

APPROVED
RETREAT

Rockville, Maryland
June 19 and 20, 2013

The Board of Education of Montgomery County held a two-day retreat at the Office of Human Resources, Maple Room, 45 West Gude Drive, Rockville, Maryland, on June 19 and 20, 2013, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

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

Absent: None

Guest: Danuta Wilson (both days)

The purpose for the two-day retreat --

- Understanding the MCPS Strategic Plan Framework
- Seeking Board review of the Strategic Plan Goals and Milestones
- Design a Work Plan for Board monitoring of the Strategic Plan Framework and Millstones
- Reach a consensus on a Joint Board/Superintendent community engagement plan
- Review the recommendations concerning processing of information requests and Board committees

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

The strategic planning framework is grounded in the principles developed by the Board. The Board's core values—Learning, Relationships, Respect, Excellence, and Equity—provide clarity on the role of staff members, parents, and the community in the work of the district. The competency areas of Academic Excellence, Creative Problem Solving, and Social Emotional Learning, along with the foundation of organizational effectiveness, provide the armature of our framework.

Academic Excellence

A strong academic program has long been the hallmark of MCPS. The strategic planning framework builds on this history, ensuring that all students have the knowledge and skills to thrive in the 21st century. Aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), curriculum across a wide range of subject areas will be robust and relevant to

the real world. With MCPS students fully prepared for their futures, our communities will be best positioned to thrive in a complex and competitive global society. Academic excellence will be measured at five key milestones in Grades 3, 5, 8, and 9, as well as by college and career readiness upon graduation.

Creative Problem Solving

Preparing students for success in the 21st century means that we will be educating our students to become citizens of a global society. They will need to work collaboratively to solve complex problems, generate novel ideas, and find creative solutions, even with scarce resources. They will need to consider the thoughts and ideas of others and be open to having their thinking change based on new evidence or information. Communicating in a variety of ways, explaining one's thinking, and knowing many ways to answer a question will be critical to our students' success. Their ability to question facts and claims, check the reliability of information, and see problems as opportunities to solve difficulties in novel ways will position our students for success in their future.

Social Emotional Learning

The challenge of raising knowledgeable, capable, caring, and responsible children is widely recognized. When school systems intentionally create and support environments that foster students' social and emotional skills, academic achievement increases, positive social interactions increase, and the quality of relationships among students and teachers improves.

Social emotional learning is the process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors. Our students' futures will demand that they value diversity and respect differences. As global citizens they will need to enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve success in a complex world.

Organizational Effectiveness

Successfully managing and operating a school system of more than 202 schools, 149,000 students, and 22,000 employees requires a comprehensive infrastructure of supporting business services. These services are provided by a team of employees who work behind the scenes to ensure that principals, school staff members, and students have the resources, materials, services, technology, and facilities they need for successful teaching and learning. MCPS hires for excellence and equity and strives to build the capacity of all employees in a self-renewing learning community that reflects our core values. Strategic processes are in place that are reflective of engagement with our business partners and the community to support the success of all students.

Student Knowledge and Skills Statements

Over the course of several months, the Strategic Planning Network Teams generated recommendations for the knowledge and skills students should have in each of the three competency areas. Additional input was obtained at a community forum held this spring. Finally, feedback on the knowledge and skills statements generated by the

Network Teams was solicited from a broad range of stakeholders, including principals and central services administrators, the Montgomery County Education Association Councils on Teaching and Learning, students, and parents.

Adult Actions and Community Role

A new and critical component of the strategic planning framework is the articulation of expectations for adult actions and the role of the community in supporting our students' success. Members of the Network Teams discussed these expectations and generated recommendations. As we engage the greater community as true partners in educating our county's youth, the framework allows all stakeholders to see their role in *Building Our Future Together*.

Measuring Our Success

The measures outlined in the strategic planning framework provide significant milestones that will allow us to monitor our progress as we strive to prepare all students to be college and career ready. While these milestones begin in Grade 3, we are well aware that early childhood success in kindergarten through Grade 2 continues to be a critical component to closing the achievement gap. It is expected that schools will review and monitor local formative and summative assessments beginning in kindergarten. We will continue to monitor our achievement by racial/ethnic groups, as well as by gender, and special services. All schools will be accountable for meeting the milestones, as well as reducing the achievement gap.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK MONITORING CALENDAR

Staff suggested the following monitoring:

- Elementary Milestones – October
Grade 5 Gallup Student Survey -- January
- Middle School Milestones – December
Grade 8 Gallup Student Survey – January
- High School Milestones – March
Eligibility – March
- Graduation and College Ready Millstones
Algebra 2 with a “C” or higher by Grade 11 – February
Score 3 or higher on AP and/or 4 or higher on IB -- February
Score 1650 or higher on SAT and/or 24 or higher on ACT -- February
High school Gallup Student Survey – January

JOINT BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Staff presented a plan for the coming school year to more actively engage parents, other community stakeholders, students, and staff. Activities will be scheduled throughout the school year, and held in various geographic locations. Priorities for the coming year are:

- Creating opportunities for parents, students, and community partners to hear and learn from each other regarding education needs.
- Providing coordinated opportunities for the Board and Superintendent to engage

with the community

- Widening MCPS' sphere of relationships to –
 1. Engage parents and the remainder of the community in non-traditional ways
 2. Appeal to business leaders to enhance their relationships with MCPS as good corporate citizens
 3. Reduce and eliminate the academic achievement gap
- Increasing collaboration with Montgomery County Government to mitigate political debates regarding funding and Maintenance of Effort requirements
- Creating a more functional public narrative for the public support of education in Montgomery County

The staff and Board reviewed and discussed a chart listing the events, audience, primary leadership, proposed dates, locations, participants, and description of event.

REPORT OF THE WORK GROUP ON THE BOARD'S SELF-EVALUATION

Ms. Brandman, Chair, reported that the Board and individual Board members are often asked to consider taking action to address interests or concerns that arise from a constituent community. Typically, these interests/concerns:

- Are presented at the Board table (e.g. public comment).
- Are raised in the presence of the Board (e.g. cluster visits, meetings with community groups).
- Are brought to the attention of a single Board member.
- Are presented through an organized community advocacy effort (including petition drives/mass e-mails).

In addition, Board members through their work, and particularly through attendance at conferences or other professional development seminars, develop an interest in an action item not already contemplated by the annual work plan. For example, at a recent MABE conference another school system presented information about their ongoing credit recovery work that sparked the potential for further investigation by MCPS.

While the Board's informal practice of holding a summer "disciplined work" session provides an opportunity to consider possible action items, Board members have found it limiting to have only one opportunity a year to consider topics for inclusion with the Board's work. During the remainder of the year, the only other "formal" way to address unanticipated action requests is through the initiative of a single Board member proposing a New Business Item.

Currently, if an action request does not inspire a New Business Item, the Board has no readily available means for responding to or resolving the request in a timely fashion. The work group believes there should be a routine, streamlined process for resolving pending action requests. Such a process is particularly warranted for requests that have come to the Board's attention through community initiative and where the community is seeking a response. Two important caveats should be noted, however: (1) it is incumbent upon the Board to determine at the outset whether the

action request genuinely reflects the interests/concerns of the community; and (2) the Board will need to be very explicit in addressing community expectations regarding responsiveness given the significant implication of any additional work on our limited resources and capacity.

Accordingly, the work group proposes the following recommendations for consideration by the Board:

1. The Board should formally implement a summer retreat to develop the Board's annual work plan, as initially envisioned and recommended with the Board's disciplined work process. Board members would have an opportunity to submit topics for inclusion on the Board's annual work plan and to consider any action requests from the community.
2. In addition, the Board should add three additional sessions to already scheduled full-day Board meetings to consider other often unanticipated, action items. Officers, superintendent, and Board staff would compile a list of "pending action requests" which would be discussed by the full Board during the quarterly deliberation. During the quarterly deliberations, the Board, in consultation with the superintendent, would decide whether/how to proceed with each pending action request.
3. Quarterly deliberations would be structured conversations that occur in a conference room (much like a mini-retreat and not at the Board table) to fully discuss and consider pending action requests. Following the quarterly deliberation, a report would be given during the regular business meeting regarding the decisions made by the Board about each pending action request. This report would be the public presentation/acknowledgement of the Board's decision so that interested community members are aware of the Board's decision and have a "formal" response to their pending action request.
4. In its deliberations, the Board would evaluate each pending action request with specific reference to work priorities already set for the year (the annual work plan) and determine the appropriate prioritization. The Board would also expressly consider any implication for existing staff capacity/resources.
5. Approval by a majority of the Board would be required before proceeding with any pending action request.
6. The Board could respond to pending action requests by:
 - taking some immediate action (such as requesting additional research, requesting a memorandum, referring the matter to an appropriate committee for further study, referring the matter to the superintendent for other follow up, etc.);
 - indicating that the matter was of interest but not of sufficient priority to warrant immediate action and should be held for consideration in the next year's work plan; or
 - Determining that the matter did not have the interest of a majority of the Board.

7. If a pending action request is a matter of urgency, it does not have to be held for the next quarterly deliberation; the superintendent, in consultation with the Board officers, will work to provide information or a recommendation for resolution to the full Board, as appropriate.

In addition to a process for resolving pending action requests, the Board was also seeking clarification on processes to best support/encourage other Board member inquiry. To address such inquiry:

- Board members should be reminded that they can ask follow-up questions of staff arising from work at the Board table or from Board memorandums. Members should send any data request to the Board's chief of staff to triage the request and to track down a response as appropriate. Inquiries and responses will be shared with the full Board.
- The superintendent will alert the Board or Board officers if responding to a matter of Board member inquiry is deemed to be extremely time consuming in accordance with Page 15 of the Board of Education Handbook. Under such circumstances, it will require action by the full Board to proceed.
- Board members can work with Board staff to develop their interests as a New Business proposal as outlined on Page 12 of the Board of Education Handbook. Board members should be prepared to address how any proposed New Business Item aligns with the Board's already adopted work plan priorities.

Recommendation Concerning Committee Structure

The work group reviewed the current Board of Education committee structure, as well as the charge and operation of the current committees. However, rather than simply focusing on revising the existing structure, the work group felt it critical to examine the needs of the Board and propose a committee structure best designed to meet those needs. The discussions focused on the defining responsibilities of the Board namely, to set policy for MCPS; to review and adopt annual budgets; to adopt and oversee the strategic plan; and to evaluate the superintendent on the system's progress toward realizing the strategic goals.

In undertaking the analysis, the work group was cognizant of the Board's indicated preference to ensure that matters of universal interest (such as those related to the Board's responsibility to monitor student outcomes) be addressed by the committee of the whole. As part of its efforts, the work group reviewed articles on "Implementing the Board Committees" and "The Well-Designed Committee" written by Doug Eadie for the American School Board Journal (2008). The work group also looked at sample committee structures from several other jurisdictions.

The work group identified three major areas of Board work that most need committee support: Policy, Fiscal, and Strategic Planning. These areas coincide with

the Board's defining responsibilities. These are also areas where the in-depth advanced work of a smaller group of Board members—drafting policy language or reviewing audit data—Board. The work group was unanimous in recommending the need for these committees.

The work group then considered alternative options for most effectively addressing other work currently assigned to Board committees. Transitioning to a three-committee structure would require, for example, a commitment to address community and public engagement by the committee of the whole. The work group debated whether developing and shaping the Board's community engagement work is best addressed by the committee of the whole because it can be most efficiently decided by presentation of options to and deliberation by the full Board simultaneously. In the final analysis, the work group felt that it was more appropriate and more efficient to involve the full Board directly in planning the Board's engagement activities on an annual basis. This would better allow the full Board to discuss and determine its preferences for engaging with the community. Accordingly, it is our recommendation that we transfer responsibility currently assigned to the Community and Public Engagement Committee to the committee of the whole. Under this model, we anticipate that there will still be instances in which the Board president may need to appoint an ad hoc work group to address a particular short-term topic related to community engagement and implementing the Board's engagement strategy. Our Handbook already contemplates this process.

The work group then invested significant time thinking through the most productive way to accomplish the work currently assigned to the Committee on Special Populations. The work group was mindful, for example, that our alternative education programs have been identified as an "innovation" school and will be undertaking significant new work that will be monitored by the full Board as part of its oversight of the innovation schools effort. Similarly, the systemwide priority focus on interventions which is addressed and monitored by the full Board will have significant impact on our special education, ESOL, and gifted and talented populations. In addition, it is anticipated that the renovated strategic plan will identify key indicators for monitoring student outcomes that will better enable the full Board to focus particular attention on the performance of students identified in the special populations. For these and other reasons, the work group debated whether the work of the Committee on Special Populations providing oversight/accountability for meeting the needs of special populations might be best addressed by the full Board. The work group noted that the Committee on Special Populations meetings have frequently drawn interest and participation from a majority of Board members suggesting universal interest in addressing this work as committee of the whole.

Some caution was raised, however, questioning whether the full Board would have the time on agendas to focus deeply on the needs of these special populations. For example, when the full Board reviews student outcomes on the indicators in the revised strategic plan, if the Board desires a greater in-depth study on specific indicators concerning the achievement gap for special education students or wants to study

the progress of ESOL students, how would we create the time and capacity to conduct such a comprehensive review? As noted above, the Board president could convene an ad hoc committee as needed. Another alternative considered by the work group was to keep the Committee on Special Populations intact but revise its charge to make clear that it would meet only when the full Board determined that it was needed to provide time and capacity to dive deeper into indicators affecting special populations. In addition, there may be areas affecting special populations that might require additional review and which could be assigned to the committee. For example, the Committee on Special Populations has currently been tasked to develop recommendations for questions to guide a comprehensive review/audit of special education. It is envisioned that the Committee on Special Populations could provide the Board with needed additional capacity on this critical work with the expectation that the committee will report back to the full Board with its findings for further deliberation, as appropriate.

The work group offers these options for consideration, discussion, and final determination by the full Board. The work group recommends that the Board plan to assign the work of any committees during our annual “disciplined work” summer retreat. Were the Board to adopt the recommendation for a three-committee structure, we would propose the following revised charges for those committees:

Policy Management

- ✓ When the need for a new or revised policy is recognized, the committee meets with appropriate staff to develop a draft policy. The committee then presents the proposed policy item to the Board for discussion and tentative action. The judgments and recommendations of the committee are advisory in nature and shall be submitted to the full Board for any formal action to be taken.
- ✓ The committee shall monitor the implementation of policies.
- ✓ The committee will review State Board regulations as they arise, as well as relevant enacted state and federal laws, and work with the superintendent to determine any policy or regulatory action that should be taken by the Board.
- ✓ The committee will be responsible for examining processes and protocols to ensure that the continuous improvement needs/procedures of the Board are addressed. For example:
 - Updates to the Board’s Operational Handbook
 - Disciplined work process
 - Addresses follow ups from the Board’s self-evaluation process.

Fiscal Management

- ✓ The committee shall approve the annual work plan of the internal audit team and may recommend items for inclusion in the plan.
- ✓ The superintendent will keep the committee informed of the results of all state and federal audits of MCPS operations and recommendations of the County’s Office of Legislative Oversight and Inspector General.
- ✓ The committee will review, as needed, financial statements provided to the county executive and County Council.

- ✓ The committee shall undertake periodic reviews of issues pertaining to the management and audit of Montgomery County Public Schools' fiscal, capital, and human resources, including the Board's operating budget, the Capital Improvement Program, staffing plans, allocations, and pension and benefit determinations.
- ✓ The committee will review the contracting practices of MCPS and will review the procurement manual.

Strategic Planning

- ✓ Working closely with the superintendent, the committee provides initial recommendations regarding the strategic direction and priorities of MCPS (long-range visioning). The committee will be responsible for undertaking a forward-looking analysis for the direction of the system, i.e., complete active and ongoing review of MCPS' environment for opportunities and challenges so that the committee can identify emergent strategic issues that are not currently addressed and recommend these to the full Board.
- ✓ Review objectives and goals to measure progress toward achieving the goals outlined in the strategic plan (performance monitoring). While it would remain the responsibility of the full Board to review student outcomes on the indicators included in the strategic plan, the committee would undertake greater in-depth study at the full board's direction in drilling down areas identified for further study. (It was suggested that a monitoring calendar be developed for interim reports to the full Board with in-depth indicators.)
- ✓ Develop and recommend legislative strategies to the Board
- ✓ Strategic communication and outreach.

Were the Board inclined to continue to assign work to the Committee on Special Populations rather than exclusively to the committee of the whole (with possible ad hoc supplementation), the work group proposed the following revised charge for the Committee on Special Populations:

Committee on Special Populations

- ✓ Working closely with the superintendent, the committee may provide initial recommendations based upon in-depth review of issues and instructional programs designed to meet the needs of special populations that require special education services, gifted and talented instruction, alternative programs, ESOL services, and multilingual supports. The committee's work plan will consist only of tasks as assigned by the full Board.
- ✓ As the Board reviews student outcomes on the indicators in the strategic plan, the Board may desire the committee to perform a greater in-depth study on specific indicators concerning special populations, including programs that serve those students. In addition, there may be areas affecting special populations that might require additional review. The committee will provide the Board with needed capacity to undertake these reviews.
- ✓ The committee will meet as necessary.
- ✓ Whenever the committee is assigned a task, the committee will be

expected to report back to the Board with its findings for further review and discussion by the full Board, as appropriate.

The work group believes that the proposed changes to the committee structure will enable the Board to have fully functioning committees that best serve the needs of the Board and strike the proper balance between committee work and work of the full Board. Furthermore, the work group believes the proposed process for addressing action requests from the community will allow for improved responsiveness while still maintaining a streamlined focus on the annual work priorities established by the Board.

NEXT STEPS

The Strategic Plan Framework and recommendations from the Board's Self-Evaluation will be prepared for adoption by the Board of Education at a future business meeting.

On June 19, 2013, the retreat ended at 5:00 p.m.

On June 20, 2013, the retreat ended at 11:54 a.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JPS:gr