at registration issues. Ms. Smith pointed out that in J/I/M schools physical education was a requirement, but in high schools it was an elective. Those classes had increased in the J/I/M schools in order to decrease the academic classes.

Mr. Simon reported that there was a lot of concern from secondary teachers about giving students credit who should not be getting credit. For example, teachers needed to give an interim report or they could not fail a student. Students got credit for the course even if they failed the final exam. Students could also fail the final exam and the last quarter and still pass the course. Dr. Pitt recalled that the student Board member last year recommended that a group look at this issue. MCEA would be appointing someone to that group, and the goal was to take another look at this issue. Mr. Simon said that he had attended a forum where the issue of social promotion came up. Dr. Shoenberg commented that the Villani group was looking at this issue.

Mr. Randy Changuris asked if there was a minimum attendance policy in the state or the county. Dr. Pitt replied that this was a grey area, and Mr. Changuris requested that the Board look into this. Dr. Pitt commented that there was a minimum number of hours but the interpretation was flexible.

Mr. Simon reported that a concern had been raised that the minigrants were being controlled tightly by the area office as to how monies were spent. Dr. Pitt agreed to check into this. Dr. Vance added that the same process was being used as had been used for the past three years. He requested specific information from Mr. Simon.

Mr. Simon noted that reduction of paperwork was a goal. One area where it should happen was in keeping track of attendance. In some schools there was a burden because every day a student was absent a form had to be filled out.

Ms. Cochran asked if the school system had a paper shortage, and Dr. Vance replied that he would check into it although he had no knowledge of any shortage.

Ms. Smith asked about a freeze on hiring teachers and administrators. Dr. Pitt explained that they had never had a freeze on hiring teachers, but they had a minimal freeze on areas outside of the classroom. He probably would increase that because they were about \$1.6 million short in medical benefits, private placement, and

teacher hiring rates. He had not reached the point where he would have to go with using long-term substitutes. Mr. Simon thanked the Board for the opportunity to meet with them and to work together. On behalf of the Board, Dr. Cronin thanked Mr. Simon and the members of his executive Board.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:55 p.m.

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PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY

HP:mlw