

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND,
WORK SESSION ON THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Monday, June 10, 2002

President Donald L. Arnold called the work session to order at 6:36 p.m. at Greenwood. In addition to Mr. Arnold, the following Board members were present: Ms. Phyllis E. Ettinger, Mr. John A. Hayden, III, Dr. Warren C. Hayman, Ms. Jean M. H. Jung, Mr. Michael P. Kennedy, Ms. Janese Murray, and Mr. James R. Sasiadek. Also present were Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent of Schools, and staff members.

Mr. Arnold informed the audience the work session was a result of a recommendation from the Board's Curriculum Committee.

Ms. Ettinger, Chair of the Curriculum Committee, provided an overview of tonight's meeting. Numerous staff members were recognized for their efforts in preparing the materials sent to Board members for the work session. She stated tonight's focus is on key policy issues of teacher quality and teacher training for diverse student populations.

Dr. Hayman, a member of the Curriculum Committee, suggested the existence of a state of emergency within the Baltimore County Public Schools—that being the achievement gap between majority and minority students. He stated this issue must take first priority among the issues the Board and school system must address. Dr. Hayman also stated the state of emergency exists for three imperatives: political, economic, and moral. He suggested the following ways the Board can make a difference:

1. Establish policies and procedures to guarantee the achievement gap is eliminated, and establish a timeframe to eliminate the gap.
2. Implement programs to eliminate the gap.
3. Provide funding to support this effort.

Dr. Hayman shared his concern with the number of non-certificated teachers in Baltimore County. He noted that the majority of non-certificated teachers are placed in high poverty schools. He stated that parents need to assume responsibility in the effort to eliminate the achievement gap, as well.

Ms. Margaret-Ann Howie, Legal Counsel to the Superintendent, reviewed the type of information to be discussed with the Board so it can establish a framework to discuss policy issues related to teacher quality. She stated staff believes there are four policy issues that could be impacted by the discussion of teacher quality—recruitment, staff development, teacher assignment, and staff retention. Ms. Howie reminded the Board of her recent presentation to them on issues related to Title I and the No Child Left Behind Act. She highlighted a few sections of the No Child Left Behind Act as they relate to teacher quality:

1. The people who are to be hired by the school system.

2. Requirements for new elementary and new secondary school teachers.
3. Requirements for teachers who are not new to the profession.

Ms. Howie explained the legal requirement of teacher placement under Title I and noted there are legal requirements to be followed in this area in the TABCO Master Agreement and in state law.

Mr. Randall Grimsley, Executive Director of Human Resources, highlighted some research and funding issues. He noted the findings of The Educational Trust that showed how the quality of teaching had a positive impact on average and less-than-average students, and test scores increased. Mr. Grimsley also spoke of The Trust's findings regarding experienced and non-experienced teachers.

With regard to funding issues, Mr. Grimsley stated that Baltimore County's starting salary ranking has declined. He noted, however, Baltimore County has a very attractive compensation package. Mr. Grimsley provided a brief history of a few ideas designed to attract teachers to low performing schools. He stated the Mentoring Program is effective in supporting new, inexperienced teachers. Finally, Mr. Grimsley reviewed recruitment efforts and costs.

Mr. Hayden inquired as to Baltimore County's current starting salary rank and how it compares regionally. Mr. Grimsley stated Baltimore County's starting salary of \$32,500 ranks 11th. He noted in large districts close to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, the starting salaries are close to \$38,000. In Northern Virginia, the starting salary is in the same range. Next school year, Anne Arundel and Harford Counties will probably have higher starting salaries than Baltimore County.

Ms. Ettinger inquired about recruiting in areas where there may be excess teachers. Dr. Smeallie stated that Personnel looks at data provided by organizations such as the Mid-Atlantic Association of School, College, and University Staffing to assist in determining such areas. He noted that recruitment trips to the West Coast may not be successful, as many young college graduates from that area have many ties to that area and are unlikely to move to the East Coast. However, there have been recruitment trips to Michigan and Minnesota. Dr. Smeallie noted that recruiting trips are reviewed annually.

Ms. Ettinger stated that, in the future, it would be helpful to the Board to have fiscal notes included with the incentive strategies that the Board may consider. She also suggested providing the experience of school districts in dealing with incentive plans.

Dr. Hayman inquired about the disparity between the number of provisionally certified teachers in the Central and Southwest Areas. In providing a response, Dr. Smeallie stated candidates are asking to visit multiple schools and are shown several schools with similar characteristics. Dr. Hayman disagreed with this practice and suggested candidates should be assigned to the schools where they are needed. Dr. Smeallie responded by saying that as an

employer, Baltimore County Public Schools tries to match a candidate's background, skill, and experience to the appropriate school and assured Dr. Hayman candidates are not allowed to select their job assignment.

Ms. Ettinger noted that federal law will force us to change our practices. Ms. Howie stated that new hires for 2002-2003 in Title I supported programs will have to be highly qualified. By 2005-2006, all teachers must be highly qualified. Ms. Ettinger stated that the situation is now a matter of how we will change our practices, how quickly, and how effectively. She continued by saying the school system's challenge is to integrate the realities of federal law, our needs, and the job market. Ms. Ettinger voiced her distress with the information provided in the Teacher Certification Report and stressed that strategies and policies need to be developed to place teachers where they are needed.

Dr. Smeallie stated in today's market, quality teachers expect to visit the site where they may be working. They expect to meet with the person to whom they will be reporting, and they expect to see the employment setting. He stated that these candidates force us, as an employer, to listen to them and show them options. Dr. Smeallie concluded his comments by saying it is incumbent upon the school system to consider incentives to make people want to be at a particular school. They won't succeed if they are forced to work at a particular school.

Mr. Kennedy spoke of the need for our funding authorities to fully understand the requirements of the law. Ms. Howie stated that the law provides funding for teacher training and teacher mentor programs to help existing teachers become "highly qualified." Dr. Smeallie added that federal officials will be firm about meeting the deadlines. He noted that there will be a majority of school systems that won't be in compliance. He shared his belief that Baltimore County probably will not be in compliance by the start of the 2002-03 school year, despite the efforts of Personnel to meet the federal law.

Ms. Jung noted that filling vacancies in Title I schools must be a priority for recruiters, and Dr. Smeallie confirmed that it is his department's priority. He noted, however, that a candidate sent to a Title I school may like the school, but if the assignment isn't what he/she has done most, the candidate might inquire about other vacancies that might be a better match. Personnel will first put them in contact with another Title I school before referring them to a non-Title I school.

Ms. Jung inquired about recruitment overseas. Dr. Smeallie responded that international recruitment is difficult because of several INS requirements.

Mr. Sasiadek noted we must find a way to connect new hires with children, families, fellow teachers, and the community. He stated that up until now, the system has used a segmented approach. He stated that we need to look at the problem of recruitment and retention as a whole, which would include asking local authorities for additional funding so we can attract more qualified candidates, offer outstanding programs that offer support to teachers after they are hired, and provide programs to guide them through their professional growth.

Ms. Ettinger asked the Board to focus its discussion on policy issues, and she summarized some of the issues discussed earlier in the evening. She stated her desire to see where our policies are, whether they are meeting our needs, or if adjustments need to be considered. She reminded everyone that tonight's discussion focused on only two items and that there are many other issues which impact student achievement and the achievement gap that deserve discussion. Ms. Ettinger shared her belief that the key to student achievement is attracting and retaining qualified teachers and placing them where they are needed so students can achieve the way they ought to and in the way the school system is obligated to help them achieve. She asked to see the policies that relate to the four (4) areas mentioned by Ms. Howie at the beginning of the work session and for a policy analysis to help the Board determine how existing policies help or hinder our efforts.

Mr. Kennedy suggested the system conduct its own study to determine the impact of reduced class size on student achievement.

Dr. Hayman shared his hope that the Board would take a definitive step and make a formal announcement indicating the achievement gap in Baltimore County would be eliminated by a specific date. That announcement would show the public that the Board is serious about the issue. He also suggested the need to have policies that mandate diversity training for every school system employee and that address non-certificated teachers.

Mr. Arnold and Ms. Ettinger summarized for staff the information requested by Board members. Mr. Sasiadek also suggested looking at current successful practices in our schools.

Ms. Ettinger summarized the evening's discussion.

The work session was concluded at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe A. Hairston
Secretary-Treasurer