

## **APPROVED REPORT**

### **REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION**

Tuesday, December 11, 2007  
Greenwood

The Board of Education of Baltimore County, Maryland, met in open session at 4:42 p.m. at Greenwood. President JoAnn C. Murphy and the following Board members were present: Ms. Frances A. S. Harris, Mr. John A. Hayden, III, Mr. Rodger C. Janssen, Ms. Ramona N. Johnson, Mr. Joseph J. Pallozzi, Mr. H. Edward Parker, Jr., and Ms. Joy Shillman. In addition, Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent of Schools, and staff members were present.

The Board entertained oral argument in Hearing Examiner's Case #08-23. The matter was heard in closed session.

In addition to the above listed Board members, the following persons were present for oral argument: the Appellant; J. Robert Haines, Esquire, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Sonia Diaz, Chief Academic Officer; Ms. Rita Fromm, Chief of Staff; Mr. Carl Love, Homeless/Title I Liaison; Ms. Sherri Merrifield, Pupil Personnel Worker; Anjanette Dixon, Esquire, Staff Attorney; Margaret-Ann F. Howie, Esquire, General Counsel; P. Tyson Bennett, Esquire, Legal Counsel to the Board of Education; and Ms. Brenda Stiffler, Administrative Assistant to the Board of Education.

The proceedings of the hearing were recorded by a court reporter.

Board members deliberated on the case.

The hearing was concluded at 5:17 p.m.

At 5:17 p.m., Mr. Hayden moved the Board adjourn for a brief dinner recess. The motion was seconded by Ms. Harris and approved by the Board.

### OPEN SESSION MINUTES

The Board of Education of Baltimore County, Maryland, reconvened in open session at 6:57 p.m. at Greenwood. President JoAnn C. Murphy and the following Board members were present: Ms. Donna Flynn, Ms. Frances A. S. Harris, Mr. Earnest E. Hines, Mr. Rodger C. Janssen, Ms. Ramona N. Johnson, Ms. Mary-Margaret O'Hare, Mr. Joseph J. Pallozzi, Mr. H. Edward Parker, Jr., Ms. Joy Shillman, and Miss Audrey Dittman. In addition, Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent of Schools, and staff members were present.

Ms. Murphy opened the meeting by reviewing the agenda for tonight's work session. She stated that the purpose of the work session is for the Board to have a dialogue on governance issues.

Dr. Hairston stated that a Board member requested resource allocation information. Dr. Hairston provided the Board had the information available in a binder for the Board's review. Ms. Murphy stated that if a Board member would like a copy of a particular section within this binder to flag the individual documents and copies would be made available.

## HANDS-ON DEMONSTRATIONS

### **Curriculum Alignment**

Dr. Sonia Diaz, Chief Academic Officer, introduced Ms. Mandi Dietrich, Director of Special Programs, who provided an overview of assessTrax. The web-based software platform:

- Houses short-cycle and benchmark assessments.
- Makes data immediately available on line, following scanning of assessment sheets.
- Data is reviewed to monitor ongoing implementation plans.
- Provides reports by student information (class, grade, school).
- Will be phased-in in three years; BCPS is currently in year two of the implementation plan.
- Continuous training to ensure assessments are in place at schools and that the program is effective.
- Currently houses only those short-cycle assessments for courses that have written approved curriculum and meets Maryland State Assessment (MSA) or high school assessments (HSAs). (Staff members are working to narrow the number of courses to 39).
- Utilizes data to ensure the quality of the items in assessTrax.

Ms. O'Hare asked what proof is available to ensure that the tests in assessTrax are aligned with the voluntary state curriculum (VSC). Dr. Diaz responded that, for the most part, there is an alignment, which will be shown through tonight's demonstration. Ms. O'Hare asked if there is data that shows the reliability of the items that students are being tested on. Dr. Diaz responded that the school system is working on this issue.

Board member, Mr. John Hayden, III, entered the room at 7:10 p.m.

Ms. O'Hare expressed concern that biology test scores are not improving. Dr. Diaz stated that staff is reviewing the information and is re-evaluating/reassessing usefulness of the short-cycle and benchmark assessments. Ms. Dietrich reiterated that assessTrax is half-way through the implementation process and not all short-cycle and benchmark assessments are in all schools.

Mr. Hayden asked whether the scanners will be available in schools when assessTrax is fully implemented. Dr. Diaz responded that the school system has identified additional funds so that extra scanners can be purchased.

Mr. Parker asked how training is scheduled. Ms. Dietrich responded that initial training was mandatory. Ms. Linda Meyer, Lead Technology Trainer, stated that five staff members from secondary schools were trained and a reading specialist from the elementary schools.

Ms. Johnson asked which middle and high schools were using assessTrax. Ms. Dietrich responded all middle and high schools are using assessTrax, while all elementary schools will employ the software beginning with the 2008-2009 school year.

Ms. O'Hare asked whether there is flexibility in the testing schedule to accommodate differentiated instruction. Ms. Dietrich responded that short-cycle and benchmark assessments are scheduled in a specific time frame, which allows teachers to have the flexibility to administer those tests.

Mr. Parker asked who has responsibility for training new teachers coming into the system. Dr. Diaz responded that the Office of Professional Development has a year-long plan for teacher orientation; content areas will also play a key role in supporting teachers; and school improvement plans will have specific site-based professional development for teacher training.

Mr. George Newberry, Director of Science, PreK-12, distributed information specific to biology and tonight's demonstration:

- Curriculum Alignment (VSC-CLG/AIM/assessTrax)
- Sample "Objective Analysis" from assessTrax
- Elementary Report Card Update

Ms. Meyer provided a demonstration of the assessTrax scanning process.

Mr. Dan Oliver, Resource Teacher at Woodlawn Middle School, reviewed with Board members how classroom teachers utilize the data from assessTrax. As an example, Mr. Oliver reviewed the objective analysis report for a selected testing area. Mr. Oliver noted that the objectives identified in assessTrax, which also aligned with the curriculum objectives that are embedded in Articulated Instruction Module (AIM).

Ms. Antoinette Roberson, Science Department Chair at Patapsco High School, reviewed the class results using the assessTrax reporting system. She noted that department chairs can monitor and identify whether students meet the goals and where the classroom instructional modification should occur.

Ms. O'Hare asked whether the data can be used to target teacher professional development with Ms. Roberson responding affirmatively.

Ms. Murphy asked if students are regrouped so that teachers "A" and "B" have students with the same issues. Ms. Roberson responded that there are "built-in" remediation courses in the schedule as well as after-school tutoring.

Mr. Hines asked if trend analysis is reviewed incrementally on student progress. Ms. Roberson responded student progress is reviewed at department work sessions. Mr. Oliver noted that one report available in assessTrax is a selection of “student assessment reports” so that a teacher can view how a student is performing outside of his/her subject area.

Mr. Hayden commented that parents need to be educated on the reporting process so they can work with the students and staff to address achievement gaps. Ms. Dietrich stated that BCPS will be introducing a “friendlier” report to provide parents with the information they need to understand student progress and student supports in gaps in learning.

### **Articulated Instruction Module (AIM)**

Dr. Barbara Dezmon, Assistant Superintendent for Equity and Assurance, briefly reviewed with Board members the development of the AIM tool and provided a demonstration of the product.

- AIM is a summary of the curriculum. AIM provides parents/guardians with information on progress of the student.
- Curriculum information is placed into the AIM tool by the Office of Curriculum and Instruction.
- What goes into AIM is decided by the curriculum department.

Mr. Hayden commented that it appears that the state’s core learning goals have been copied into AIM. Dr. Dezmon stated that AIM is the container. With BCPS placing emphasis on academic rigor, the school system can go beyond the VSC. Mr. Hayden asked if there is sufficient time exists in the current teaching schedule to go beyond the VSC; Dr. Dezmon responded affirmatively.

Ms. Murphy asked who is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of material downloaded into AIM. Dr. Dezmon responded it is the responsibility of the Curriculum and Instruction department.

Ms. Flynn asked about the intended audience for AIM. Dr. Dezmon responded – administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Ms. Flynn suggested to Board members that they review the language in AIM and decide if this is an effective tool for communicating with parents. Dr. Dezmon stated that one goal of the AIM tool was to simplify the language as behavioral. Parents want to know if the student met the requirements. Ms. Flynn asked whether AIM could provide a user-friendly report for parents and serve the needs of teachers. Dr. Dezmon responded the material and wording of the information in AIM is at the discretion of the curriculum and instruction office.

Ms. Johnson asked whether AIM can assist the school system in student achievement. Dr. Dezmon responded a teacher would review the opportunities and equity of access to rigor within the curriculum. This provides a structure in which objectives can be listed to ensure consistency across the county. Ms. Johnson commented that BCPS needs a short-term plan to meet immediate needs. Dr. Dezmon stated that if the instrument is used properly it could help BCPS focus and improve.

Mr. Janssen asked whether the school system currently has the same level of accountability at all schools. Dr. Dezmon responded that by not having a reporting system, such as AIM, that is consistent across schools for all courses BCPS may not have that “window” that would open on to that equity of access through consistent expectations. Mr. Janssen asked whether the PDK audit was the first report that indicated that BCPS curriculum was not aligned. Dr. Dezmon responded that the Superintendent had suspected a lack of alignment before the audit.

Dr. Hairston reminded the Board that the AIM tool will not improve instruction. It is the quality of the information and instruction that will help improve student achievement. AIM will help BCPS review the structure of the curriculum with regards to its alignment.

Ms. Flynn asked if the intention is to require quarterly AIM reports from teachers. Dr. Hairston stated that is not the intent. BCPS wants to put a structure and curriculum in place for staff to respond to the PDK audit.

Ms. Mary Martin, Resource Teacher at Powhatan Elementary School, briefly reviewed the elementary report card, which is incomplete at this time.

Mr. Hayden asked what the fundamental difference is between assessTrax and AIM. Ms. Martin responded that AIM is used to communicate with parents; assessTrax is used more for guiding instruction.

Ms. Rebecca Schene, Webmaster, Office of Information Technology, reviewed the way the information can be articulated from teacher to teacher and year to year.

Mr. Janssen referred to an earlier statement that AIM provides the structure to list activities that would be required systemwide; therefore causing systemwide alignment. Mr. Janssen asked if BCPS currently has the structure or same level of accountability throughout the county. Dr. Dezmon responded that by not having a reporting system that is consistent across schools for all courses, BCPS may not have the “window of opportunity” that would open onto that equity of access.

Mr. Parker stated that he would like the Board to review the information and perhaps request that the Superintendent present to the Board for approval the curriculum for the four core content areas by the end of May 2008.

Ms. Murphy stated that, due to time constraints, the report card presentation would be deferred to a later date.

Ms. O'Hare asked Board members to review Montgomery County Board of Education's Web site with respect to Grades 1 and 2 report card.

Dr. Hairston stated there is a task force in place to review current assessments to ensure that the quality of the assessments is appropriate for the content areas.

PDK GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Ms. Harris reviewed with Board members the status of policies for the 2007-2008 school year. Board members also received the status of policies associated with the PDK audit findings.

The work session concluded at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Joe A. Hairston  
Secretary-Treasurer

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