

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON CHARTER SCHOOLS
AND WORK SESSION ON THE
MARYLAND STATE ASSESSMENT (MSA) REPORT

Tuesday, October 14, 2003
Greenwood

The Board of Education of Baltimore County, Maryland met in open session at Greenwood. President Mr. James R. Sasiadek called the work session to order at 7:01 p.m. In addition to President Sasiadek, the following Board members were present: Mr. Donald Arnold, Ms. Francesca Cirincione, Ms. Phyllis E. Ettinger, Mr. John A. Hayden, III, Mr. Michael P. Kennedy, Ms. Joy Shillman and Mr. James E. Walker. In addition, representing Dr. Hairston was Ms. Christine Johns, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, staff members; as well as the media were present.

Mr. Sasiadek noted that one individual, Ms. Judy Miller, representing the League of Women Voters of Baltimore County, signed up to speak this evening on public charter schools.

Ms. Miller gave a brief overview of the organization. She stated the association developed a list of criteria they felt would be essential in charter schools. They are:

1. Public charter schools must be non-dictarian, non-religious, non-profit and non-home base.
2. Applications can be summated by a variety of groups.
3. Local Boards of Education will determine which groups or organizations will be granted contracts
4. No waivers may be granted governing fiscal accountability nor as specified by federal regulations, civil rights or safety standards
5. Quarterly financial reports should be made to the local school Board
6. Academic standards, including testing required by other public school students, must be met
7. Admission must be non-discriminatory
8. Must be funded at the same per pupil level as students in other public schools

Ms. Miller requested this criteria be considered for the public charter school policy.

At 7:06 p.m. Mr. Sasiadek moved to the work session to discuss the Maryland State Assessment (MSA) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report.

Ms. Johns, on behalf of Dr. Hairston, noted the purpose for this evening was to provide the Board of Education an understanding of the MSA as it relates to the AYP. Ms. Johns introduce Dr. Jerry Dalton, Director, Accountability, Research and Testing. Ms. Johns remarked that Dr. Hairston was at New Town High School with Dr. Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, and Senator Hollinger.

Mr. Sasiadek commented that some Board members were attending the Southeast Advisory Council pre-budget hearing at Sollers Point Technical High School this evening.

Through a PowerPoint™ presentation, Dr. Dalton provided a summary of the MSA and AYP results. He summarized that the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) law was enacted by Congress on January 8, 2002 and defines success in terms of the individual child. He also noted that NCLB requires schools to close the achievement gap in ethnic/racial minorities and other subgroups.

Dr. Dalton reviewed the four cornerstones or principles of NCLB:

- Strong accountability for results
- Local control and flexibility for states
- Expanded parental choice for children from disadvantage backgrounds
- Effective and successful programs that focus on teaching methods that work

Dr. Dalton commented on the basic principles of accountability required by NCLB, which include:

- All schools are held accountable
- All schools are measured by the same criteria
- All students are evaluated
- All states must report results of school system performance
- Subgroup accountability
- AYP is based primarily on academic measures
- Separate decision for reading and math
- Participation rate: 95%

Dr. Dalton noted that the common goal of all state plans was 100% proficiency of students in reading and mathematics by 2014. He reviewed Maryland's starting points for AYP showing the reading and mathematics points. Dr. Dalton remarked that MSA is a statewide test given each year in reading and math. In 2003-2004 school year, the MSA will be given in reading to grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 and math to be given in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and Geometry.

Next, Dr. Dalton looked at Baltimore County's MSA 2002-2003 results. He noted that one elementary school, two middle schools, and one high school did not make AYP for all students. Dr. Dalton remarked that most of Baltimore County schools are above proficiency standards.

Mr. Hayden asked for an explanation of the concept of the AYP scoring. Dr. Dalton responded there is a data point that marks all students for reading and all students for math. If a student fails either one of those, AYP is not met.

Dr. Dalton reviewed each individual chart for reading and mathematics by grades regarding proficiency and advancement. He noted that Baltimore County is well above the starting point of 40% proficient and exceeded the state average for both reading and mathematics. He also presented the MSDE reading and math benchmarks for 2003-2005 by grades. Dr. Dalton noted the Baltimore County school system is ahead of the 2005 intermediate goals.

Next, Dr. Dalton reviewed the number of schools not meeting AYP by subgroup. He commented the charts reflect a need to focus our energies on special education. Dr. Dalton also noted that Baltimore County's special education performance is consistent compared to the State's special education performance.

Finally, Dr. Dalton reviewed racial/ethnic subgroups in reading for grades 3, 5, 8 and 10 and for mathematics grades 3, 5, and 8. He noted the charts show a gap in achievements within various subgroups.

For the purpose of our own analysis, Ms. Ettinger asked if there was a breakdown in the special education subgroup by disability. Dr. Dalton responded the data is not currently available, however, he was confident he could provide the data.

Ms. Ettinger commented the system could do a disservice to staff and students by combining special education and disabilities into one subgroup. It would be helpful to the school system to see if a pattern exists between special education and disability. Dr. Dalton was confident he could provide the data breakdown. Ms. Ettinger noted that as school systems move forward to implement the law, concerns need to be substantiated and data available to be ahead of the game.

Mr. Hayden inquired as to whether students in special education and racial/ethnic groups were counted twice. He expressed concern of over-identifying students (e.g., special education and African American students).

Mr. Arnold inquired about the measurement of adequate yearly progress on special education students. Mr. Ronald Boone responded that the state is working on an alternative assessment. He commented additional information would be provided as it becomes available.

Mr. Arnold asked what provisions are there for students without disabilities but who are not good test takers. Mr. Boone responded that IEPs have certain directions for test taking and that under the NCLB law, there is a 1% waiver for severely handicapped children. Mr. Arnold asked if the federal or state governments were looking into this issue. Mr. Boone responded the U.S. Department of Education is looking at expanding the waiver, but at best it may go to 1-1/2%

Ms. Ettinger asked where special advocacy groups stand with the issue of special education. Mr. Boone stated he would look into the issue and provide information to Ms. Ettinger.

Ms. Sasiadek commented it is the norm to count an individual child frequently in the 37 categories. Mr. Boone stated that eight schools did not meet AYP in other areas as well as special education. He remarked that the system might want to focus on the eight schools that did not meet AYP. Mr. Boone also reviewed the data for elementary, middle, and high schools for not meeting AYP within the special education subgroup. Mr. Boone suggested the system look at teacher certification data and cluster school patterns, involving area offices, to get to the root cause of the problem.

Mr. Kennedy commented receiving calls from parents since the test scores have been published. Mr. Boone noted it is the school system's responsibility that every student meets AYP.

Ms. Ettinger remarked that the data shows what parents have been expressing over the years, especially with IEP youngsters. Communities could become concerned should their school be marked as a failing school.

Mr. Sasiadek expressed concern over identifying a specific child or children. He commented with the State number being a low number of five and the possibility of students being members of multiple groups, there is a risk of easily identifying a particular child.

Mr. Arnold expressed concern of scores dropping if students from a low-performing school move (i.e., special transfers) to a high performing school. Mr. Arnold reemphasized the need to provide the best opportunity for all children to succeed. Dr. Dalton noted that under the law we must educate all children, and we need to communicate this message to parents and communities. Dr. Dalton noted that staff should have data on special transfer students.

Ms. Ettinger commented the best way to capture concerns is to demonstrate that students who are somewhat disadvantage could perform very well. Ms. Ettinger recommended the system publish the information presented to communicate our commitment to the children.

Ms. Johns thanked Dr. Dalton and staff for their support this evening.

The work session was concluded at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe A. Hairston
Secretary-Treasurer