

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

November 13, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. with the following committee members and Board staff present: Nancy Navarro (chair), Sharon Cox, Patricia O'Neill, Roland Ikheloa, and Marcia Vogel (recorder).

MCPS staff present: Aggie Alvez, Elaine Chang-Baxter, Robin Confino, Brian Edwards, Judy Pattik, Brian Porter, Laura Steinberg, Carey Wright, and Steve Zagami.

**Enhancing Outreach and Communication—Working with the Department of Communications**

Ms. Alvez noted that the Department of Communications wants to be responsive to the Board's needs. For the community forum held in October, written testimony submitted by those who spoke was posted on the web site, which had not been done previously. The Bulletin and QuickNotes are other vehicles that can be used to communicate information about the work of the Board, including the work of its committees. Ms. Cox suggested that QuickNotes could be advertised in the monthly MCCPTA newsletter; she also noted that because there sometimes is a lack of communication between delegates and PTA presidents, the information given to delegates at the assemblies should be sent to PTA presidents as well.

Ms. Navarro noted that it is important for the public to understand the difference between the work of the Board and the work of the administration. Ms. Navarro asked how the work of the Board is communicated to the public, and noted that a comprehensive strategy is needed. For example, when a new initiative is introduced, communications could include wording to the following effect: "Under the direction of the Board of Education [or "with the guidance of the Board of Education"], the superintendent proposed..." These types of references emphasize the role of the Board.

Ms. Cox noted that there was nothing about the Board in the opening day video. She also noted that if the public is asked for input, then the system has to show how it is utilized. Mrs. O'Neill added that, in general, the public doesn't have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of the Board versus those of the superintendent.

Ms. Alvez suggested that more information could be included on the Board's web page. For example, information on a topic or issue of current interest to parents could be provided (i.e., the calendar—how and why the dates are decided, etc.) Ms. Navarro wanted to know how the Board has a face in what happens in the school system every day. Mr. Ikheloa and Ms. Alvez will continue to work to address this issue.

Ms. Alvez will look into getting QuickNotes information to all PTA presidents and will ask them to advertise the service in their newsletters. Mr. Ikheloa and Ms. Alvez also will work on increasing the timeliness of the BOE web presence, including a section where information is provided on topics of current interest (i.e., calendar example above).

Ms. Navarro suggested that the Board's message could be folded into vehicles that are already in place. She requested that the Board's presence be increased in The Bulletin. She also noted that one has to scroll down the home page of the school system's web site to find the Board link, and she asked that this be changed in such a way as to increase the Board's presence on the site.

### **Enhancing Customer Service for Parents and Community Members—International Student Admissions Office and Residency Compliance Unit**

Mr. Ikheloa visited the International Student Admissions Office in September and did not find the conditions there to be customer friendly. The hallway doubles as a waiting area for the clinic next door—there were 50–60 youngsters waiting in the hallway when he visited. He also visited the Parents' Place at Newport Mill Middle School, and was concerned that the staff there was underutilized in that he did not witness any parent visits during the period he was present.

He suggested that the school system look at all the units visited by many parents. These offices should be close to bus stops, clean, and user friendly. He noted that Mr. Romero has previously asked about moving forward on issues related to the structure of the building that houses ISAO; harnessing multiple resources is the bigger picture.

Mr. Zagami and Ms. Steinberg noted that there have been simplifications and clarifications to the ISAO processes. They agreed that it would be a good idea to colocate ISAO and the Residency Compliance Unit. Ms. Steinberg added that school-based staff and pupil personnel workers are receiving training so that they can make more determinations on their own and make fewer referrals to ISAO and the Residency office.

Ms. Navarro stressed that MCPS needs to take seriously the issues of the physical conditions at the ISAO office and the issue of colocating resources.

Staff was asked to provide information to the committee on possible scenarios for colocating resources, including a timeline. What combinations of resources would be possible without causing major disruptions? Mr. Ikheloa will also draft a memo to the superintendent on the same issue.

### **Update on Board Office Staff Restructuring and Next Steps**

Present for the discussion: Nancy Navarro, Sharon Cox, Aggie Alvez, Robin Confino, Roland Ikheloa, Brian Porter, and Marcia Vogel (recorder).

Mr. Ikheloa noted that he has spoken with Stephanie Williams about placing the Board's Handbook on the work plan of the Policy Committee.

Mr. Ikheloa reviewed the staffing specification adopted by the Board on August 30, 2006, and the staffing structure prior to that time.

The advertisement for the position of staff assistant for policy and communications has been completed and it will be shared with Board members. Dr. Marlene Hartzman has been handling the appeals and some Ombudsman issues.

Ms. Cox asked about reporting functions and when Mr. Ikheloa could come back to the committee to talk about how that will be structured. Mr. Ikheloa responded that he would prefer to do that after the new staff member has been hired. Ms. Cox is interested in follow-up regarding legislative activities. She noted that Ms. Rogovin reports back to the Board, but wondered if there is a way to look at the information to determine what is important for the Board to take action on. She pointed to the need to close the loop regarding legislative issues. Ms. Rogovin also handles the television show, Education Matters; Mr. Ikheloa would like to keep that with Ms. Rogovin for now but is flexible on who handles it in the future. It was suggested that the show could showcase the work of all the committees and be connected to the work of other Board members as well.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

### **Action Items**

<b>Who?</b>	<b>What?</b>	<b>By When?</b>
Ms. Alvez/Mr. Edwards	Increase Board presence in Bulletin	Ongoing
Mr. Ikheloa/Ms. Alvez	Increase timeliness of BOE web presence; provide information on topics of current interest	Ongoing
Mr. Ikheloa/Ms. Alvez	Increase presence of BOE link on home page	Done
Mr. Ikheloa/MCPS staff	Draft memo to superintendent on colocating resources, providing information on possible scenarios	Ongoing (attached)
Mr. Ikheloa	Report back to committee re reporting functions	After staff asst. has been hired