

APPROVED REPORT

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION

Tuesday, March 20, 2007
Greenwood

The Board of Education of Baltimore County, Maryland, met in open session at 7:07 p.m. at Greenwood. President Donald L. Arnold and the following Board members were present: Ms. Frances A. S. Harris, Mr. John Hayden, III, Mr. Rodger C. Janssen, Ms. Ramona N. Johnson, Ms. JoAnn C. Murphy, Ms. Mary-Margaret O'Hare, Mr. H. Edward Parker, Jr., Ms. Joy Shillman and Mr. Peter Bacon. In addition, Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent of Schools, and staff members, as well as the media were present.

Mr. Arnold opened the meeting with a welcome and reviewed the agenda. He stated that the purpose of the work session is for the Board to understand in detail the aspects of the audit and look at ways to implement the proposed recommendations. Mr. Arnold noted that the next work session is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 1, 2007.

ENROLLMENT AND CAPACITY ANALYSIS

Mr. Don Dent, Executive Director of Planning and Support Operations, shared with Board members enrollment and data capacity of Rodgers Forge and Stoneleigh communities. Mr. Dent also shared the number of presentations that the Office of Strategic Planning has provided to elected officials, councilmen, and various community leaders. Presentations vary from enrollment and boundary issues to consideration of turning Campfield Early Childhood Center into a comprehensive elementary school.

Ms. Harris asked which school is the highest percentage over capacity. Mr. Dent responded that the number one overcrowded school was Deep Creek Elementary School followed by Rodgers Forge and Dogwood Elementary Schools, respectively.

Mr. Parker stated that the Board should consider looking into redistricting the entire county school system. When considering redistricting, Mr. Parker commented on the need to look at removing portable classrooms for safety reasons.

Mr. Hayden echoed Mr. Parker's remarks. However, it is an expensive, time-consuming process, multi-year process. With additional space at Dumbarton Middle School, Mr. Hayden asked the Superintendent to consider the practicality of having pre-kindergarten or other classes from Rodgers Forge Elementary scheduled into Dumbarton Middle School.

CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT AUDIT RESULTS

Dr. Hairston reviewed with Board members, in detail, the findings and recommendations from the curriculum management audit. He stated that necessary adjustments need to be made in order for the school system to move forward and strengthen its weaknesses.

Recommendations from the audit were as follows:

1. Hire a Chief Academic Office (CAO), who reports directly to the Superintendent; bring curriculum development, professional development, and assessment into alignment.
2. Develop and implement comprehensive professional development policies, rules, and plans:
 - Create central Professional Development focus
 - Create Professional Development system plan
 - Evaluate Professional Development effectiveness
3. Develop and implement a curriculum management plan, promote alignment and rigor, consistent format, and guides for non-core areas.
4. Review, revise, adopt, and implement updated Board policies.
5. Develop and implement a comprehensive assessment plan and a system which provides data for use in instructional decision making.
6. Require systematic evaluation of all district programs via internal/external reviews linked to student achievement.
7. Design and implement a data management plan in order to maintain accurate, useful, and easily accessible data to guide staff in instructional decision-making, include automatic error checking and data sampling, and maintain a single centralized database to ensure consistent and accessible reports.
8. Develop and implement a five-year plan that aligns district resources to curricular goals and provides cost-benefit analyses.
9. Improve; ensure equal access for students to all comparable programs, services, and opportunities.
10. Act immediately to eliminate substandard school environments; consider outsourcing maintenance needs to reduce backlog.
11. Initiate and implement needed policy updates and necessary improvements for special programs.

Mr. Hayden asked if the job description provided to the public in an effort to hire for the Associate Superintendent position, is the same or similar to the Chief Academic Officer. Dr. Hairston responded that the Associate Superintendent job description had a much broader responsibility; however, the job description is relative to the position.

Mr. Parker stated that training needs to be provided for new teachers as well as current teachers. Ms. O'Hare commented on involving teachers in a focus group; key element is team effort.

Dr. Hairston made the following comments:

- With stronger Board policies in place, BCPS could develop a more effective budget and “weed out” ineffectiveness and redirect resources where appropriate
- Proposed FY 2008 operating budget has a request for a “Policy Analyst”
- Proposed FY 2008 operating budget has three positions for Researchers to help generate useful data
- Need to review our programs (i.e. magnet, gifted and talented) and define or redefine the direction going forward.

Ms. O’Hare stated that the reason teachers may feel overwhelmed is that change and implementation are not well paced.

On page 368, item G.10.2 of the full audit report, the recommendation states for the Board to “direct the Superintendent to present to the Board—within thirty days—a plan identifying school safety issues and explaining how and when they will be eliminated.” Mr. Hayden encouraged the Board and Superintendent to address this issue immediately.

Mr. Janssen expressed concern regarding the tracking of maintenance work orders when a new maintenance work order tracking program was up and running. Mr. Janssen also stated that our facilities could not get to the point where it could effectively put a tool in place because the school system cannot catch up. Dr. Hairston stated he is aware of the maintenance tracking program and noted the sheer volume of work orders. Volume of work orders will always put our Department of Physical Facilities in catch-up mode.

Ms. Shillman stated that the school system does have a maintenance tracking system that is now working, and BCPS does outsource some of the work.

Ms. Harris suggested the school system consider outside clubs or organizations to “adopt” a school in their area as an alternative method to addressing the maintenance issues. Ms. Johnson also supports looking at other avenues, internally or externally, to address this issue.

Mr. Arnold expressed concerns about the effectiveness of various programs in place. An evaluation of curriculum programs needs to occur to avoid duplication and ensure effectiveness. Mr. Hayden stated that while evaluating programs is important, and that some magnet programs may need to be enhanced, he will always be a strong defender of the concept of the magnet program.

Ms. Harris suggested that the Board organize the recommendations to deal with specific items. Dr. Hairston stated that everything begins with Board policy.

Ms. Murphy and Ms. O’Hare commented that the school system needs to focus on curriculum so that teachers can broaden delivery of the curriculum. Ms. Shillman expressed concern that the gifted and talented curriculum guides were the oldest of the guides.

In response to a question about the Chief Academic Officer (CAO), Board members directed the Superintendent to add to the March 27, 2007 Board agenda the CAO position and Curriculum and Instruction organizational chart. Mr. Parker stated that there needs to be a policy reflecting the duties and responsibilities of the CAO.

Mr. Janssen commented that based on the recommendations; there is a ratio of 10 to 1 for funding versus policy. He requested the Superintendent provide a fiscal note to the Board for the implementation costs associated with the audit's recommendations.

Mr. Bacon stated that if the school system does not evaluate and provide a different platform of professional development and curriculum, the results will be the same.

With regards to curriculum, Mr. Janssen stated that many of the school system's courses are not as vigorous and challenging for students. The fact remains that BCPS has programs with not enough students to fill those programs. These are probably the programs the auditors suggested to eliminate.

Ms. Johnson suggested that the Board put together an action plan that would provide the Superintendent with direction on how to address the recommendations. Mr. Arnold stated that the Superintendent needs to come back to the Board with his recommendations so that the Board can prioritize and move forward.

Ms. Murphy recommended that Board members review recommendation #2 in preparation for the next work session.

Dr. Hairston clarified for Board members that the recommendations are ranked with the least cost bringing the greatest yield immediately.

Mr. Arnold asked Board members to review recommendation #2 and submit any comments to Ms. Stiffler. Ms. Stiffler would collect the data and disseminate to Board members prior to the next work session.

The work session concluded at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe A. Hairston
Secretary-Treasurer