The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in retreat with the Honors/Advanced Placement Workgroup at the Glenview Mansion, Rockville, Maryland, on Tuesday, October 26, 1999, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:10 p.m.

Board members present: Mr. Reginald M. Felton (President), Mr. Stephen Abrams, Mrs. Patricia O'Neill, Laura Sampedro (Student Board Member), and Ms. Mona M. Signer.

Workgroup members present: Mrs. Ruth Sernak (Cochair), Mr. John Smith (Cochair), Ms. Blondie Awkard, Ms. Carol Blum; Ms. Lola Crawford, Dr. Sheila Dobbins, Ms. Patricia Gafford, Ms. Leanor Guillen, Ms. Donna Hollingshead, Dr. Joanne Jackson, Ms. Constance Lee, Ms. Shirley Levin, Dr. Myriam Met, Mr. Joseph Monte, Mr. Daniel Shea, and Dr. William Wilhoyte.

Others present: Dr. Jerry Weast (Superintendent), Mr. Steven Seleznow (Deputy Superintendent), Mr. Larry Bowers (Chief Operating Officer), Dr. Hiawatha Fountain (Associate Superintendent), Mr. Brian Porter, Mr. Jay Headman, Mr. Don Kress, Ms. Nancy Schultz, Dr. Kimberly Statham, Mr. Matthew Tronzano, Ms. Lee Ingham, Dr. Patricia Flynn, Ms. Judith Madden, Mr. Roland Ikheloa, Ms. Fran Brenneman, Ms. Susan Marks, Mr. George Margolies, Mrs. Glenda Rose, and Mr. Bruce McKay (facilitator).

Mr. Felton welcomed those in attendance, and Ms. Ruth Sernak gave a brief background to the retreat.

Dr. Wilhoyte gave a presentation on attitudes, expectations and leadership. After the presentation, there was an open discussion that MCPS should

- monitor or have an accountability process with goals and timetables for implementation of the workgroup's recommendations
- change attitudes and beliefs that affect expectations in the classroom
- improve minority representation in honors/AP classes
- identify gifted and talented students in elementary school
- use reading, math and SES plan as an accountability measure
- allow initially small AP classes
- encourage good students to apply for honors/AP courses
- develop effective teacher training
- nurture staff as well as students
- make regular courses more challenging for students
- nurture learning in the elementary student
- build successful strategies for more rigorous courses for middle school students
- explain to students why it is more important to take a rigorous course than get a high grade
- prepare middle school students for the rigors of honors/AP courses

- look beyond student's attitude and behavior to encourage enrollment in honors/AP courses
- motivate counselors to work with students on time management and study habits
- promote students advocating for themselves in registering for courses, and
- enable parents to become involved with their student's learning and course selection.

Mr. Felton pointed out that the Board and Superintendent were striving to build a school system that was student centered. The discussion turned to the fact that student performance stems from good teachers, and it takes several years to overcome one year of bad instruction. Staff development and research can help teachers modify expectations and the delivery of instruction. Students do not enroll in honors/AP because they think the courses are difficult, but, in reality, it is a different way of learning. Again, it was mentioned that there must be a blueprint for action in order to implement the recommendations of the workgroup.

There was a break from 10:15 to 10:40 a.m.

Dr. Seleznow made a presentation on MCPS reorganization, resource deployment, and the delivery of instruction. Mr. Kress presented the monitoring efforts of the Office of School Administration. Ms. Madden gave a brief outline of counselor responsibilities, and their advocacy role in working with students.

The following recently-adopted Board priorities were highlighted:

- ♦ 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.

Under the direction of Mr. McKay, the retreat participants were paired and the following solutions were suggested for each identified barrier.

Staff Development

- Include all levels of employment from principals to building services
- Add to the employment time used for training (12-month employment)

- Devote funding for resources – presenters, research data, etc.
- Commit to training – H/AP teaching, differentiated teaching, etc.
- Personnel to develop programs and clarify needs

<u>Attitudes and Perceptions</u>

- Includes (1) low expectations; (2) stereotyping by gender, race/ethnic groups; (3) valuing cultural differences and ability
- strategies will differ according to role in education:
    1. Principals
        - need to set tone and create climate
        - have vision themselves and convey vision that high expectations matter for all students
        - need to develop plan (School Improvement Plan) that changes attitudes and perceptions
    2. Teachers
        - educate them (through Staff Development) to recognize and value cultural and learning differences and have high expectations
        - create classroom of acceptance; support students
        - recruit minority students for H/AP so there will be a critical mass of them and will feel comfortable in the H/AP – perhaps their presence in large numbers in H/AP class will change their perception about whether they "belong"
    3. Students
        - help recognize that their own low expectations and some "acting white" negative stereotyping can be barriers to entering H/AP; form groups of students and address these issues in honest and constructive ways
        - need student groups to develop self-advocacy skills

<u>Delivery of Instruction</u>

- Staff development with differentiated training for H/AP teachers; need time for training
- William and Mary Great Books – strategy used for all students in early grades
- Closer monitoring of instruction in classrooms by administrators using the new teacher evaluation system
- "Skillful" teacher training
- Student feedback/evaluation of teacher's instructional techniques and intervention by administrators, mentors, and resource teachers, as needed

Nurturing

- All school-based staff must build personal relationships with students
  – early staff contacts with parents
  – each adult in the school has an advisory role with small groups of students
- Create mentoring programs (internal and external to school) for students
- Establish academic and counseling (social and emotional) support programs in each school

Inflexibility

- Empower schools to take risks to identify youngsters
- Eliminate objective criteria as sole bases for admission process
- Have multiple points of entry to "h" courses without being confronted with rigid tracks
- All staff must know data inside out to make optimal decisions

Mind Set

- Establish direct lines of communication whereby the message gets delivered and modeled from top to bottom within preK-12 framework
- Dialogue is held preK-12 – vertical/cluster collaboration
- Issues are dealt with from a cluster preK-12 perspective; everyone "owns" each kids development preK-12

Monitoring – Internal and External

- Internal monitoring (Personal Barrier Assessment) – forced self-assessment towards accepting greater responsibility for possibly acting as a gate-keeper or barrier
- Recommendation – every professional should be required to view and to participate in a discussion of Dr. Wilhoyte's slide presentation and identify ways to effect change
- External monitoring – coordinator/staff position to hold all concerned accountable (with appropriate consequences) for putting in place the recommendations for effecting change towards improvement (continuous)

Race, Class, Equity

- Talk about the "elephant in the living room" – explicitly talk about race, class, equity
- Attend to teacher paradigms/underlying beliefs about effective instruction –

expanding repertoire
- Infuse these issues in all action steps to understand why they are barriers

Parent Information and Knowledge

- Flip Cards: value of SATs, Honors/AP enrollment, scope and sequence for course selection, best practices for homework
- TV-Cable – MCPS channel to advertise "how to information"
- Internet - Library – partnerships with library to provide information and available computer information, including Flip Cards
- Parent information workshops in the community
- Parent notification/information through churches/community organizations
- Distribute Flip Cards to local organizations
- Utilize parent information specialists to create workshops and disseminate information

Resource Development

- Barriers/Supports
  - + organization in process of changing
  - - system already underfunded
  - - politics

- Solutions
  - Internal collaboration
  - cross functional teams
  - flexibility in assignment
  - redefine "positions"
  - government partnership/collaboration (recreation, libraries, social services, facilities)
  - community partnerships to serve broader needs
  - "honesty message"

Political Will

- Communicate the problems in the way that allows people to identify key issues and buy into solutions (internal and external)
- Convince people that it is their best interests (internally and externally) to shift resources, develop staff, terminate below-standard programs and staff
- Involve the community (parent, civic, business, and government) and employee leaders in problem identification, resolution, and support at the local and countywide levels

Data Management

- Need a data management system that makes data easily accessible for principals, teachers, and counselors
- Date needs to be easily queried so staff can look at trends and results
- Use technology for ongoing assessment of students to ascertain progress
- Technology can make data accessible, staff accountable to look at results and plan and implement improvement, and to implement ongoing assessment of students.

Curriculum

- Design curriculum which is measured by CRTs, MSPAPs, and SATs. This should include: academics, fine/practical arts, PE, and health.
- Build into the curriculum and related training, quiz, test and rubric formats used on the CRTs, MSPAPs, and SATs

Organizational "Culture" Blame

- Enforce accountability and impose consequences for not meeting the accountability standards
- Equity measurement must be a part of accountability

Leadership

- Do a more thorough job of assessing candidates' attitudes, beliefs, expectations about student achievement and delivery of H/AP/GT education during the selection process for resource teachers, assistant principals, and principals
- Develop standards/rubrics for assessing leaders performance
- Provide targeted training based on standards/rubrics

Mr. Smith was concerned that the recommendations of the workgroup would be lost with the administration's reorganization and educational plans. He asked that specific timelines be developed for the implementation of the recommendations.

The retreat ended at 12:10 p.m.