APPROVED
55-1991

Rockville, Maryland
November 4, 1991

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Monday, November 4, 1991, at 8 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mr. Blair G. Ewing, President in the Chair
Mrs. Frances Brenneman
Dr. Alan Cheung
Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo
Mrs. Carol Fanconi
Ms. Ana Sol Gutierrez
Mrs. Catherine E. Hobbs

Absent: Mr. Shervin Pishevar

Others Present: Dr. Paul L. Vance, Superintendent
Mrs. Katheryn W. Gemberling, Deputy
Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

#indicates student vote does not count. Four votes are needed for adoption.

Re: ANNUAL MEETING WITH MONTGOMERY COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL

Mr. Ewing welcomed the members of MCAASP to their annual meeting with the Board of Education.

Mr. Jay Headman, president of MCAASP, stated that their first question had to do with the budget crunch and what was going to happen. They already had a freeze of $4 million, and another $3 million was needed.

Mr. Ewing reported that the County Council had set a timeline which involved a hearing on November 12 and a discussion of the energy tax on November 19. He explained that the energy tax was the key to Mr. Potter's plan for avoiding more cuts to the school system. If the Council did not adopt this tax, the budget cut might be around $15 million for the school system. The Council was expected to make decisions on November 21. The Board had made no decisions beyond the freeze, but the Board had asked the superintendent to examine all options. Mr. Ewing said the Board was not eager to do anything about furloughs or layoffs if they could be avoided. They had talked about lowering temperatures in the schools and cutting maintenance costs except for emergencies. He explained that the Board did not have any answers for MCAASP because the County Council had to take an action before the Board

could act on the budget deficit. In the judgment of the Board's lawyers, the action taken by the state did not negate the rules for employee negotiations. If there were changes in the budget which required changes in contracts, the Board would have to following the normal process. Mr. Ewing explained that they could not take actions that were premature, but they would be prepared to act once the Council had taken its actions.

Mrs. Fanconi reported that at today's County Council meeting an agreement had been reached that the Council did have to take an action on the budget. She had also received assurances that the County Council and county executive would not use the line item authority in the legislation. She hoped that the school advocates would be able to speak at the Council's hearing on November 12.

In regard to spending affordability, Mr. Ewing stated that the Council had set rates higher than expected for the school system but about $47 million lower than what was needed for same services and the growth in MCPS, but this was not the current crisis. They would begin facing that crisis in January. He explained that the spending affordability guidelines were based on a set of assumptions about taxes which some Council members believed to be optimistic. Therefore, the picture for next year was grim; and it was important for all of them to focus on the best approach to these situations. They needed to work together because without each other they would not be effective.

Ms. Gutierrez indicated that the Delegation was having a hearing this evening and was looking at new revenue. It might be that in January the transfer tax would be raised. She said that she was impressed by a memo from the superintendent and the deputies about how the freeze was to be implemented, and she would like some feedback on what they were currently asking the schools to do.

Mr. Headman replied that he had met with his staff, and they were extremely concerned about furloughs, the loss of pay, and whether there would be enough materials for the children. Recently the superintendent had been working with principals to let principals make decisions on how best to use funds in the schools, and he felt that this would be very helpful to schools. The impact now was whether they would have enough funds for supplies for the rest of the year. All schools had employee openings, and staff were picking up on these duties. He thought they were seeing stress among staff, and when furloughs were mentioned staff wanted to see whether funds could be found outside of personnel costs to make up the $3.2 million. Mr. Headman was concerned about the timing of these decisions because as the days went by they would have less and less opportunity to have savings other than furloughs. Mr. Ewing assured him that if the Council followed its own schedule, the Board would act promptly. Mrs.

Brenneman added that the point had been made at the Council meeting that the later the decision, the fewer the options; however, by law, the earliest date for a Council decision would be November 21.

Dr. Gerry Lynch commented that he had included all staff members in his meetings. The staff had understood the process and had discussed furloughs, salary reductions, and layoffs. The regular instructional program had already been cut, and staff would like to know whether there would continue to be a sports program. He indicated that Larry Bowers was doing a good job of putting everything in perspective, and they needed more briefings on a regular basis. Mr. Ewing indicated that the Board had talked about sports as a possibility, and it would be on the table along with everything else. Mrs. Fanconi asked about cuts in the regular program, and Dr. Lynch explained that professional leave had been cut which was a real perk for a staff and an encouragement for teachers. There were very few perks they could give to that teacher who was working to make the program better, and professional leave was one of those. Mrs. DiFonzo pointed out that it was difficult for staff to understand when they saw professional development being cut while the sports program was not.

Dr. Frank Masci said that at his staff meeting they had discussed the possibility of decisions affecting sports and extracurricular activities. In most cases the best people received these stipends, and they had already suffered a salary freeze. Mrs. Hobbs asked about "work to the rule." Dr. Masci reported that this varied widely from school to school. In some cases teachers were not writing recommendations for colleges, and in other cases they were leaving the buildings at 3 p.m. Mrs. Hobbs asked whether everyone felt the pressure to comply when a work to the rule decision was made. Dr. Lynch replied that at Baker staff had decided to work to the rule and cancel extracurricular activities for November. This was costing teachers money, but they want to show cuts that would affect students and parents. He was working this through with the PTA, and he was making sure that nothing affected the school day; however, they would lose tutoring and band when they had already lost sports.

Dr. Vance remarked that it had been his experience that when a faculty was divided on an issue such as this, the wounds never went away. He hoped that they would not have faculties that were split down the middle.

Mrs. Fanconi asked if there were any actions they could take to bring the issue to the attention of the community. For example, they could turn off the lights on the outdoor playing fields and have daytime games. Dr. Masci replied that the football schedule was nearly ended. Mr. Headman commented that the last thing he would like to see cut was the extracurricular program because it

enhanced the student program, but if they did not look at sports and other areas he was not sure what other cuts they could make. Ms. Patricia Barry pointed out that the loss of revenue from night sports would be greater than the utility costs. Mrs. Fanconi indicated that this was the kind of information the Board needed from staff.

Dr. Masci said that staff was concerned about having enough paper for final exams. The ESOL program did not have texts, and all of their materials were handouts which required lots of paper. The learning centers used a lot of handouts as well, and staff in these areas were really apprehensive. The paper and copy toner for a high school averaged about $12,000 a year.

Ms. Barry commented that Montgomery College got to keep the fees for the rental of its facilities. She wondered how much MCPS lost when they operated school buildings in the evenings for the ICB. Dr. Vance agreed that the payback to the school system for the use of its facilities should be comparable to the actual cost of operating these buildings in the evenings and on weekends.

Ms. Joy Odom reported that she was involved in five new courses in math where they were training teachers. If the training could not continue, they would have to stop the program. In addition, teachers needed study time to prepare for these new courses, and the work to the rule came in. She said that she spent a lot of time talking through these issues with teachers.

Mr. Ewing asked if there were other thoughts about possible savings the Board might consider. Dr. Masci thought that to the extent possible they had to separate the frills from the basics. What he was hearing was that they had to maintain the instructional program, and some of them were concerned that when materials of instruction were touched that program was being affected. Extracurricular activities were "extra." While the Board would have to make some decisions that were repugnant, the bottom line was the basic instructional program. Ms. Dorothy Jackson said that training had to be considered a basic because they had new teachers who needed this, especially in mathematics.

Dr. Vance asked for their thoughts on how to convince the public that this was really happening. The newspaper editorials were not really sympathetic, and he was afraid that once work to the rule came in, their constituency would turn against them. Ms. Jackson reported that her school was divided about work to the rule. The teachers planned to have a letter on this issue and wanted a dialogue with the PTA. Mrs. DiFonzo had heard that in some classes teachers were announcing that they would write letters of reference for students if their parents brought in letters to the county advocating more money for teachers.

Mr. Headman pointed out that a majority of people in the county did not have children in the public schools. There was an editorial in the Gazette which shocked him because of its hostility toward MCPS and its statement that teachers were paid too much. There was also a letter to the editor from a teacher saying that teachers would not do this or that. The feeling of teachers was that some things needed to be cut before salaries. Dr. Masci pointed out that the federal government was a big employer in the county, and teachers did not see there had been as much of an effort toward solving the federal budget. Teachers did not see people out of work and knew that federal government workers were getting a pay raise.

Dr. Cheung commented that they all knew the Board was on record as encouraging the Delegation and the Council to generate more revenue. They had received complaints that this was not appropriate for the Board to do. He wished that the Board had the ability to generate its own revenue. He knew that a lot of people did not believe the school system was in trouble. These same people believed there were too many administrators and too much fat in the school system. He pointed out that the federal employees would receive a 4.2 percent raise, and in the past these federal workers had compared their small raises with those of the teachers whose salaries had gone up considerably in recent years. The Board knew the budget crisis was real, but the message was not getting out to the public. His coworkers in the federal government were still challenging him about whether the school system was in trouble. He asked how MCAASP could help get this message across.

Mr. Ewing believed that this impression was created by the newspapers, the Taxpayers League, and people resentful of the raises that school system employees had received. Dr. Dawn Thomas remarked that a large percentage of the adult population had gone through the schools when all these supports were not available to students. These people had one textbook and no extra help. The majority of them did not have children in the public schools and had a very narrow understanding of education today. Dr. Masci commented that there was a national movement to knock the schools. People were writing that taxpayers were not getting their money's worth and comparing American schools to those of the Japanese or talking about the "good old days" in American Education. These people did not know that the public schools had to educate everyone and that the Japanese schools were able to select students. They had forgotten that in the good old days public schools had a drop out rate of around 50 percent and problems of juvenile delinquency.

Ms. Gutierrez asked whether they were counteracting the negativism of the newspaper editorials. She did not think so. Until she had received the superintendent's memo on the impact of the budget decisions, she did not understand how these measures

would affect the day-to-day operation of the schools. Some editorials had misinformation such as paying teachers for vacations. They had to ask about how many federal workers had to work at night to get their jobs done. They had to point out that education in Montgomery County was an asset to property values. They had to point to the numbers of merit scholars in Montgomery County and stress that this did not come about by magic. The more they sat back and shook their heads, the less effective they were going to be.

In regard to the situation statewide, Mr. Ewing pointed out that some schools had been hit harder than others. Some members of the Legislature were worried about increasing taxes because a number of people lost their seats in the 1990 election because there was an anti-tax movement running strong in their jurisdictions. Many legislators believed there was no general support for a tax increase in the state. However, in an NEA survey people said they did not want more taxes but would support taxes earmarked for education.

Mrs. Fanconi stated that she was shocked when she saw Dr. Vance's expense cutting list, and she realized how principals must have felt when they saw the cutbacks. She inquired about feedback mechanisms for the schools. Dr. Vance reported that he had been meeting with employee groups, and they had not been reluctant to share information on the situation in the schools. He had asked Mrs. Gemberling and Dr. Rohr to prepare information on the impact of the work to the rule situation as well as the freeze situation and to share this information with the Board. His concern was how to get this information out to the community in a positive way. When he had worked in Philadelphia, teachers had rented the schools and held meetings to enlist the support of parents. He felt that there must be creative ideas out there to turn the tide of public sentiment.

Mrs. Fanconi agreed with Dr. Vance and pointed out that they were supposed to be educators but they were not doing a good job of educating the community. Even county officials thought that teachers were overpaid. She had attended a meeting at her daughter's school where teachers presented their views on the situation, but parents were angry because they felt the teachers were whining.

Dr. Vance remarked that he was proud of the example set by the leadership on the Board of Education. They had been instrumental in working with the leadership of the Delegation and Council and the county executive in coordinating the interests of MCPS. He continued to receive positive feedback about this, and because of the Board's efforts they had not had acrimony among the Delegation, County Council, county executive, and Board of Education and with the unions as well. He thought that the first step was to capture the support of parents and have them explain

to citizens when the lights went out and the gyms got cold. They needed as many messengers as possible. Dr. Masci thought they might be able to use the adopt-a-school program to get the message out to business and industry that the whole county lost when education took a nose dive. They needed to look to the senior citizens because they wanted to see their grandchildren well educated. He believed there were some groups out in the county that would be natural allies.

In regard to site-based decision-making, Mr. Ewing reported that the Board had received MCAASP's letter on the subject. Mr. Headman explained that his organization did not reject the concept, but they did have a lot of questions and could not support the policy before the Board.

Mr. Ewing explained that the Board was pursuing a policy in this area because the Board felt it was important to come to grips with what they were trying to do in this area. He said that whatever policy they did adopt should be considered as a first step and not the final word. The Board did not have all the answers and would not have them on November 12 or in six months. Until they had something in place, they would not be clear about whether or not such a policy would help with the education of children and their achievement. He pointed out that MCPS had one of the lowest ratios of administrators to staff in the state, and it was likely that there would be no improvements in the numbers of administrators. An effort to devolve some authority made economic sense. The Board began this effort in the spirit of the Commission on Excellence. He thought they ought to make use of the knowledge of teachers, administrators, and support services to make the schools function better. Some schools were doing this now, but others were not.

Mr. Ewing reported that a couple of years ago he was a national site visitor to the Bronx High School of Science, and he had been impressed by the position of the principal of the school. He had a committee for the continuous improvement of the school, and the principal's lament was that the school was not good enough. This was the spirit the Board began with. They had been encouraged by the experiences of other school systems and thought there was always room for improvement. He and other Board members did not have answers to the questions raised by MCAASP, but he felt these questions needed to be addressed.

Mr. Headman commented that he had attended a workshop and the question was raised about the importance of training, the cost, and the time involved. He wondered how much money MCPS would have to do a good job in this area. Ms. Odom pointed out that every school had advisory groups and could not exist without them, but the next step would cost money at a time when they had none.

Mr. Ewing wondered if every school did everything to involve teachers and the staff. He would have a hard time believing that. Dr. Masci replied that most schools had an active PTA executive board as well as a guidance advisory committee. He could not imagine a school without those two components. Ms. Jackson added that with MSPP they would also have a school improvement committee. Mrs. DiFonzo said she would have to ask what was in site-based management for children and who was accountable.

Dr. Cheung stated that the principal was the leader in the individual school, and whether site-based management worked depended on that principal. The superintendent was the leader of the school system, and it was apparent that the superintendent involved his staff in decision making. Today's workforce was educated and wanted to involved in decisions. He thought that the basic concept of site-based decision making was good, but he agreed that the program would require additional resources. However, this did not mean in a budget deficit situation, they should not look to the future. He said that it was up to the principal to decide how much of this would be done, and then there was the problem of involving parents and how much of the decision making the principal was willing to share.

Dr. Lynch remarked that there was nothing that prevented him from doing what site-based decision making suggested. MSPP would bring more of this to the schools. His concern was the enormous amount of time it would take to implement such a policy. Young faculties wanted to dig into instructional issues, but older faculties did not want the involvement because of the time commitment. He did not think there was anything in or out of the policy that prohibited him from involving staff.

Dr. Thomas reported that this summer she had attended a session on MSPP in Prince George's County, and she had found that it took schools one or two years before they got to discussions of instruction. They were tied up in micromanagment issues because they had no training. It took time and training to get to instructional decision making. Mr. Ewing said that the Board would have to make a determination as to whether it wanted schools to focus on all aspects of decision making or on a limited set of decisions. It was his view that the more limited set would be more sensible as a starting point. Asking people to get involved in hiring and firing might be something that they would come to later. Asking people to get involved in instructional issues was a good idea as long as a beginning teacher was not making this decision.

Dr. Thomas commented that the new teacher pilot was a type of site-based decision making. The schools applied to be in the program and it was all instructional decision making, but none of the 10 principals involved felt threatened. The principals saw a

big improvement in the morale of the experienced teachers and an improvement in the climate of the school. This was what she would like to see happen in site-based management.

Ms. Gutierrez said she looked at it from a management point of view and not as an instructional solution. It made the leaders in the schools take on a very successful approach which was participatory management and very different from the more traditional centralized decision making. The idea they would pick and choose where it could be done and how it could be done was contrary to the whole concept because they could not buy into it half way. She was somewhat disappointed with MCAASP's position. She described some TQM proposals that spoke to seven elements influencing how organizations became more effective. One of these was employee empowerment and teamwork and five levels as they moved toward this goal. The best one was "the norm was participatory management" with a flatter form of organization and a self-managing team. Unions would be part of the policy making groups.

Ms. Gutierrez reported that the concepts that were part of site-based management were coming from a long process of management styles. The Commission on Excellence had addressed these concepts very well as they applied to MCPS, and their report was produced back in 1987. It was her opinion that to continue to look at this and try and define it was no longer the major issue. Other benchmark school systems were using this, and if Montgomery County found value in this they should go after it. However, she would hate to see this go forth lukewarm because then it really would not work.

Dr. Masci commented that he had tried this in three different schools but not everyone wanted to buy into it. Sometimes some of the people who wanted to buy into it, should not be in it. The trick was to get a representative balance. For example, he had asked his instructional council to come up with ways to conserve money, but they did not want to handle this. He felt that people needed training to handle these issues. If MCPS went into site-based management, they had to do it right and support it. It needed to be thought through, people needed to be trained, and it would take a long time to do it.

Mr. Headman said that his first reaction to the policy was they did a lot of this and could do a lot more of including people in decisions. This was a significant and critical issue, and it was his feeling the Board should not go forward with it at this time. He agreed that involving the community in decision making was critical and that the time of the principal dictating to the school was over. In the contract MCAASP had recently signed there was an educational management committee which was to discuss such an issue because of its importance.

Mr. Ewing thanked the MCAASP executive board for joining the Board of Education in discussing these important issues.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 10:20 p.m.

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PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY

PLV:mlw