

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
June 20, 2012

The Board of Education of Montgomery County held a work session on the Board's Self-Evaluation at Richard Montgomery High School, Rockville, Maryland, on June 20, 2012, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:56 p.m.

Present: Ms. Shirley Brandman, President
in the Chair
Mr. Christopher Barclay
Ms. Laura Berthiaume
Dr. Judy Docca
Mr. Michael Durso
Mr. Philip Kauffman
Mrs. Patricia O'Neill
Dr. Joshua Starr, Secretary/Treasurer

Absent: Mr. Alan Xie

Staff: Mr. Brian Edwards
Mr. Ikhide Roland Ikheloa
Ms. Suzann King
Mrs. Glenda Rose

Facilitator: Mr. Andrew Gelber

Ms. Brandman welcomed those present and thanked the Board members for completing the self-evaluation form. Materials for the work session included an agenda, possible priorities for the next level of work, and a summary grid based on copulation from the self-evaluation form. This work session will give the Board a time and space to stop and talk about the Board's work.

Mr. Gelber listed the objectives for the work session:

1. Celebrate the thoughtfulness of our work
2. Recognize and accept divergences of perspective
3. Determine priorities for the Board's "next level of work" during 2012

At this point, the Board paused for reflection:

1. What was your experience using this Board self-evaluation tool for the first time?
2. Based on your review of Board members comments, what stood out for you?

In turn, Board members commented with the following points:

1. The self-evaluation tool was a helpful way to reflect and articulate specific issues and concerns
2. The focus on the big issues in advance of the work of the system.

3. There is always room for improvement since all work is in process.
4. Board work should be dynamic and changing.
5. Colleague's comments were helpful to identify and clarify the activities of the Board.
6. The self-evaluation tool helped the Board identify where it is and based on its vision, where it should focus its efforts.
7. The Board members need faith and trust in one another since it makes a difference in moving forward.
8. The Board and superintendent need to work together to achieve success for students.
9. The Board cannot get lost in the "weeds" because it affects the school system.
10. If the Board does not do its work well, there are systemwide consequences.
11. The Board should decide on what work is important.
12. There is a difference between building on success and tweaking.
13. The Board works as a whole; not an individual.
14. In reading others comments, the Board is more in sync than otherwise thought.
15. The Board needs to work on one or two solid topics to build success since too many topics lead to frustration.

The facilitator commented that too many priorities equal no priorities. It takes a passion and spirit to work on a short list of issues. The evaluation of the Board was one piece of the puzzle in its role as oversight and governance. There are parts of the system not examined by a Board evaluation since the Board is steering the ship and that leaves the seaworthiness and direction to the senior staff. Precise core values and the evaluation speak to how the Board is doing.

The step forward for the Board is maturity, and this is a powerful step since the evaluation shows vulnerability and trust. The set of reflections by individual Board members is raw material that will not be used, but checked. From this raw material, a grid was developed listing the Performance Standard, Rating, Summary Statement, Strategy for Moving Forward, Responsible Party, and Timeline. This grid would not be filled out at this work session, but the conversation will drive the work of the Board. Seven areas are too many, but there are three of the seven which are the heart of the matter concerning visions, students and resources (establish/promulgate district visions and values; monitor expected student achievement results; and responsible management of resources). A disciplined process is working through the work of the Board.

Board members and superintendent made comments on the following questions:

1. In one area the Board feels good about policy, but the Board is frustrated about the operating budget process.
2. The best time to make a great system better is when you are doing well; apply principals of good Board work to new issues and demands for continuous improvement.

The Board president reflected that the process comes back to core values and

renovation of the strategic plan. There is a need to focus on the core values to make sure they are appropriate (this is work for the full Board). The core values through the strategic plan will shape the resources and policy and provide direction for the school system. Hopefully, the Board can bring the discussion on core values to a vote. Board members continued the discussion by adding:

1. The Board has a desire to cover a lot of areas, but it is the Board's responsibility to simplify and make the core values clear and understandable.
2. Too many core values make it difficult to see if there is guidance; there is a need to address the issue of simplification and offering room to adapt and adopt.
3. The Board should hone the core values to make them clear throughout the school system; there needs to be a crosswalk with the operating budget, policy, structure of the organization.
4. The core values should be tattooed in the minds and hearts of Board members.
5. Core values could be seen as the theory of action for the school system.
6. There is a process that the Strategic Planning Committee reviews the strategic plan prior to the Board's adoption.
7. The Board is on the path of doing it right starting with priorities, core values and aligning the operating budget to fund the priorities with measures for effectiveness.
8. Restricting the strategic plan will focus on strategies and indicators in relevant areas; question the simplification of core values since there are competing values.
9. The system cannot do everything since it leads to nothing done well.
10. Great core values may still not be used; there has to be a commitment to core values in committee and Board work.
11. The challenge is to have core values and a strategic plan that cascades throughout the school system.
12. The visions, mission, and core values drive the system in resources, communications, and policies.
13. There will be a complete "C" change on the way the Board operates; core values with measurable outcomes.

The facilitator commented that the Board is dealing with the big picture and the Standards A through G states what the Board thinks is the purpose of the Board. Reviewing Standard A (establish/promulgate district visions and values) there is a need to revisit the vision, mission, and core values with a focus on making them usable and actionable as guides for Board decision making. The full Board will review the core values and the revision of the strategic plan for fewer goals, fewer data points, clear "theory of action," and clearer specification of relevant indicators.

Board members reflected that there is a need to develop a set of priorities; function with a disciplined process for the strategic plan and operating budget; reduce the number of strategic plan goals, target resources, and develop the right indicators; Board meetings provide information to inform the Board in order for them to make better decisions.

On Standard C (monitor expected student achievement results), the facilitator noted that the Board will revisit and revise the kinds of data regularly requested and received, improve the Board's ability to use data analysis to guide Board decisions making, Board discipline (what's needed and why). Is it a full Board request or an individual request? The Board has a dialogue with the superintendent on what is relevant and meaningful.

The Board members commented that there is a need for data to guide decision making, instruction on the use of data, and need to use data to run scenarios to guide decisions. In the strategic plan, there is a need to define what the system is working towards with specific evidence. The clarified core values are the guiding work for academic priorities, but do the core values call for specific indicators. There is a need to agree on the indicators to provide understanding for all Board members. One Board member questioned the restructured strategic plan and the requirements of the State Department of Education.

The facilitator thought the Board's thinking was to take a new look at the whole cycle to determine how the pieces fit together. The vision, mission, and core values drive programmatic issues, such as resources, policies to support the core values, timelines on when, and monitor student achievement. The system is seeking more control over the work on the new direction and data tracking with limited but meaningful indicators that drive decisions.

Board members thought it was important to have data to advocate to the county government and community. One Board member voiced frustration with the strategic plan since it was complete when it came to the Board for approval after the committee has recommended adoption. With the committee structure, there is a need for the Board to make sure the process works, serves the Board's needs, and has the appropriate committees. The Board will develop performance criteria in collaboration with the superintendent for indicators on the process for the Board at the committee and full-Board levels. One Board member observed that the committee time is limited, and the Board does not devote adequate time for a rich discussion. The Board can get to mutually agreed upon data by using meaningful indications in the strategic plan.

The facilitator thought the Board needs a conversation about the strategic plan and the seven standards have a huge implication on strategic plan development. The resulting product feeds back into the ability for the Board to do its work. It is important for the Board to be on the inside of this development in its appropriate role. The conversation should be about good indicators with the Board agreeing to those indicators based on a disciplined process. There will be true resolution on the strategic plan. The Board should be explicit with one another from the past to future practice since the background has huge implications for the future.

The president thought there were things the Board could work on such as operations, agenda setting, and the appropriate committee structure. There are issues about what goes to a committee and what goes to the full Board. Does the Board have the right committees to do the work? The superintendent thought it was important for the Board

to agree on any fundamental change.

Lunch was served from 12:36 to 1:07 p.m.

After lunch, the facilitator commented on revisiting the strategic plan and recalibrating the Board and superintendent relationships. What seemed plausible this morning has moved to a discussion on what are the Board's immediate next steps? Working on the standards is premature, and it is impossible to have future oriented conversations since there are other tasks to be completed. There are bigger questions such as resources aligned with the strategic plan with the vision, mission, and core values. Just when the Board was to begin a series of processes on the role of the Board, the heart of what the Board is about bumps up against the core values and strategic plan. The Board will not know the new scheme until it moves through the strategic plan and renovation.

The Board agreed and the conflict is when the moment happens to work on the vision, mission, and core values. The struggle is the first opportunity to articulate what is needed in an organized manner. At this point, the Board is putting the cart before the horse. It is important to recognize and take the time to reflect on what have been done and realize what the highest priorities are. Even though there has not been an action plan developed, the time at the work session was well spent in order to reflect on the past and future.

The facilitator stated that there is a relation to where the Board has been looking at Standards A, C, and D. (establish/promulgate district visions and values; monitor expected student achievement results; and responsible management of resources). This work session has taken things the Board can work on. What will make the difference in doing a great job? The board has come from the role in and understanding of the strategic plan, and the way it is thinking. If things were running well, certain issues would not come up.

The president stated that the take away was that the Board has a lens for the core values working on the timing and sequencing. What is the committee work and that of the full Board? Get more feedback. What is necessary for the strategic plan?

The facilitator urged the Board to understand this work session to pursue recalibrations and a new understanding about the work of the Board in order to shift things around.

Board members stated that it is important to realize that members are part-time and there is a need for staff to understand that role with two-way communication and shared definitions. The expectations of Board work is growing and limits who can participate as a member.

Board members opined that a communication plan should be developed which drives the other standards. During the superintendent search, there was a well laid out communication plan. Communication crosses from meetings to operating budgets as well as other Board events. The Board can communicate in unique ways based on the

fact they are elected. The Board spoke to the idea of a Board communications plan and the need to work with the Communications Office and the Board's committees. The Board's strategy should be proactive and not reactive. The Board and school system can have very different roles in communication, but there needs to be more coordination to take advantage of mutual opportunities. In revising the strategic plan, what are the communication tools, such as forums and conversations with the labor associations and the MCCPTA.

Regarding the core values, the Board could use the forums for feedback with an opportunity to talk to people and listen to their perspectives. The Board's time and energy should be used optimally. There should be an effort to reach other members of the community. The committees could be used for conversations. There is a need to rethink some of the engagement opportunities since the Board wants to engage with the stakeholders with educational conversations. There is a need to create a way to discuss items with the Board taking a position on the issues outside of the legislative platform. As an example, what does the Board think of the state suspension policy?

The statement was made that the Community and Public Engagement Committee should develop a communication plan for full Board approval. The plan should be strategic.

The Board reflected that even though there was not a final work product from the work session, the conversation on the work of the Board was reflective on what the Board has done and is looking forward to doing. There is commonality among the Board members even though there is a diversity of views. For the first evaluation, it was a good start in reviewing the processes and the efficiency of the Board. It is helpful to reflectively review the process and share institutional knowledge.

The facilitator summed up with the observations that the Board was in a good starting point since they made honest remarks and observations. The Board has a shared commitment to governance with incremental and transitional improvement. Incremental improvements can begin tomorrow, and transitional improvement comes from the big reforms such as the strategic plan.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JPS:gr