

## REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF BALTIMORE COUNTY RETREAT

Sunday, June 8, 2003

The Board of Education of Baltimore County, Maryland, met in open session for retreat on Sunday, June 8, 2003, at 10:08 a.m. at the Marshy Point Nature Center, Marshy Point Road, Baltimore, MD. President Donald L. Arnold and the following Board members were in attendance: Ms. Phyllis E. Ettinger, Mr. Thomas G. Grzyski, Mr. John A. Hayden, III, Mr. Michael P. Kennedy, and Mr. James R. Sasiadek. In addition, Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Douglas Neilson, Chief Communications Officer; Ms. Denise Zepp, Administrative Assistant to the Board, and Mr. Jonathan Rockoff, a reporter from The Sun, were present.

Mr. Arnold introduced the morning's presentation on "Building Strong Leadership Teams" to be led by Ms. Kitty Blumsack, Director of Board Development, Maryland Association of Boards of Education.

Through a Power Point™ presentation, Ms. Blumsack reviewed the topics to be covered by the presentation. She started by discussing the various ways information is retained—visual, lecture, demonstration, reading, discussion group, and hands on.

Ms. Carol Saffran-Brinks, Assistant County Attorney, and Board member James Walker entered the room at 10: 20 a.m.

Board members were asked to list their expectations. They included:

- Defining the team,
- How to incorporate new board member(s) into team most effectively,
- Demonstrate how the Board can work together and adjust to new demands,
- Reinforce the Board's own progress,
- Working smarter (graduations, group meetings, etc.), and
- Sharing information with other Board members.

In discussing "Dimensions of Success," Board members were shown a triangle. Each point of the triangle had an area important to success—process, results, and relationships. Ms. Blumsack noted that most people possess strengths in two of the three areas. Board members were paired up and discussed their individual strengths and reported back to the group on their findings.

An effective team was defined and characteristics of high performing teams were reviewed by Ms. Blumsack. Once again, Board members paired up and rated the group in each of the areas.

Ms. Blumsack reviewed the “Stages of Team Development – Forming Characteristics” as well as “Leader Behaviors.” Ms. Ettinger stated that some people are appointed to the Board with knowledge of how the board works. Others come with little or no knowledge or come with misinformation. Mr. Sasiadek commended Mr. Hayden for his role in assisting student members by being seated next to them at public meetings and providing guidance.

The next stage of team building, “storming,” was reviewed by Ms. Blumsack. The storming leader behaviors were also reviewed.

At 11:33 a.m., Mr. Arnold called for a ten-minute break.

The presentation by Ms. Blumsack resumed at 11:42 a.m. with a discussion of “norming” characteristics, “norming” leader behaviors, “performing” and “mourning” characteristics, and leader behaviors.

Board members were shown “Three Realities” that every board member needs to recognize and acknowledge—serving as a member of a team, not having the individual authority to fix problems, and success as a board member being tied to the success of the board.

The presentation continued with board and superintendent relationships and roles and relationships.

Mr. Arnold announced a brief break at 12:10 p.m.

At 12:17 p.m., Board members discussed, in pairs, whether or not they were in agreement with the questions listed under “Roles and Responsibilities.” The questions dealt with being in agreement on board and superintendent roles and responsibilities and on whether the board regularly reviewed how the board/superintendent team works together.

Mr. Grzynski noted an orientation for new board members shortly after their appointment would be most helpful. His orientation took place approximately six months after his appointment. Ms. Ettinger suggested orienting the public on the roles and responsibilities of a board member. Currently, there is no process for board member appointment. She mentioned the possibility of an information night so the public’s questions can be answered and so they know what is expected of a new board member. Mr. Arnold noted the area advisory council’s interest in setting up a process for board member nominees.

Ms. Blumsack’s presentation continued with an explanation of “Board Culture” and understanding what it is. She asked if the Board had “norms” in areas like participation, listening, asking questions, time, and decision-making during meetings and work sessions. Mr. Arnold noted the three readings for policy change, stating that it can be extended or shortened. Ms. Ettinger noted the Board’s orderly discussions in part due to the Board president keeping a list of those members who wish to speak.

Ms. Blumsack urged the Board to write down its “norms,” suggesting it as a way to review the group’s progress and to reinforce what’s in existence. Mr. Arnold asked Ms. Ettinger to chair a group to develop a document listing the Board’s norms. Mr. Sasiadek, Mr. Walker, and Mr. Arnold will also serve with Ms. Ettinger. Board members were encouraged to submit ideas to Mr. Arnold or Ms. Ettinger.

Board members completed a written self-evaluation on “School Board Communications.” Mr. Arnold noted communications could be better in the area of timing of some of the larger written reports that are sent to the Board prior to a meeting. He stated that sometimes there are only a few days to read and digest a large document prior to a meeting. Mr. Grzynski stated that if the Board had more time to review large reports, members could formulate and submit questions to staff prior to the presentation at the public meeting.

Ms. Murray entered the room at 1:00 p.m.

Dr. Hairston noted that the problem is one of internal structure and can be resolved. Ms. Ettinger commented that a more quality discussion and decision-making can occur if there is time to digest complex materials.

Ms. Blumsack referenced documents from another county with regard to responding to individual board member requests and guidelines for board/staff communications.

Ms. Blumsack suggested the Board establish its own vision statement and goals, separate from those of the school system.

### EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Mr. Hayden provided a brief history of the Education Foundation. He noted that at the time of its establishment in 1992, the Superintendent wanted the Board to have complete control of the organization; therefore, the Board of Education is the only member. The Board can make assignments to the Foundation’s Board of Directors. Problems surfaced in the Foundation’s ability to raise funds, as some corporate organizations did not want to donate to government organizations, noting the Board’s close ties. Mr. Hayden referred to the Anne Arundel and Montgomery County Public Schools’ models of similar foundations, where members of the Board are “stockholders.” These models are more common in the way they are set up, creating a level of independence. Mr. Hayden noted the Baltimore County Public Schools’ Education Foundation has the potential for growth and to raise more funds.

Ms. Ettinger raised concerns about solicitation of funds through school system employees, its appropriateness, the potential for large amounts of money coming through the Foundation’s board, and the Board of Education having little information on the decision-making. She also expressed concern about the Foundation Board acting without knowledge or authority of the Board of Education. Mr. Hayden responded that he had never seen that happen, but acknowledged that it could. School requests would be coordinated with school system staff.

Mr. Walker clarified with Mr. Hayden his request that if the Board of Education severed its relationship with the Education Foundation, donations would increase because donors would feel the Foundation was not subordinate to the Board.

Ms. Ettinger again noted her discomfort with the large amounts of money from corporate donors and the impact on individual schools or programs that are under the purview of the Board and Superintendent. Mr. Hayden noted the projects/programs requested by schools are not funded by the school system's budget.

Mr. Grzyski left the room at 1:40 p.m.

Mr. Sasiadek inquired if the Foundation could be restructured to include two or three Board members on the permanent Board of Directors. These people would be selected by the Board on a semi-annual basis. Mr. Kennedy asked the Superintendent his position on this plan, to which Dr. Hairston voiced his total agreement. Mr. Kennedy indicated he would feel more comfortable with the Board severing its ties with the Foundation if a couple of Board members were members of the Foundation's Board of Directors.

Mr. Hayden indicated this proposal would be a fundamental change to the Foundation's Articles of Corporation and suggested the current Board of Directors would not oppose the change. It was agreed that Mr. Hayden will make a brief presentation to the Board and public at the June 10<sup>th</sup> meeting about the proposed change with a Board vote to be taken on July 8<sup>th</sup>.

The retreat was concluded at 1:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Joe A. Hairston  
Secretary-Treasurer