

APPROVED
15-1995

Rockville, Maryland
March 8, 1995

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Wednesday, March 8, 1995, at 7:55 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Beatrice B. Gordon, President
in the Chair
Mr. Stephen Abrams
Dr. Alan Cheung
Mr. Blair G. Ewing
Mr. Reginald Felton
Ms. Ana Sol Gutierrez*
Mrs. Nancy King

Absent: Ms. Wendy Converse

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

RESOLUTION NO. 184-95 Re: AMENDMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR
MARCH 8, 1995

On recommendation of the superintendent and on motion of Mrs. King seconded by Mr. Abrams, the following resolution was adopted unanimously by members present:

Resolved, That the Board of Education amend its agenda for March 8, 1995, to add items of legislation.

RESOLUTION NO. 185-95 Re: BOARD AGENDA - MARCH 8, 1995

On recommendation of the superintendent and on motion of Mrs. King seconded by Mr. Abrams, the following resolution was adopted unanimously by members present:

Resolved, That the Board of Education approve its agenda for March 8, 1995, as amended.

Re: ANNOUNCEMENT

Mrs. Gordon announced that Ms. Gutierrez would be joining the Board later in the evening, but she might be delayed because of the bad weather. Mrs. Gordon welcomed Mrs. Gail Ewing, County Council member, who was in the audience.

committee as a whole was concerned that MCPS had the shortest amount of instructional time for elementary school students.

It seemed to Mr. Abrams that there were a couple of things missing from the discussion. Qualitatively, based on results, MCPS seemed to be doing very well in comparison with other jurisdictions. They needed to look at the issue of homework and the involvement of family in a partnership in education. He asked whether any of the discussion indicated whether children would be bored with an lengthened day as opposed to getting individual attention in partnership with the family or mentors. This might be a more effective use of resources. He also asked whether it was the educational budget's responsibility to fill the gap from 2 to 6 p.m., given the constraints on resources.

Mr. Wolfsheimer replied that he would take exception to the notion that children would be bored with a longer day. It seemed to him that Mr. Abrams was indicating that the home life should take a larger role. No one would disagree with that, but it was difficult to do that in a structured environment which they had in a school system. If individual classes had more time, it would give them more opportunity to provide instruction.

Mr. Wolfinger explained that the committee was asked to look with a fresh eye at how educational services were delivered. This might mean lengthening the school day or the school year, but they wanted to avoid taking a marginal approach to this. They did not have evidence that year-round school would improve academics significantly. However, they learned the schools across the country were trying different approaches. While MCPS was a very good school system, it could be made into a better school system. He shared the concern about whether or not the educational system should be paying for providing family care from 2 to 6 p.m., but if they could deliver a curriculum in a seven or seven and a half hour day that would better prepare students for college or work, the community owed it to itself to at least look at that. Given the budget constraints, this would be a tough recommendation to sell.

Mr. Abrams felt that people had the sense that education was limited to what was going on in the school. However, teachers found a correlation between students who consistently turned in their homework assignments and the performance of these students, especially in math. Student had other activities such as religious school after the school day which contributed to both socialization and education. People were saying school had to be more focused and that there should more concentration on homework, and that this might be a better utilization of resources rather than tinkering with the length of the day.

Mr. Wolfinger commented that if they merely added five minutes to every school period and did nothing else, this would be a useless recommendation. However, if the longer school day allowed for in-school homework time and more intramurals at the mid level; he thought this would be worthwhile. Ms. Capron added that teachers had told them that a lot had been added to the curriculum, but nothing had been taken away, and they needed time to cover the curriculum in a quality way.

Mrs. King reported that at the elementary school level, the community would like the teacher to spend more time with children. She heard that teachers were correcting papers while students were watching a movie. People felt that teachers should be spending quality time with students for those six or seven hours. When she had

attended high school, they always had a study hall where students could get help if they needed it or they could help each other.

Mr. Felton remarked that there were many ways to look at that extended time. More and more they were finding out that the school was the only institution available for students, and they needed to provide as much of an enrichment experience as they could. He had also heard that many students were frustrated because material had to be presented within that 50 minutes. He shared their concern about just adding five minutes to the period, but it seemed to him there were some subject areas which needed more time during the day than others. He asked whether the committee had discussed either of these. Mr. Wolfsheimer replied that in the program subcommittee they did discuss lengthening the school day. While it sounded like five minutes was not a lot, it could be valuable time that could be added to each class period. The teacher could plan properly and add additional instructional materials and teaching to the classroom.

Dr. Cheung reported that he had gone to school five and a half days a week, eight hours a day, 10 months a year, in a modified British system school in Hong Kong. Everyone had to take the same courses, and by the time he finished high school he had had four years of chemistry and four years of physics. The school emphasized repetitive homework, and most of the tests were based on memorization. There were tests at the sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades. If a student failed a test, he or she did not progress to the next level and school ended for that child. Dr. Cheung remarked that it was not really the amount of hours one attended school, but rather it was the quality of that time. However, they also had to look at whether or not they had enough time to deliver the curriculum because the Board had increased graduation requirements. Knowledge was multiplying every seven to ten years, and the work situation was changing. Today a worker did not have to be in the office to do work. With a computer, a person could do work at home. Children could work at home if they were guided by their parents or someone else. Computer software could enable them to learn faster than individualized learning offered in the school, and the Board had to look at this perspective.

Dr. Cheung commented that if MCPS could only offer six hours of instruction because of resources, they needed to look at afterschool enrichment. They might have a study hall or intramural sports or anything else to enrich the lives of children. He pointed out that in MCPS they were tied by the transportation system. They planned their instructional program around the bus schedule. He thought that this was wrong, and they should look at what would facilitate learning rather than bell times. He thought they could work with voluntary organizations in the communities in terms of tutors and mentors. The county had a Latchkey Program sponsored by the ICB. He said there had to be educational aspects of any afterschool program, not babysitting. There were many retired people in the county who would love to do this. MCPS was working with Interages on intergenerational programs. Afterschool enrichment might work rather than lengthening the school day. Some students could learn at home if they had access to computers, and he would like to see every teacher have access to a notebook computer to take home. In their global access plan, they had to start thinking about the role of the teacher. Teachers should work to develop their own educational software rather than depend on commercial products. He thought they needed a blueprint for where global access would lead them.

Ms. Capron commented that in her past life she had been a principal of an elementary school. They had a strong extracurricular program after hours from 3 to 4 p.m. For those students who participated, they had 23 extracurricular activities. Many teachers were willing to give up their planning time to do this because they recognized the benefits for students. For students who did not participate, they missed a lot. She thought they needed to standardize this and provide that time during the school day for all students.

Mr. Ewing stated that their recommendations about areas to explore were excellent. With respect to the student day and the school year, he said the argument was powerful that they needed to consider expanding both. As Dr. Cheung had stated, knowledge was growing exponentially. Teachers complained all the time about more and more things being added to the curriculum, and nothing got subtracted. In Prisoners of Time, there was an extensive comment on that very point. He thought they needed to find a way to get students more instructional time. In the Prisoners of Time, it was pointed out that in the United States schools on average spent about half the time on academic subjects compared to Japan, Germany, and France. It probably was going to get smaller unless they took some action because there would not be any reductions in the pressures from the public to add things to the curriculum. For example, years ago they did not require that students learn about the environment. Now it was good thing that students learned about the environment.

Quite apart from the fact that Montgomery County had the shortest day, Mr. Ewing thought they needed to explore this. He did not know that they needed to have the longest day, but on the other hand it would be very healthy for them to find ways to extend the day. Extending did not mean adding five more minutes to each period. In Prisoners of Time, there was a recommendation called, "Fixing the Design Flaw." They talked about beginning with what schools required students to learn and adjust the time accordingly. They could not do that if they were stuck with six hours a day, five days a week, and 180 days a year. More time could be used in a lot of creative ways. It could be used for more time in the community with its learning resources, formal and informal. It could be used for mentoring and to recognize the great diversity in learning styles. Some students took longer to learn things and needed more time. A greater flexibility that came from a longer day would permit students and teachers to explore things. He remarked that it was not that they failed students now by doing none of these things, but they should be able to be much more flexible.

Mr. Ewing did not think that any of this was inconsistent with the notion that the schools ought to be community resources available all day. Many community schools were available before and after school, in the evening, and on the weekends. There were schools that were so busy that staff had a hard time finding time to get them cleaned. He did not know how they would keep students in a building if they were not there as a part of their instructional day. The good students would stay, and the students having trouble in school would leave if the program were voluntary. For this reason, he thought a big part of this had to be an extended school day for which students were required to be present.

Mr. Ewing commented that it was wonderful to enlist people from the community to come and help, but it was an enormous amount of work and as soon as they got the whole thing put together, the year would end and the volunteers would depart. They had to look at what they expected to accomplish that way versus what they could accomplish with a longer school day. For example, he asked whether they would find

volunteers at Broad Acres Elementary School. He did not think so. It was not because people did not care about their children but because their lives were so desperate they had no time to spend in that way. He said they should not kid themselves that volunteers would take up all the slack, but he thought that volunteers could do a great deal, even more than they were now doing. He thought they ought to encourage this. He assumed that all their recommendations could be pursued simultaneously and were not mutually exclusive, and the representatives of the study group replied that this was correct.

Mr. Ewing knew that parents objected fairly strenuously to the notion of year-round school. He asked whether they objected to the notion of longer school year. Mr. Wolfinger replied that parents had approached them at the forums about a longer school year. They also heard the complaints from parents regarding the half days. Some people were willing to concede that maybe the summer vacation was too long or the winter vacation was too short. Mr. Wolfsheimer added that there was a willingness to shorten the summer vacation to something less than ten weeks, they did not want to get down to a four week vacation.

Mr. Weaver thought that the best way to approach these recommendations was as issues to explore. Their primary task was year-round education, but these issues had emerged from that task and seemed to have considerable merit. He pointed out that the school day now had been forced to take up a number of non-academic issues that needed to be there such as the DARE unit and sex education. He also remarked that homework was essential because students had to deal on their own with issues taken up in class. The fact was that society had changed, and it was sometimes difficult for families to sit down together. Therefore, the idea of a study hall with someone to help a student was attractive. It was not babysitting or daycare. It was extension of the day for important educational objectives.

Mr. Weaver stated that when he went to high school the day did not end at 2 p.m. It ended around 3:30 or 4 p.m. Now they had great pressures on families, and they were putting youngsters out on the street at 2 p.m. without the guidance of families. Mr. Abrams pointed out that in his high school days, school started later in the morning as well.

Mrs. Gordon commented that of all the recommendations, lengthening the student day had the most appeal. She had been in a school for a number of years, and she knew how often they had to cut off discussion because the day was ending. They added and continued to add things they wanted students to know, but they did not ever take anything away, and they did not give teachers any more time in which to do it. It was not just an issue of lengthening the student day. It was an issue of looking at what they did with the student day. It was obvious that students benefitted from more time in the classroom. However, she did not think that all of that time had to be structured in the classroom. They knew that children learned in the cafeteria, in recess, in small groups, in large groups, etc. Increasing the school day would provide more opportunities for children to learn. In Prisoners of Time, there was a recommendation to increase the length of the school day and the school year. This carried with it another recommendation to look at what was done with that day. They had to begin to look at this as an opportunity to refocus on what they were doing and how children learned. As they looked towards technology, they knew that children were going to be learning in very different way. They might not necessarily need the six hours in the classroom, but they would need them for six or seven hours in the building because they would

have other ways of learning. She would support increasing the length of the student day, but she would want to see some kind of restructuring and different models for different communities.

Mrs. King stated that there were many good ideas here, and she agreed they should work with the staff and come up with some options as far as extending the school day and eliminating the early dismissal days. There were many good ideas in the report, but some of them might be too costly. In regard to more summer school opportunities and year-round education on a voluntary basis, she wondered about how much disparity there would be among students if they did not opt for a longer school year or other options. Ms. Capron replied that this was a question faced by the whole study group. Was there a quantifiable difference in the amount of information learned between year-round and regular school? They could not find data that supported this. Therefore, they thought they would like to have a chance to try it out without mandating it. Mr. Weaver explained that they were thinking about "voluntary" because of the lack of data. They would be considering a large number of changes without knowing what the outcomes might be. A voluntary basis would allow them to do it on a small scale to see if the benefits were worth the financial expense. Ms. Capron added that this would also provide some choice for Montgomery County families.

Mr. Wolfinger commented that he would focus on how far ahead the parents would be if they were willing to engage in the experiment. Their recommendation would be for a cluster or a group of schools to offer to prove out some of these concepts the group thought had merit.

Dr. Cheung remarked that based on the discussion and the recommendations, he would have no problem supporting an extended school day, providing the time was being used effectively. He agreed with Mr. Ewing that they needed to have some structure to it by involving the parents and the community in the design. In Asia, even the best students had tutors. In Montgomery County, there were 4,000 Chinese-American students attending weekend classes. About five or six years ago ACAMP started. This was a tutorial program whereby upperclass students tutored lowerclassmen, especially refugees. It started with Chinese Americans and then extended to Asian American, Hispanics, and African American. If MCPS could provide some incentive, even pay, for this mentoring, it would be doable. They could also look to part-time aides and retirees to provide programs. He felt that there were a lot of opportunities out there, not necessarily restricted to the regular classroom program. He thought the Board should try out the group's recommendations which required minimum resources. For example, ACAMP was planning to meet with the City of Gaithersburg to see if the City could help expand the program to schools in Gaithersburg.

Mrs. Gordon suggested that they turn to the next recommendation which was the elimination of the early dismissal days. They heard from parents about these days and the need to be much more family friendly. On the other hand, MCPS used those days for in-service training, and they had been trying to increase the amount of in-service training that they provided. Two years ago they had combined two half-days into one full-day; however, they had abandoned that, and she would be interested in hearing from staff about this. She wondered how they would handle parent conferences, report cards, and in-service, if they eliminated the half days to make it easier for parents to schedule child care.

Mrs. Gemberling recalled that at one point they had two early release days to provide an opportunity for staff training. Elementary schools did have times for conferences as well. Individual schools had requested additional release time for staff training, and within a couple of years all principals asked for this time. Therefore, MCPS now had three half days a semester. Having the half day did give them state credit for a student day. They had to have 180 days of schools, but the Annotated Code gave them credit if they had three hours and ten minutes and served lunch. At that point in time this seemed to be the best compromise for providing staff training and conference times with parents. It was the most cost effective and allowed them to meet instructional guidelines. At the time it was not as much of an issue for elementary children because for many parents a half day was not a particular issue. However, what worked very well for the school system was not as easy on parents in today's society.

Mr. Weaver commented that there were two issues. One was the impact on family, and the other was the length of the school day. Parents were saying that students were only attending for half a day. Other jurisdictions had parent conferences and professional developments, but these were scheduled as full days. Students attended for additional full days to balance that out. Mrs. Gemberling remarked that they could always get the number of days in, but this was a judgment call MCPS had made. Some LEAs did bring teachers in for full days, and others did as MCPS did.

Mrs. Gordon asked Ms. Capron, as a former principal, about the effectiveness of using half a day for in-service versus using an entire day. Ms. Capron replied that it took a lot of discipline on the part of staff to deliver a quality half-day in-service program. Children were dismissed, but there were always stragglers. Frequently the school staff wanted a pot-luck lunch so that everyone could sit down together in a social atmosphere. She remembered the full-day in-service they had had, and this provided a lot more flexibility for some in-depth staff training. She had taught courses, and one of the principles of staff development was not to do a one-shot training. There needed to be reinforcement of the training in order for the training to be successful.

Dr. Vance stated that if the mood of parents and the Board had shifted, he and staff would be responsive to that. The half-days had been recommended, suggested, and promoted in collaboration with cluster leadership. In those days, they did a lot of cluster-wide training because it was economical and used resources wisely. He thought that this was one area for them to review and analyze. He would be interested in what was going on in other jurisdictions in the metropolitan area and throughout the state.

Dr. Cheung remarked that when they lived in a manufacturing society, they were tied to the workplace. Now they were living in an information and knowledge society. In the United States, scientists tended to work on their own and not communicating with their peers. In Great Britain, there was better communication because of their 4 o'clock tea. He thought they might have to look at their use of time in order to facilitate communication.

With respect to the half days, Mr. Ewing said that if the issue was that the school system by continuing this practice was not being helpful to families because of child care, then eliminating half days would be a good idea. However, the larger issue was using the schools as community resources from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. There were schools now where parents dropped their children off at 7 a.m. when the only people at the school were building service workers. There were children who were not picked up

after school. It seemed to him they needed to look at the larger issue of whether they wanted schools to be places that were community service centers. In his view it was not a matter of public schools providing babysitting so much as it was a matter of protecting children. They were increasingly seeing that children were not being protected and were latchkey children because parents had no options.

Mr. Ewing stated that the issue of half-days was related to the issue of breaks because parents found these difficult to deal with as well. It seemed to him that year-round use of schools was a good idea in itself in terms of the importance of making sure there was a place for children to be that was safe. Unfortunately, sometimes even the home was not safe. The school system could not solve all those problems, but they had to work with county agencies and the private sector. They could begin to do more than they were now doing in the sense of pooling resources and focusing on the schools. He believed this was the intent of Gail Ewing's resolution which had been adopted by the Council.

With regard to the extension of the school year and the school day, Mr. Ewing said that Dr. Vance had given the Board some dollar amounts. Extending the school day by an hour and the school year by three weeks would cost \$62 million. He calculated that this kind of change would give them roughly nine weeks more of instructional time which was a 25 percent increase over the current school year at a budgetary increase of about 15 percent. This sounded like a bargain to him. He would like them to look at options in terms of costs and benefits. If they were interested in a longer school day rather than a longer school year, they ought to know why and what the cost implications were in each case. They also needed to know how they would use the time.

Mrs. Gordon stated that the next recommendation was to shorten the summer break and lengthen the winter and spring break and extend the school year. There were two related recommendations to offer remedial and enrichment courses during the winter and spring breaks and to offer more summer school opportunities.

Mr. Felton said that these all supported the central theme of greater flexibility for families and for students. It was hard to argue that these were just issues of cost. Parents were saying they needed some kind of order, but adjustments could be made if they were consistent. He would like to go back to the idea of why they would want to do this. The longer use of the facilities in any day could offer a lot of options. They were talking about some students who did not have supervision. There was another group of children out there who had long days because they were involved in music lessons and tutorial programs. It might be that the availability of the building would allow community and private resources to make those kinds of experiences available to more students. He supported these ideas, but he did not think there was a set system that would meet all the needs of all the schools. This was the challenge for them.

Mr. Ewing thought it was important for them to offer as much in the way of opportunity to students as possible during breaks, afterschool, and in the summer. He said that offering remedial help in a fairly structured way at an early point was really a very good idea. Waiting until after a student failed a state exam or a class was a very big mistake. The more remedial help they could offer and the sooner they could do it, the better off students would be. He agreed that these were good ideas.

Mrs. Gordon explained that tonight was for discussion. They were not going to take action on any of the recommendations. They would have other discussions, and now

that the superintendent had heard some discussion it might be the point for the superintendent to come back with some recommendations.

It occurred to Mr. Abrams that lacking in the discussion was other institutions. He was thinking about the changes that were occurring through multiculturalism in Montgomery County and the implications of that for additional uses. Dr. Cheung had pointed out some activities that were taking place in the Asian community. Mr. Abrams knew about afterschool activities and summer programs in the Jewish community. Most synagogues were trying to encourage Jewish high school students to do a semester or a summer in Israel. He did not think they could look at these issues in a vacuum.

Mr. Abrams was hearing a concern for at-risk students as the rationale for the kinds of changes they were talking about. Today he had walked through Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School and had heard from parents there as to why their population levels had not been as high. They were looking at students going to private schools. He thought they had to take into account things they considered in the public schools and recognize the implications they had in terms of promoting other kinds of choices. He cautioned them not to be too radical until they had had an opportunity to pull in other institutional members and engage them in the dialogue.

Mr. Ewing did not think the justification for either extending the school year or the school days rested on just at-risk students at all. The basic issue was whether students needed additional instructional time. He thought all students did. It would come in different forms for different students. He commented that the benefits were not just for at-risk students. They had seen some great benefits from the high schools that had developed their own special programs. Those schools had had to carve out time to make those programs work. A longer school day would make it easier for schools to develop and maintain those kinds of special emphasis programs. These programs should not be designed for just the ablest students. It was the case that some flexibility in scheduling was needed for those to succeed. He thought there were a lot of benefits to be thought of as they went through this, and they ought not to focus exclusively on at-risk students. Mr. Felton agreed that they would not pursue this just for at-risk students. Many other countries far exceeded what MCPS did, but he was concerned that if they had a longer day and did business as usual, it would not give them a better product.

Mr. Wolfinger stated that they could look to their own middle school model. They built in instructional support time into the school day as well as planning time. Even within the school system, they were delivering the school day in different ways. They did not necessarily have to have cookie-cutter spaces of time. The same could be said for the school year as well.

Mr. Weaver thought there were two sets of issues. One set was the issue of lengthening the school day and the school year which applied to all students. The other set was the issue of breaking up the school year and using the breaks for remediation. The research showed that at risk students benefitted the most from that kind of modification. The school day/school year lengthening benefitted all students.

Mr. Wolfsheimer stated that Dr. Cheung and Mr. Ewing had talked about students as tutors. This could provide an instructional benefit by tying it to the community service requirement for ninth graders. This could be used as a vehicle for providing education for the tutor because it reinforced what he or she had learned as well as providing

benefits to the students receiving the help. He said that he worked for an organization that provided 96 hours a year to employees to do community service. They had a partnership with Walter Johnson and Blair high schools. If they tried to develop more public/private partnerships, it would improve student achievement. Students would learn what work life was really like. He thought that employers in Montgomery County would be receptive to providing that kind of partnership, and he urged the Board to pursue this. Dr. Cheung pointed out that in ACAMP, the students doing the tutoring were themselves supervised by adults.

*Ms. Gutierrez joined the meeting at this point.

Mrs. Gordon thanked the work group for their efforts. The Board would be participating with a group established by the Council to look at extending use of the school day and school year. Mr. Ewing and Mr. Abrams had volunteered with two Council members and a representative from the county executive's office. They would want to address the instructional needs first and foremost. The school system could not do everything for everyone, and there were many public and private resources out there. She reported that Baltimore City was undertaking a year-round school this year, and an invitation had been extended to Board members to visit.

RESOLUTION NO. 188-95 Re: ADJOURNMENT

On recommendation of the superintendent and on motion of Mr. Felton seconded by Mrs. King, the following resolution was adopted unanimously by members present:

Resolved, That the Board of Education adjourn its meeting at 9:35 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

PLV:mlw