

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

November 9, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 1:15 p.m. with the following Board members and Board support staff present: Shirley Brandman (chair), Laura Berthiaume, Phil Kauffman, Laura Steinberg, and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Staff members: Erick Lang, Karen Woodson, and Lori-Christina Webb.

Minutes

The minutes from September 14, 2009, were approved as presented.

Visioning for ESOL Services

Dr. Woodson began by explaining that English Language Learners (ELL) fall into two broad categories: those that are either currently enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program or exited from an ESOL program within the past two years (R-ELL), and those who exited an ESOL program more than two years ago. While both groups are considered ELL, current ESOL students and R-ELL students comprise the No Child Left Behind LEP subgroup. Dr. Woodson went on to provide demographic data about the current 17,388 ESOL students explaining that more than 61% of the students speak Spanish and nearly 61% of ESOL students are U.S. born. ESOL enrollment has increased by 4,000 since 2006, with more than 75% of the total ESOL enrollment now in elementary schools. Discussion followed regarding ESOL instruction.

Dr. Woodson said that there is a growing need for specialized instruction among secondary school ESOL students who have limited or no prior schooling. Committee members asked about counseling services. Dr. Woodson said that ESOL is allocated 27 skilled staff to help students with cultural, family, and situational issues, and that this staff intensely collaborates with school based counselors and parent outreach staff to ensure that ESOL students are fully served.

Committee members asked for the thinking behind having ESOL centers for high school students but not for elementary and middle school students. Dr. Woodson explained that by clustering high school students in centers, sufficient staffing is possible to offer the full sequencing of ESOL courses. By contrast, staff believes that by elementary and middle school students remaining in their home schools they are afforded better supports for academic English language acquisition. Dr. Woodson stressed that the supports and focus provided during non-ESOL instructional time meets a critical need given that many elementary ESOL students are not fluent or literate in their first language.

Dr. Woodson then went on to explain the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) federal reporting requirement. AMAO is an annual target for the percent of students making progress toward attaining proficiency in English as measured by the LAS Links assessment. To date, MCPS has continuously exceeded the target.

AMAO II holds schools accountable for exiting students from ESOL based on a student's overall score on the LAS Links assessment. Dr. Woodson explained that MCPS ESOL exit criteria include an array of factors, including, but not limited to the LAS Links score. MCPS believes that this allows for a more comprehensive assessment of a student's readiness to exit ESOL. She said she has serious concerns about being required to use only one factor to exit students. However, since MSDE has not yet formally communicated this new requirement in writing, MCPS has continued to exit students from ESOL using existing MCPS ESOL multiple exit criteria.

Committee members asked what the potential impact could be if MCPS is required to follow the MSDE proposed exit criteria and if there might be an appeal process. Dr. Woodson suggested that staffing issues will need to be addressed so that sufficient supports can be provided to exited students and that she had no information about an appeal process.

ACTION: The committee asked to be kept informed if and when MSDE makes a decision. Additionally, they said they would follow up with MABE to see how other school systems are handling the ambiguity.

Latino Youth Collaborative

The collaborative is meeting and will be developing a series of recommendations that will be made to the county executive. There appears to be a keen interest in MCPS resources, such as Family and Community Partnerships, ISAO, and ESOL, and there is some concern that many of the recommendations will require additional resources.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.