

APPROVED
29-1999

September 17 & 18, 1999

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in retreat at the Sheraton Hotel, Columbia, Maryland, on Friday, September 17, 1999, beginning at 1:00 p.m. and Saturday, September 18, 1999.

Present: Mr. Reginald M. Felton, President
 in the Chair
 Mr. Stephen Abrams
 Mr. Kermit V. Burnett
 Mrs. Beatrice B. Gordon
 Mrs. Nancy J. King
 Mrs. Patricia O'Neill
 Laura Sampedro, Student Board Member
 Ms. Mona M. Signer
 Dr. Jerry Weast, Secretary/Treasurer

Absent: None

With the assistance of facilitators from Structured Solutions, Inc., Board Members availed themselves of a networked, portable computer system--using collaborative, interactive software -- to facilitate the rapid collection, organization, analysis, and prioritization of ideas and information in a rapid fashion. Upon listening to presentations and partaking in discussions, Board members simultaneously used their laptops to enter ideas into the system, which were displayed, via both individual computer monitors and a projector, for all participants to observe the input of others.

This process was used as Dr. Weast, Dr. Seleznow, and Mr. Bowers made presentations and shared data and charts, reflective of their concept of trend benders, their preliminary thinking as to a reorganization of the administrative structure of the school system, and their early thoughts as to a tactical plan to raise achievement levels of all students and to narrow the gap among demographic groups. With the input into the computer program of ideas, comments, and questions generated – not only by these presentations but other issues raised by Board members – the Board Members ranked, narrowed down, and refined draft academic priorities and non-academic issues.

Ultimately, the Board of Education developed specific objectives comprising “Steps for Success” to enable the Superintendent to successfully lead MCPS over the next four years, 1999-2003. These objectives support the full implementation of the Success for Every Student (SES) Strategic Plan. The Board also identified several non-academic issues to be reviewed. Together, these will ensure the highest quality education to all students in an environment that nurtures excellence.

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

- ◆ Improve the educational design and delivery of instruction and curriculum by utilization of proven best practices.
- ◆ Organize and optimize assets for improved academic results.
- ◆ Analyze and measure teachers' and principals' effectiveness in improving student performance and results.
- ◆ Develop, expand, and coordinate a literacy-based birth to kindergarten initiative.
- ◆ Create unique, innovative family and community friendly partnerships to improve academic results.

NON-ACADEMIC ISSUES TO BE REVIEWED

- Complete a review of all policies that have not been reviewed in the last two years to ensure that they are still relevant and facilitate improved student achievement.
[With the adoption of five academic priorities, a comprehensive review of all policies is necessary to ensure that they are in sync with the direction of the school system and that they do not impede efforts underway to enhance academic achievement for all students.]
- Restructure Board meetings to reflect a new way of doing business.
[Following on the heels of suggestions emanating from the Winter retreat in Annapolis, the sentiment existed that it was time to review the fundamental way in which the Board conducts business meetings. Consideration should be given to reducing or eliminating many of the routine matters that come before the Board, taking up vital time on the agenda, in favor of allocating more time for items that address or concern one of the five priorities. An annual self-evaluation by the Board and training in and use of the continuous improvement model were suggested as ways for the Board to stay responsive.]
- Establish an effective partnership among School Board, MCPS, and County Council.
[Seizing upon the momentum accompanying new leadership, the Board has recommitted itself to establishing a closer working relationship with the County Council to achieve its priorities. Rather than simply articulating our

needs during the time the budgets are marked up, the Board recognized a need to have on-going dialogue between the bodies and among the members.]

- Evaluate administrative and executive staff regularly based upon performance and compensation.
[The Board wishes to see future compensation increments of administrators and executive staff more closely tied to merit based upon an annual performance evaluation, breaking away from uniform across-the-board increases that do not differentiate among individuals. In this regard, the Board wants the Superintendent to initially implement such a plan with the Executive Staff.]
- Evaluate School Security to complement an effective student learning environment.
[Recognizing that learning can only take place effectively in an environment in which students and staff feel safe and secure, the Board wishes to see school security evaluated with an eye toward how it contributes or detracts from the learning environment.]
- Increase diversity among MCPS staff to mirror MCPS students.
[Moving beyond well-intentioned statements, the school system must actively recruit and outreach so that the overall profile of our workforce better reflects the students served, with regard to race and ethnicity.]
- Provide assistance to staff who have traditionally not encountered diversity in order that they may understand the benefits.
[Notwithstanding efforts to recruit diverse staff, it is imperative that existing staff, to whom our current students are entrusted, have the opportunity to receive staff development to enhance their sensitivity and awareness, as well as to receive the tools and skills, necessary to educate all students.]
- Engage county government officials to reclaim closed schools to accommodate student population growth.
[With a burgeoning student population, increasing at a rate that exceeds projections, the Board and Superintendent must be more aggressive in making the case that the County should not dispose of closed schools so that the Board can reclaim those school buildings when practicable.]
- Establish MCPS business entity to market and sell educational products, advice, curricula/guides, and other services of value to other school districts.
[Progressing from the steps taken to establish an entrepreneurial activities

fund within the budget, the school system must actively market, in a very visible manner, its products and its expertise to other school districts and governmental agencies so as to increase revenues that can be devoted to instructional efforts.]

- Assess costs of employee health benefits.
[In the spirit of continuous improvement to find savings within the budget and with the knowledge that this will be a recurring issue to be addressed at the bargaining table, the school system shall continue to review all aspects of employee health benefits.]

The Board of Education adjourned its retreat on Saturday, September 18, 1999, at 4:00 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JDW:gr