

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
January 25, 2006

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Wednesday, January 25, 2006, at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Dr. Charles Haughey, President
 in the Chair
 Mr. Steve Abrams
 Ms. Sharon W. Cox
 Ms. Valerie Ervin
 Mrs. Nancy Navarro
 Mrs. Patricia O'Neill
 Mr. Gabriel Romero
 Mr. Sebastian Johnson, Student Board Member
 Mr. Larry Bowers, Acting Secretary/Treasurer

Absent: Dr. Jerry Weast

Re: **WORKSESSION ON THE SUPERINTENDENT'S
 RECOMMENDED FY 2007 OPERATING BUDGET**

Dr. Haughey announced that after the work sessions, the Board would take final action on Tuesday, February 14. The review of the budget will be done section by section as outlined in the table of contents for each budget chapter. She urged staff to point out pertinent issues that may be of concern to the Board. Board members were free to ask questions and request that staff provide pricing information on specific issues.

Mr. Bowers outlined the operating budget, emphasizing the areas in which the system had had success through the Strategic Plan and the focus on expansion of those initiatives. Board members made general comments on their support for the Strategic Plan, the budget formation process, and the initiatives.

Regarding all-day kindergarten, Mrs. O'Neill asked for capital costs to complete all-day kindergarten this year. She asked if staff had requested the additional portables for the FY 2008 budget. Mr. Bowers stated there is a fixed amount and adjustments are made in the spring.

Mrs. O'Neill asked staff to determine if the governor's added funding for facilities would be eligible for portables to complete all-day kindergarten. Mr. Bowers thought there was funding, but he would check to make sure.

Mrs. Navarro wanted to know the rationale for spacing out the implementation of all-day kindergarten. Mr. Bowers explained that a committee worked on developing a plan, and

the recommendation was to include one quarter of the schools each year for complete implementation by 2008.

Mr. Abrams noted that there was a criterion for the schedule for implementation of all-day kindergarten. Those schools with the highest need were scheduled first, and his assumption was that that had not changed. Mr. Bowers stated that was one factor, and the other factor was a geographic spread so that all clusters would have all-day kindergarten.

Mrs. Navarro was trying to ascertain the difference between this year or next for completing all-day kindergarten in Montgomery County.

Ms. Cox replied that the division was based on revenue levels throughout the years. She assumed that the superintendent did not recommend acceleration this year due to his estimate of the available funding.

Dr. Haughey asked for the report on the rationale and factors used to select the phase-in of all-day kindergarten.

Mr. Romero asked about the realignment of funds from the high school budget for substitute teachers in elementary schools. What will be the impact at the high school level? Dr. Spatz replied that every year staff realigns funds. Romero asked how many substitute teachers would be provided with \$1.5 million.

Mrs. Navarro inquired about the criteria for assigning assistant principals. Mr. Kress replied that the same criteria as last year will be used based on enrollment data. If there are 570 students or more, an assistant principal is assigned to an elementary school. The second criterion is for a school that has more than 40 full-time professional employees. However, this year staff is considering using FARMS criteria.

Mr. Romero wanted to know the rationale of not using mobility as a factor. Mr. Kress replied that in the past staff looked at several factors, including the relationship between mobility and FARMS, and concluded that it all came down to educational load.

Mr. Romero noted that textbook funding has been reduced by \$218,000. Mr. Kress said it was a one-year reduction, which mostly affected texts not related to new curriculum.

Ms. Cox asked about the literacy approach in secondary schools. Reading specialists are used in middle schools, but literacy lead teachers are used in high schools. Is the philosophy to train all teachers on reading strategies rather than identify a reading specialist? Ms. Leleck agreed because the intent is to embed literacy in all content areas.

Ms. Ervin wanted to know the impetus for spending \$2.6 million in this direction. Ms. Leleck replied that it was the High School Assessment (HSA), because it will be a requirement for ninth graders. When staff examines the data, there is a need for literacy skills to access

high level courses.

Regarding guidance counselors, Mrs. O'Neill inquired about the counselor-to-student ratios from school to school. She was concerned about Poolesville High School with the magnet program and whether or not there is an additional counselor. Also, John F. Kennedy, Wheaton, and Northwood high schools do not have good ratios. Mr. Kress noted that the ratios are based on projected enrollment. Mrs. O'Neill noted that it would take eight additional positions to have a 250:1 ratio in all schools.

Mr. Abrams asked staff to analyze the data on the Wootton Cluster to determine whether there are deficits in student performance. If so, how will that be corrected?

Mrs. Navarro noted the increase in ESOL enrollment and how that affects MCPS initiatives. There was testimony to add a coordinator to accelerate the curriculum development. What can the system do to accelerate the process? Ms. Leleck stated that there are two components – (1) the state curriculum in ESOL was just approved, and (2) ESOL teachers are well trained and are adapting the general curriculum.

Ms. Cox wanted to be clear on the areas of responsibility for the ESOL curriculum. Ms. Leleck replied that the curriculum falls under the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and it is directly supervised by ESOL and five specialists.

Ms. Cox noted that Board policy requires a review every five years of every subject area. Year after year the Board has been involved in a number of initiatives that have kept staff busy reviewing and revising curriculum. Within two years, there should be the capacity to have a regular review. Is the current process sufficient to keep the system on target and current? Ms. Leleck reported that there are changes and monitoring in the interim. The formal process needs to happen, but in the interim staff is still developing and writing curriculum. Staff would like to have that discussion with the Board's Policy Committee.

Mr. Romero said the Division of ESOL and Bilingual Programs had four main functions. He wanted to know more about parent outreach and how ESOL interacts with the Division of Family and Community Partnerships on parent outreach. He was mostly interested in effective communication with ESOL parents. Staff replied that both divisions are under the same director; therefore, they are linked organizationally. The ESOL parent outreach team orients newly enrolled children and families to MCPS. There are also translation and interpretation services.

Mr. Romero heard from the community that there was a great deal of concern about language assistance for parents at the schools. He wanted to know what was in place and if there was a way to strengthen that service. Staff reported that enrollment and languages are analyzed to develop priority schools.

Ms. Cox spoke about the priority schools, and asked what the difference was between

schools with and without service. Staff replied that all schools are served. Schools that are not identified as priority schools can request service and that information is tracked and analyzed to adjust criteria to identify priorities.

Mrs. Navarro stated that she has heard from all clusters that there is a need ESOL for more parent specialists. Is there a ratio of staff to enrollment? Ms. Leleck replied that the ESOL enrollment has increased substantially, and staff has not determined why this is happening.

Mrs. O'Neill noted the transition out of the ESOL program. However, she thought the questions from the clusters were for family support.

Dr. Haughey stated that the Research and Evaluation Committee has been looking at the demographics of the county, and there is a need to know where students are coming from, how they fit into the system, and how they move through the system.

Mr. Romero thought it is was multi-year issue for families, and it is a question of sustainability. What is the most efficient way to support this division? Ms. Leleck thought it was a matter of analyzing the data and reallocating funds.

Ms. Ervin stated that the school system tries to encourage a more challenging curriculum for most students. What is the system doing to accelerate students above grade level? However, the numbers are small in the expansion of the gifted programs. What is the end result? Staff explained that the work of the department is to differentiate models into the curriculum. There is training for teachers on differentiation and serving the needs of an unrepresented population.

Ms. Ervin wanted to know how many students self-select into a gifted program. Staff replied that at the middle and high school levels it is typical, and the elementary level goes back to the global screening.

Dr. Lacey commented on acceleration and the focus on academics. Historically, there have been center programs, and there are other criteria along with academics. The center programs were isolated, and now the thinking is to make whole school magnets.

Mr. Johnson inquired about students in accelerated programs, and he wanted to know what supports and academic assistance is provided to these students to ensure success. Ms. Leleck replied that there are students entering the courses knowing they need support, and it is provided by the school throughout the day using various strategies.

Ms. Cox inquired about the staffing structure that is needed to support ESOL families. Ms. Leleck replied that there is clear data on who needs such a program, but she was concerned about families when a student is not in an ESOL program.

Ms. Cox thought she heard that the system is trying to provide a higher level of rigor for

everyone, eliminate a screening process, and provide support for students to be successful. However, there needs to be a continuum for high performing students. Is it possible to provide for the needs of all children in the school? Dr. Lacey stated that there is a philosophical shift, and many gifted students opt to stay in the home school with options to support them.

Mrs. Navarro noted that the Division of Family and Community Partnerships is doing an inventory of outreach efforts in the system. Have they drafted a plan? Ms. Leleck replied that there are models inside and outside the system. Mrs. Navarro asked for a compilation of the parent outreach positions and job descriptions.

Dr. Haughey commented that principals want to accommodate the gifted youngsters in their school. What he did not see in the operating budget is a strategy to moderate the conflicting demands of programs in the local schools and funds to develop programs in other schools. International Baccalaureate and Cambridge programs have distinctive curricula. How is the system designing instructional programs to provide challenges in the home school?

Mr. Abrams inquired about the allegation made in testimony that the Maryland State Department of Education has developed a program for all Maryland schools to access data, report data, and use data vis-a-vis IEPs. Why was MCPS spending funds to develop its own IEP system when MCPS could get it from the state? What is the state providing? Ms. Strange replied that the Maryland on-line IEP produces a document that the state mandates for use by all systems. The final document is due out in May. The MCPS system will interact with other MCPS databases, such as transportation and SEDS. Eventually, the parents will have the ability to view their child's IEP.

Mr. Abrams asked if the MCPS system will feed information to the state that will satisfy the mandate. Staff replied in the affirmative. Mr. Abrams asked what the cost would be to implement the "free" system from the state. Staff replied that there would be training costs and hardware, but it is not clear at this point. Dr. Wright pointed out that the MCPS system will track interventions, student referrals, and baseline data.

Mr. Abrams asked about an assertion that special education funding went unspent due to the inability to fill certain positions. There was also a lower cost for tuition. Dr. Spatz replied that there were also fewer students.

Mr. Abrams noted that parents lobbied for funds that were not spent. Was the level of service advocated for by parents met by the system? Are there areas of enhancement after meeting the level of service? Dr. Wright replied that the initiatives are for enhancements through the staffing plan committee. The committee has a broad representation of the special education community. At the end of the process, there is consensus on the requested services and recommendations. The staffing plan has been aligned with the Strategic Plan and budget process.

Ms. Cox asked about the nature of the recommendations and said the priorities fluctuate depending on the membership of the staffing plan committee. There does not seem to be a strong alignment with the Strategic Plan. Is there a way to frame the work of the committee with the Strategic Plan? Dr. Wright stated that staff sets the frame for the committee based on the Strategic Plan and an assessment of revenue available for the budget.

Ms. Cox inquired about the about paraeducator training and whether it is content specific. Staff replied that the training is to (1) support students in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and (2) teach about complex disabilities.

Ms. Ervin inquired about basing staffing ratios on the needs of special education students instead of the number. She was concerned that the staffing plan apparently did not address the issues raised by the people who testified before the Board. Dr. Wright stated that the committee discussed needs-based staffing, but the system needs to find a balance between LRE and self-contained classrooms.

Ms. Cox suggested putting the staffing plan committee into the Strategic Planning Forums.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JDW:gr