

APPROVED REPORT

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION

Tuesday, May 15, 2007
Greenwood

The Board of Education of Baltimore County, Maryland, met in open session at 7:00 p.m. at Greenwood. President Donald L. Arnold and the following Board members were present: Mr. John A. 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 by stating that the work session would permit the public to witness the work of the Board.

Mr. Arnold asked Board members to submit questions/points for Recommendation Number 4 to Ms. Stiffler for the next work session scheduled for June 19, 2007.

BRAC REPORT

Dr. Hairston shared with Board members information related to BRAC and the necessity to enhance academia to meet future work force needs.

REVIEW OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATION #3

Dr. Sonia Diaz, Chief Academic Officer, and Ms. Kathleen McMahon, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Humanities, and Dr. Hays B. Lantz, Assistant Superintendent, STEM, responded to questions submitted by Board members regarding the PDK Curriculum Audit Recommendation Number 3.

1. Teams are working to develop a consistent curriculum guide template that is representative of exemplars reviewed (e.g. Montgomery County).
2. The Curriculum Development Handbook does not cover the scope and elements of effective curriculum guides.
3. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction has eliminated courses that generated no student interest. As part of the work with the curriculum management plan, courses will be reviewed to ensure rigor and alignment to graduation requirements. Part of this work will include developing a list of priorities with respect to courses that will remain in the course guide to meet the needs of the curriculum audit recommendations.

4. A digital curriculum portal with links to current digital curriculum is now accessible at the BCPS Intranet Curriculum and Instruction website: http://intranet.bcps.org/offices/curriculum_and_instruction. In addition, Curriculum and Instruction offices are archiving current electronic curriculum guides to the network server as the first step in delivery of curriculum guides in digital format.
5. When possible, scoring assessments will be conducted through scanners to expedite reliable results, to provide a consistent format for feedback, and to facilitate the data analysis.

Dr. Diaz shared the “draft” Curriculum Management Plan (CMP) Roadmap with Board members, which provides direction for the curriculum planning process and designates the scope and cycle for curriculum review.

Mr. Hayden asked for an example of some of the courses to be eliminated from the curriculum. Dr. Lantz responded horticulture courses, courses not related to the HSA, and courses that students did not sign up for.

Ms. O’Hare asked about the timeline. Ms. McMahon responded that a final timeline would be presented to the Board at its regularly scheduled meeting in June.

Staff members reviewed the “draft” CMP, which is divided into three sections and the characteristics of a comprehensive CMP:

- CMP Narratives
- CMP Roadmap Templates
- References

Each section will address vision; curriculum development; curriculum implementation and support; and assessment, monitoring, and evaluation.

Ms. Sonja Karwacki, Assistant to the Area Assistant Superintendent, Southeast Area, reviewed the monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of the CMP. She noted it is important for the system to focus on rigorous written, taught, and test curriculum.

Mr. Arnold asked about the plan to have staff embrace the technology piece of the plan. Ms. Karwacki responded that the curriculum office would work with the Office of Professional Development to support the new curriculum development process.

Mr. Hayden stated that a Board policy needs to be developed that addresses a curriculum management plan. Mr. Hayden encourages the Board and staff to work towards the policy that should be appropriate for this recommendation.

Dr. Hayman stated that while rigor is important, relevancy is a critical issue. The school system needs to be sure that what is being taught, tested and evaluated is relevant.

Board members Hayman and Shillman requested that information for the work sessions be provided to Board members prior to the session.

Mr. Hayden asked whether BCPS has reviewed other curriculum management plans in Maryland, with Ms. Karwacki responding in the affirmative.

Ms. O'Hare asked if there is currently a Board policy on curriculum management. Ms. Karwacki responded yes; however, the policy is vague and outdated.

Dr. Hayman noted that there are some "giants" in the curriculum field that could help BCPS in development a constant model for curriculum.

Ms. Karwacki reviewed the instructional philosophy: curriculum (written), instructional (taught), and assessment (tested) management principals.

Mr. Parker commented that the words "especially in the four core content areas" are used throughout the plan. Curriculum needs to be inclusive and not separate. Mr. Parker recommended using the word "curriculum."

Ms. McMahon summarized the development of the CMP roadmap and the short- and long-term implementation timelines. Dr. Lantz reviewed the curriculum framework and design and the process for developing and assessing the curriculum guide.

Dr. Hayman recommended changing "framework" to "priority learning framework." He also suggested adding community family reinforcement in the guide.

Ms. Verletta White, Coordinator, Department of Professional Development, and Mr. Rob Tomback, Principal, Catonsville High School, reviewed the curriculum implementation and support strategies. A professional development coordinating committee will be formed and framework finalized in response to the results of the PDK audit.

Ms. Murphy recommended that Human Resources be an active participant in these committees since they are hiring people that may need professional training.

Ms. Shillman asked for clarification of "adult learners." Ms. White responded this group will consist of parents, instructional assistants, and resource teachers.

Mr. Hayden commented that a finding in the PDK audit report was evaluation of staff and hopes that among the other professional development activities that administrators are evaluating staff and developing professional development plans.

Ms. O'Hare recommended that the Board see an update on the progress of the audit recommendations throughout the year.

Dr. Hayman expressed his delight in a professional development coordinating committee; however, he believes it could be unmanageable due to the amount of individuals on the

committee. Dr. Hayman stated that professional development is a key piece in turning the school system around.

Dr. Hairston noted that principals will receive their priorities for the next school year at the principals' academy to be held on June 25.

Ms. Mandi Dietrich, Director, Special Projects, provided highlights of the "draft" curriculum management plan roadmap, components of a comprehensive assessment plan, and expectations for curriculum review and evaluation.

Ms. Della Curtis, Coordinator, Library Information Services, reviewed the Curriculum Management Portal. Ms. Curtis welcomed Board members to send book suggestions to her so that the information can be added to the portal in hopes to increase professional development needs.

Mr. Hayden asked if any of the plans on the portal are part of the follow-up from a PDK audit, focusing on the same areas, with Ms. Curtis responding the Philadelphia Audit of 2006.

Ms. Kara Calder, Chief Communications Officer, summarized the "draft" communications strategies and action plans as it relates to the PDK audit. Ms. Calder stated that the timeline for a successful implementation of the communications plan will be integrated into the curriculum management plan roadmap.

Ms. O'Hare stated that the best opportunity to communicate with parents is back-to-school night. She suggested that principals direct that message to the parents.

Ms. Johnson asked what communication strategies the system is currently using. Ms. Calder responded that some key communicators are "good news ambassadors" and continue to improve support for community stakeholder groups.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Mr. Arnold introduced Mr. David Nevins, Nevins & Associates, who shared with Board members ideas on how to handle questions from the media and use tools from other school systems on how to answer those questions.

Mr. Nevins stated that the Board is the number one ambassador for the school system. When dealing with the media, the Board wants to share the good news that is occurring throughout the system. School systems would be more successful if a Board speaks positively and in unison. Board members need to talk about the successes of the system. Some items Mr. Nevins shared with Board members are:

- BCPS has one of the top graduation rates in the United States.
- The graduation rate for African-Americans is equal to white students.
- MSA scores have risen over the last two years.

Mr. Janssen exited the room at 9:29 p.m.

Mr. Hayden asked how does one act as an ambassador while pointing out significant issues that need to be addressed. Mr. Nevins responded that the Board does not have all the same advantages as a private corporation. The public would be impressed with the dedication and debate that is taking place as long as everything is discussed in a positive manner.

Mr. Nevins provided some suggested interview techniques for Board members:

- Listen carefully- what you say is only half the battle
- Be totally and completely honest
- If you were not comfortable with the topic, would like you to call the board president or superintendent.
- Make sure you deliver key message points – when possible, refer the question to staff that has the information.
- Occasionally, you may misspeak, feel free to go back and correct yourself (honesty and openness).
- Turn negatives into positives.
- Rather than “no comment” refer it to the superintendent, board president, or staff member that could correctly answer the question.
- Would not recommend speaking “off the record.”

Mr. Nevins stated that he would provide additional information to Board members if they so desire.

BOARD’S PRIORITY GOALS

Communication and Marketing

Ms. Calder provided highlights to Board members in where the school system is in terms of advancing communications and marketing to parents, communities, and the Board.

Ms. O’Hare would like to see *ConnectEd* used for positive communication to parents. She also suggested that a report to the Board on usage of *ConnectEd* would be helpful.

The work session concluded at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe A. Hairston
Secretary-Treasurer