



October 16, 1995

the education provided by MCPS for minority students. The committee deliberated on the improvements and deficiencies of MCPS as perceived by the members and made recommendations. The staff response to the report was received on March 14, 1995.

Dr. Chan requested that the Board take a hard look at the issues raised and ask questions it felt necessary to clarify those issues. Dr. Chan stated that the committee wanted to move forward and address issues that are coming up as well as the fourth charge: identification and dissemination of successful practices.

Mrs. Gordon pointed out that committees should be more advisory to the Board as issues come up throughout the year rather than focusing exclusively on an annual report with the formal process that accompanies that report. The issues encountered by members of the committee will be very helpful to the Board in making decisions throughout the upcoming year.

Mr. Ewing stated that the recommendations of the committee were excellent and tremendously important. He anticipated that the Board would take action soon. Mr. Ewing voiced support of the committee's suggestion that it be invited to participate in the review of the SES annual report.

Mr. Ewing continued that the committee recommended that MCPS must develop additional achievement indicators for earlier grades, notably elementary schools to establish clear lines of accountability, consequences, and resources allocations. The report indicates that it is difficult for parents and the community to determine whom they should hold accountable. He supported the idea that there needs to be a line of accountability and consequences. He asked what consequences the committee had in mind? Ms. Ingram responded that the important issue is that children performing below grade are going to get help. The question is whether MCPS has a mechanism to indicate these children and then follow up with activities.

Mr. Ewing pointed out that an issue that appears repeatedly in the report is one that SES should include outcomes and standards for reading in K-2. Mr. Ewing was not convinced that the staff response had addressed the concern.

Mr. Ewing proceeded that the committee thought it would be useful if offices responsible for a particular SES task would provide a status report. He pointed out that this recommendation was again focused on accountability. He asked the committee if they were familiar with the management plans with specific dates, strategies, and tasks that must be implemented to achieve SES. Ms. Ingram reported that the committee had a real concern that there were no completion dates and who was accountable.

October 16, 1995

Mr. Felton commended the committee for a comprehensive job. He agreed with Mrs. Gordon and invited the committee to share concerns with the Board throughout the year. The message he received and supported throughout the many recommendations was that the committee wants more accountability and the parents have a better understanding of the progress of their children.

Mr. Felton pointed to the recommendation that ISM data on the average rate of progress should be reported by grade and school for students, below, on, and above grade level. The staff response stated that staff does not believe that it is appropriate to control for demographics in assessing student progress; however, he did believe that was the Board's position and, in fact, looked at that data. Mrs. Gemberling responded that MCPS does not do that with ISM because it is individual student data. MCPS does not collect that data and assess that information because it is at the local school. MCPS does not have the technical capacity to analyze the data on a systemwide basis.

Mr. Hoven clarified Mr. Felton's concern by stating it had reported to the Board that the technical capacity to collect ISM systemwide could be achieved; therefore, the committee recommended that it be done.

Mrs. Gordon asked staff to address the appropriateness of the ISM data being used as a systemwide measure of assessment. Ms. Ingram pointed out that there is a feeling in the committee that the more the school system does in tracking trends across the county, the more it helps individual children. Dr. Villani observed that the cost is one issue but the bigger concern is what is the source of the data, the value and is there any viable systemwide information that can be gotten from ISM scores. Mrs. Gemberling stated that it has never been the philosophy of ISM that every child did it at exactly the same rate or pace. ISM was created as a management tool to help teachers chart individual progress.

Dr. Cheung thanked the committee. He looks at student achievement and accountability as systemwide, school, and student. The parent only cares about an individual child. The committee reflects this by stating that MCPS should develop a systemic means of "keeping track" of a child's reading progress. Therefore, it cannot be aggregated into a school or systemwide accountability. Dr. Cheung pleaded with the school system to have individual student profiles.

Dr. Cheung observed that the staff response is based on the performance of students who have attended MCPS for two or more years over those who have not attended for two years. He asked if there were other attributes that accounted for the improvement or lack of improvement such as a geographic area or mobility factor. ISM is for the individual child and the CRT is for school and system use.

Dr. Cheung commented on the staff response about how outcome areas are used as measures to determine systemwide, school, and student progress. All school improvement management plans are monitored. Dr. Cheung asked how the monitoring was done and what were the outputs regarding school and systemwide accountability.

Mrs. King thanked the committee and stated that the committee will be happy with the presentation on the CRTs later in the evening. She acknowledged that to be advised by the committee on current issues throughout year would be very helpful.

Mr. Ewing commented on the frustration of the general public and the committee that it is difficult to obtain consistence and reliable comparative and historical data for the system and for performance. The school system needs it for purposes of measuring progress, being accountable for results, for policy purposes and broken out by the school, the system, and groups within the school system. Because of the school system's desire to move in that direction and the prodding of the committee, the school system is making progress. The report helps immensely in this regard with a general strategy with which all can agree.

Mr. Felton pointed to the report in ensuring that parents of all different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds are involved in the planning and evaluating of schools. He asked the committee if they had any specific recommendations on how to accomplish that other than offering them the opportunity. Ms. Ingram stated that there are successful practices within the county and there are wonderful initiatives in this area. A frustration to a committee is that the successful practices do not seem to be disseminated.

Mrs. King agreed that MCPS schools are doing great things. She perceived that a problem may occur when a principal is told to share information especially in light of all the other things going on in a school. The Board can encourage the sharing of successful practices but the Board cannot make it happen. Dr. Chan stated that that is why the committee recommended MCPS to try harder to reach minority communities.

Mr. McCullough suggested asking minority students about their concerns and their recommendations for getting more involved and taking the step to improve their own education. He asked what the committee had done to hold the students accountable for their learning. Mr. Sye stated that, indeed, the committee needed feedback from the students and let them know that they are a part of success for every student.

Mrs. Gordon thanked the committee for the report. She pointed out that the Board had received and discussed the report earlier prior to the staff response. The committee will look at successful practices and, in fact, the school system at one time published



Dr. Stevenson reported on validating the multichoice component of the assessment system since that is one reported to parents. A majority of teachers perceive the CRTs to be an appropriate measure of content knowledge of students and a match to the MCPS curriculum objectives. It is important to validate the scores and MCPS has built into the assessment system a way of comparing the performance of MCPS students against the performance of a national sample of students. MCPS has others types of validity, one of them is predictive, i.e., to the extent staff can predict success.

Ms. Odom spoke on predicting success in math. Staff has discovered that if students are proficient in 8th grade math, that 91% of the students will score As, Bs, and Cs in 9th grade algebra.

Dr. Seleznow talked about how everything comes together in the school and how the collected data is organized, presented in a meaningful way for principals and teachers, and how people are held accountable. Dr. Seleznow demonstrated several scenarios on SIMS He demonstrated the relationship between the CRT results, ISM performance, grades, and working level. The system helps identify patterns and trends of performance.

Ms. Iams explained how the Committee on Assessment Design and Implementation developed an understandable and readable report form that is sent to parents. Although it is complex, it conveys a tremendous amount of information including CRTs and proficiency of the student. The report alerts parents to strengths and weaknesses in their child's education. Parents are also provided with test samplers that are designed to help children practice for the test as well as informing the parents as to the types of questions and areas covered. Ms. Iams felt that it was important for the public to be informed about the MCPS assessment program as the publicity will have great benefit for the school system with community members without children and those in private schools. The parents of MCPS student should have a greater opportunity to learn about the assessment program at the school level through newsletters or meetings.

Dr. Hartzman explained that the assessment is a powerful teaching tool and promotes parent involvement. She gave an example of how MCPS students are taught math, applying their knowledge, and thinking their way through problems that goes beyond multiple choice.

Ms. Collins stated that teachers like multiple choice since it is fair and reflects what is taught each day. School management plans, the objectives and outcomes are based on the results of these assessments of which multiple choice is only one part of the assessment picture and focuses on what students know. If MCPS values critical thinking, it must move toward implementation of open-ended and performance assessments. The greatest change

occurred when MCPS started to field test open-ended and performance assessments. Students are more involved in self-evaluation as well as reading and writing.

Ms. Toy explained that she has trained teachers to score the performance assessment and the open-ended instruments. She has also participated in the countywide scoring of the assessments. These instruments set a standard of excellence for all MCPS students. In scoring the instruments countywide, she has seen patterns in students' misconceptions and strengths.

Dr. Hartzman concluded the presentation by stating that the assessments reveal patterns as well as being a powerful tool to teachers in the classroom and give power to parents to be a partner in their child's instruction.

Mr. Abrams expressed appreciation for the exciting presentation on assessing student's achievements. He stated that everything presented this evening focused on grades 3 - 8, and asked if this continues through high school with the same type of assessment. Dr. Hartzman responded that high school students are given final exams and teachers are aware of the changes in the SATs which is driving them to more open-ended assessments.

Mr. Abrams inquired if this is the type of testing that the State Board is visualizing and is MCPS communicating to the state in terms of a local option. Ms. Odom replied that there is a specific committee on high school assessment. This committee is looking at how the core learning goals sent to MCPS by the state match the curriculum and the structure the state is recommending as opposed to the structure MCPS has in place.

Mr. Abrams questioned staff about the use of testing as a predictor at the middle school level. He sensed that the state and MCPS are striving for a powerful predictor in terms of competency skills and success in college for college-bound students. Ms. Odom answered that one recommendation on the high school proposal is levels of proficiency and how this proficiency ties in with post-graduation or work. Dr. Smith stated that there are core learning goals for skills for success and that is woven into all content areas.

Mr. Abrams stated that MCPS standards are more rigorous than what the state is contemplating. He questioned if the state assessment considerations would allow more stringent testing requirements at the local level in lieu of the state's proposed requirements. He hoped that MCPS' assessment could be retained as a predictor and encouraging parental involvement.

October 16, 1995

Mrs. King shared the excitement of the report. She has heard from parents who have been looking for accountability. This assessment answers concerns of the gifted and talented community, average students, and special needs students.

Mr. Felton commented that the Research and Evaluation Committee was very excited about this presentation. He asked if there was some discussion on the part of some teachers that it provides the kind of data that allows an evaluation of the teacher. Dr. Seleznow said it works in two ways: (1) it is a way for teachers to learn and improve and (2) it is a way to expose weakness and ineffectiveness. Ms. Toy explained that teachers are looking for ways for their students to be successful as well as professional development for themselves. Ms. Collins added that she looks at the grade level team in identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses, and, if a strategy is not working, how can it be improved.

Dr. Cheung was very impressed with the presentation in terms of assessment and looking at MCPS tests. He shared the excitement of his colleagues when teacher, principals, and administrators have information, data, and feedback on how they are educating the children. MCPS needs better information so that it can focus on solving problems. The testing instrument is superb but there is other information on an individual's profile that cannot be measured.

Mr. Felton asked about students where teachers do not have high expectations for that student. There is data that can be shared with students, principals, and other teachers so that students can be identified who are not performing as they should only because of low expectations by a teacher. Dr. Hartzman stated that there is a segment that asks if a student had an opportunity to learn. Dr. Seleznow stated that the data can be aggregated by race and gender to identify patterns when there is no other explanation.

Mr. McCullough asked about students whose grades drop and what can be done to help them. Dr. Smith remarked about Mr. McCullough's comment about students taking responsibility for their education as they see patterns and do a self analysis to better their education.

Dr. Vance observed that Dr. Cheung's concerns could be subsumed by the Committee on Assessment Design and Implementation. This committee will be modified to include four subcommittees: early childhood, elementary, middle level and high school. It will deal with issues and recommendations specific to grade levels. Therefore, there is a vehicle to address many of these concerns.

Mr. Ewing viewed the presentation as reflective of a huge progress of an assessment program. It is evidence of training and curriculum development as well as an expectation that students and

October 16, 1995

teachers must do better. Mr. Ewing asked about scheduling and how soon all assessment instruments will be in place. MCPS and the Board need to think about how much time is spent on testing students. The Board will need assessment data in order to obtain public support and resources.

Mr. Ewing was concerned about how the data will be made available on individual student profiles. There needs to be a strategy on how the data is shared with parents. MCPS could use the data on teachers to help them improve teaching skills.

Mr. Ewing thought that looking at early children was appropriate and policy may need to be rewritten regarding standards for young children. The Board needs to debate that issue soon.

Mr. Ewing stated that students should not be assessed solely on a body of knowledge (which is essential) but also on skills of open-ended assessments.

Mr. Ewing asked about the standard and how it was reached. Parents take nothing for granted and MCPS needs to sustain an inquiry from them. Dr. Seleznow replied that the standards committee established the standard by looking at all the tests, analyzing data, evaluating the difficulty levels, and comparing assessments and difficulty. That level was converted into a standard scale in order to be comparable from grade to grade. Those standards are constantly reviewed to see if they are appropriate.

Mrs. Gordon thanked staff and the committee for an outstanding presentation. She observed that it is important to provide parents with as much information about their children -- where they are and where they are going. Her concern was that MCPS will attempt to make all data a systemwide measure. Some data is a tool for teachers and administrators to improve curriculum delivery and need not be shared. There needs to be care taken on how MCPS uses information.

In regard to early childhood, Mrs. Gordon believed that the policy is written appropriately. Young children develop at different rates and it is difficult to measure them with strict standards.

Mrs. Gordon agreed with Mrs. Iams in that MCPS needs to publicize the high expectations and standards it has for students.

RESOLUTION NO. 701-95      Re:    ADJOURNMENT

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

October 16, 1995

Resolved, That the Board of Education adjourn its meeting at 10:10 p.m.

---

PRESIDENT

---

SECRETARY

PLV:gr