



REPORT OF THE WORK SESSION ON SECONDARY CLASS SIZE  
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

Tuesday, March 19, 2002

President Donald L. Arnold called the work session to order at 6:10 p.m. In addition to President Arnold, the following Board members were present: Ms. Maria R. Cirincione, Ms. Phyllis E. Ettinger, Mr. Thomas G. Grzymiski, Ms. Jean M. H. Jung, Mr. Michael P. Kennedy, Ms. Janese Murray, Mr. James R. Sasiadek, and Mr. James E. Walker. In addition, staff members were present.

Mr. Evans, Position Administrator, through a Power Point™ presentation, briefly reviewed elementary staff allocations and responded to questions raised at the Board's last work session. He also reviewed middle and high school staffing allocations.

Mr. Hayden entered the room at 6:18 p.m.; Mr. Teplitzky entered the room at 6:22 p.m.

Mr. Kennedy emphasized the thoughts of several Board members from the last work session by stating the school system needs to find an appropriate and clearer way to communicate staffing information to parents. He also noted that we need to better communicate with parents our efforts in staffing schools that need assistance. Ms. Ettinger agreed with Mr. Kennedy's comments.

Ms. Ettinger inquired as to how the designated reading teacher, at the secondary level, is used to serve children. She also asked if principals have complete authority in determining how these positions are used or if there is guidance from central office. Mr. Evans responded by stating the principal generally does a diagnostic review of students' needs. He noted the two types of reading professionals—reading teachers and reading specialists—and their differences, and stated there is a variety of ways these professionals can be used. Ms. Johns stated these positions are assigned as a reading teacher. However, principals may use these positions based on their schools' needs. For example, one high school may use the position for an SAT preparation class, while another high school may use the position for its reading program.

With regard to reading teachers and reading specialists, Ms. Ettinger asked how it is determined which individual is assigned to a school and what they are capable of doing to serve that school's population. Ms. Audette stated the allocation represents a position for reading. It does not indicate whether it is for a teacher or specialist. In the majority of positions that are assigned, they are reading teachers, not specialists.

Ms. Simon noted a need for hiring reading specialists, particularly high needs schools with low achievement. She also noted that before the end of the school year, a curriculum workshop will be held that will include middle school reading specialists and classroom reading teachers. The purpose of the workshop will be to identify a common set of criteria to be used in every middle school to determine which students would go from 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading into 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading or 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading to 7<sup>th</sup> grade foreign language. Ms. Simon stated that at present, there is no common practice for which students go into reading and which go into foreign language.

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Ms. Ettinger commended Ms. Simon for moving in that direction. Ms. Ettinger asked what incentives/supports we are providing to encourage reading teachers to become certified reading specialists. Ms. Simon described partnerships/collaborations with Towson University to build reading teachers, especially in the Northwest, Southwest, and Southeast Areas. Ms. Ettinger expressed an interest in knowing how many teachers have gone on to become certified specialists after the cohorts ended.

Mr. Arnold suggested the presentations provided this evening by Mr. Evans and Ms. Simon on class size formula and reading, respectively, be considered as subjects for airing on The Education Channel.

Ms. Ettinger suggested that given the Middle School Task Force is currently functioning, it might be wise to have them include the transitioning needs, with respect to reading, in their recommendations.

Ms. Simon explained for Ms. Jung how English teacher workloads are affected by the amount of writing that is done. She stated that many good English teachers leave the profession because they are overwhelmed by the workload. Ms. Jung asked for a copy of the recommendations from the National Council of Teachers of English with regard to teachers' class loads.

Ms. Ettinger left the room at 7:25 p.m.

Mr. Kennedy expressed concern about some special education children being mainstreamed in regular classes with no special education teacher working with them and the additional burden it places on the teacher. It also affects the instructional program that the teacher provides to the rest of the class.

Ms. Johns noted that a child's IEP, by law, guides what that child needs. The principal must take into consideration a child's IEP when scheduling their school and grouping youngsters. Mr. Boone stated that the law requires the school system to meet the needs of the child in the least restrictive environment. The law also calls for all educators to make necessary adaptations in instruction to meet IEP goals. Mr. Evans added that from a personnel standpoint, the system is looking for teachers who have had student teacher experience in inclusion settings or who have gone to colleges and universities where they have dual majors, i.e., elementary education and special education.

Ms. Murray inquired about accommodations in schools where there are a high number of special needs students. Mr. Boone stated Title I funds and other grant funds supplement efforts at schools based on the number of poverty students at the school.

Ms. Jung asked how a school's socioeconomic situation determines the number of social workers assigned to a building and if wellness centers are placed in a building. She also asked about the source of funding. Dr. Mohler noted that there are a number of components, including student mobility and student achievement data, which are important in the assignment

of personnel, such as social workers, pupil personnel workers, health assistants, and psychologists. After a review of these components by Health Services, Pupil Personnel, and Psychological Services, a determination is made as to which school(s) receives these types of personnel and wellness centers. A principal may determine that based upon the school's improvement plan, he/she may wish to use part of their Title I funds for a social worker position or fund an extra day for a psychologist. Community agencies may also partner with the Department of Student Support Services to provide services.

Mr. Kennedy noted a number of factors that impact class size. Ms. Johns stated that while the principal has the flexibility to determine staffing, the Executive Directors of Schools approve schools' organization reports. Mr. Boone expressed the need for principals to receive high quality training so they know what is instructionally best.

Mr. Evans continued with his Power Point™ presentation and reviewed information on the number of combination classes in the county, as well as showing information on the cost of reducing student/teacher ratios for grades K-2.

Mr. Teplitzky acknowledged that it will take a great deal of money to reduce student/teacher ratios to where the Board and the school system would like it to be. He stated the Board needs to receive from the superintendent and staff an action plan to address these critical staffing issues, alternatives to be considered, and the cost implications for the alternatives. Mr. Hayden stated that adopting a policy of incrementally moving toward a goal(s) enables the Board and school system to invite legislators to adopt the policy, too, and join with the system in moving toward the goal(s).

Board members decided not to schedule a third work session on class size and staffing. Mr. Arnold suggested that a session be scheduled when the Superintendent and staff have possible recommendations to present to the Board.

The work session was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Joe A. Hairston  
Secretary-Treasurer

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