

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

May 14, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. with the following committee members and staff present: Nancy Navarro (chair), Patricia O'Neill (member), Judy Docca (member), Roland Ikheloa, Suzann King, Aggie Alvez, Brian Edwards, and Marcia Vogel (recorder).

Discussion of Board Business Processes and Meetings

At its retreat on January 18, 2007, the Board of Education directed the Communications and Public Engagement Committee to review Board business and meeting processes and to come back to the Board with recommendations. The following deliberations and recommendations will be shared with the full Board at its May 31, 2007, retreat.

Time, format, and content of Board meetings: There was a consensus by the committee that the Board needs to restructure its Board meetings in order to make the meetings more efficient and provide more time for substantive in-depth discussions before taking appropriate action. The committee discussed creating more time for in-depth discussions by limiting the number of discussion topics at regular Board meetings. The committee also proposed creating worksessions throughout the year that are devoted to key issues. The committee proposed the following options: (1) begin evening Board meetings earlier; (2) add worksessions to the existing calendar or convert all or some evening meetings to worksessions; and (3) add Board “mini-retreats” to the calendar every year.

Board ceremonies: The committee expressed a desire to streamline the length of the Board’s recognitions and ceremonies. Ms. Navarro suggested that a short video could be shown that showcases the group being recognized, thus reducing the number of speakers and time spent. Mrs. O’Neill noted that some recognitions, i.e, Kingsview Fathers Circle, would be more appropriately included on the agenda as a “Board spotlight” on a program of interest. Regarding presentation plans for ceremonies and recognitions, the committee’s discussion centered on creating a presentation plan that (1) sets a maximum number of ceremonies per meeting; (2) provides for no more than two speakers presenting at the table—one staff member to present an overview and one community representative to speak (3 minutes each) after the superintendent or Board president has introduced the item; (3) allows time for the Board president or one Board member to speak on behalf of the Board; and (4) allows for a photo opportunity if necessary.

Format and content of Board papers: The committee appreciated improvements that have been made to the Board paper presentations over the years, including inclusion of executive summaries. However, there was a consensus that the Board papers could be restructured to provide more information to the Board in a more user-friendly manner and to allow for easier decision-making on the part of the Board. The committee expressed interest in a format for Board papers structured with the following components: executive summary; issues; alignment with the strategic plan; recommended option; other options considered (including pros and cons),

if appropriate; and legal implications of the option(s). The committee also expressed an interest in receiving Board packets sooner than the Wednesday before the Board meetings.

Paperless Board meetings: Some Boards in the state have transitioned to paperless meetings; however, committee members expressed the opinion that hard copies are easier to read and are still needed.

Public Comments: The committee noted that other jurisdictions around the state structure their Public Comments sections differently. Some restrict the comments to only items on the meeting's agenda; some, like MCPS, allow comments on any topic; and some do a mix of both. The Board would need to decide which of these options to pursue.

Board/Superintendent Comments: Committee members discussed the option of placing Board/Superintendent comments at the end of the Board meeting, rather than immediately following Public Comments, and the desirability of imposing a two-minute time limit on each Board member.

Town Hall Meeting concept: The intent of the Town Hall meeting concept is to broaden community access to the Board at different geographic locations and to provide an opportunity for community members to speak to the Board on a variety of topics in a less-structured environment. The committee recommended that the full Board consider whether Town Hall meeting(s) should be in addition to or in lieu of the strategic planning forums. The committee requested that the Strategic Planning Committee work with Mr. Bowers regarding the form of the strategic planning forums.

Communications and Outreach Strategy for the Board

Committee members agreed that a comprehensive media and communications strategy is needed to increase the Board's visibility and highlight the work of the Board. It was suggested that the Board's web site be used to post messages from the president and to provide information about actions taken at Board meetings. Committee members agreed that there should be more op-ed opinion pieces from Board members on issues of interest. With regard to communicating the work of the Board to other county and state officials, it was suggested that elected officials be encouraged to subscribe to QuickNotes.

With regard to cluster meetings, invitation letters need to say that principals "will" be invited, not "should" be invited. Typically, presentations have been too long and have not allowed sufficient time for give and take with attendees. It was suggested that Board members take feedback cards with them to the cluster meetings. Cluster meeting planning and organization will be discussed at the Board's upcoming retreat.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Action Items

Who?	What?	By When?
Mr. Ikheloa	Prepare draft presentation plan and guidelines for recognitions; include Mrs. O'Neill's previous memo re recognitions	May 31, 2007
Mr. Ikheloa	Request that administration bring presentation plans to agenda setting	Ongoing
Mr. Ikheloa	Draft memo to Board re retreat, including discussion and deliberations of the Communications and Public Engagement Committee regarding Board business processes and meetings	Done
Mr. Ikheloa	Request that Strategic Planning Committee work with Mr. Bowers regarding form of strategic planning forums	On committee work plan
Mr. Ikheloa	Update HSA white paper	Ongoing
Mr. Ikheloa	Ensure that letters to cluster coordinators re cluster meetings say that principals will be invited	Done