

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
POLICY COMMITTEE**

May 5, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 p.m. with the following Board members and Board staff present: Pat O'Neill (chair), Shirley Brandman, Suzann King (staff assistant), and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Other staff present: Stephanie Williams, Harriet Potosky, Suzanne Merchlinsky, Robin Confino, Brian Edwards, Sally Davis, Betsy Brown, Marty Creel, Jennifer Lowndes, Lori-Christina Webb, Karen Crawford, Kathy Lazor, Steve Zagami, Aara Davis-Jones, Nancy Erdrich, and Kay Williams.

Guests: Michael Carson and Jo Chang,

Other attendees: Kay Romero, Suzanne Weiss, and Fred Stichnoth.

Committee Minutes

Action: The March 3, 2009, meeting minutes were approved as presented.

Report from AEI Pilot Schools

Central office staff provided background information about two pilot programs that started in 2003 at Burning Tree Elementary School and Georgian Forest Elementary School. In these pilot programs, the normal second grade gifted and talented screening was completed and the data from the screening were used to recommend placement or instruction. However, the final step, assigning a gifted or not-gifted label was not completed. Staff placed high expectations for academic achievement on all students, and the students were given appropriate instruction based upon their classroom performance. Prior to implementing the pilot, school staff enlisted parental support for the concept and professional development was provided to staff regarding how to deliver differentiated instruction.

Representatives from Burning Tree (Mrs. Nancy Erdrich, Principal and Ms. Jo Chang, Parent) and Georgian Forest (Ms. Aara Davis-Jones, Principal and Mr. Michael Carson, Parent) elementary schools reported on the pilot program at their respective schools. Though representing different communities and socio-economic impact, both schools are experiencing success in accelerated reading and math, as well as science enrichment without a label dictating program or commitment of staff. Furthermore, all children are experiencing accelerated instruction, not just those selected as gifted. Plus, there are after school activities for additional enrichment. The parents were very excited about the opportunities provided for their children, and they were eager to participate and volunteer. They also expressed their belief that there is no learning gap if there is rigorous instruction plus equity and opportunity.

Discussion focused on: how the normal second grade screening is completed, but not used for placement or instruction; the regrouping of students for instruction in math and reading; how the grouping is determined by class work; the success achieved by students in the pilot programs at the two schools; the importance of parental support; and the various perspectives regarding the use and non-use of the gifted and talented label.

Central office staff discussed what has been gleaned from the data, the need for consistency of student placement from school to school given the large size of the school system, the importance of professional development to providing differentiated instruction, the necessity of all students having access to advanced instruction, expanding the screening for gifted and talented services, and the need to monitor additional data points.

Evaluation of Policy JPG: *Wellness: Physical and Nutritional Health*

Staff is evaluating Policy JPG to ascertain whether that policy's desired outcome (i.e., having an educational environment that encourages life long healthy behaviors, supports personal well-being and fitness, and promotes academic success) is being achieved. This evaluation of Policy JPG is concurrent with the work of the State's Wellness Policy Workgroup. Staff reported that they were in the process of collecting data via surveys to MCCPTA, SGA, teachers, and principals. MSDE teams have met to develop implementation and monitoring plans to assess each school system's wellness policy. Furthermore, there will be a template to monitor procedures based on the four areas of the law. The State's workgroup will begin with providing a toolkit on wellness to share best practices. Discussion is underway regarding how to disseminate these toolkits to schools.

ACTION: Staff will provide a draft report to the Policy committee in September.

Policy AEB: *Strategic Planning for Continuous Improvement*

On March 10, 2009, the Board of Education voted to postpone final action on Policy AEB, *Strategic Planning for Continuous Improvement* and remanded the policy to the Policy Committee to review various concerns that had been raised during the Board meeting. It was noted that certain language was included in Policy AEB, given that policies Policies CFA, *Site-based Participatory Management*, and DBA, *Budget Preparation and Procedures*, would be rescinded. The Committee discussed proposed language regarding the availability of school improvement plans, MCPS's core values, as well as the process used to review progress on the implementation of priorities, initiatives, and strategies, including those that may have a budgetary impact for the next year.

ACTION: The committee made changes to Policy AEB to address the concerns raised during the March 10, 2009 Board meeting. Further, the committee voted to refer the revised policy to the Board for final action during its May 12, 2009

meeting, as well to recommend the rescission of Policies CFA, *Site-based Participatory Management*, and DBA, *Budget Preparation and Procedures*.

Policy JHF, *Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation*

Staff explained the background and requirements of a recently-enacted Maryland law that requires every school system to have a bullying policy. MSDE has sent a model policy to each school system in Maryland requesting that they draft a bullying policy and submit it to MSDE by July 1. (MCPS staff has spoken with MSDE which will be flexible on the deadline provided a draft policy is presented to the Policy Committee by July 1st.) The MCPS work group that developed the policy was very motivated, and the regulation is in the final stages. In reviewing the draft policy, committee discussion focused on the importance of addressing: victim issues, issues stemming from witnessing a bullying incident, collaboration with mental health agencies, and electronic bullying. Staff noted that this is an early draft of the policy; members of the MCPS workgroup are discussing the draft with their constituencies, will hold a meeting to discuss any comments, and provide a revised draft to the Policy Committee.

ACTION: A revised draft of the policy and regulation will be reviewed by the committee in July.

Update on Policy JNA, *Curricular Expenses for Students*

The committee received a report from staff about the guidelines that are being developed regarding curricular fees. Staff reported that they have received feedback from administrators and fiscal assistants. Staff has prepared memoranda to elementary, middle, and high school principals outlining implementation of the guidelines. Staff is in the process of developing model parent letters and final guidelines. They have met with business managers, and there will be voluntary training for principals. Also, there will be a one-page/palm card to remind school staff about curricular fees. The Office of School Performance is working with schools on approving fees. At the end of the first marking period, data will be available concerning the number the fees, appeals, and waivers.

A question arose concerning summer reading that may require students to purchase books. Staff replied that books will be annotated on a separate paper unless the school provides the book.

The committee was concerned that the funds allocated by the school system to address the change in curricular fees would not be enough to provide the same level of materials for students. They wanted staff to monitor closely the impact on students and the tools developed to ameliorate fiscal constraints. Staff explained that forms will be developed and data collected to evaluate the guidelines.

All agreed that this is a learning year and modifications will be made as soon as possible when issues arise.

ACTION: Staff will provide an update on curricular fees during the July committee meeting.

Committee Work Plan

The committee decided that it would review items generated by the policy audits, as well as monitor certain policies, such as Policy JNA. Given that the full Board reviews the implementation of policies on middle school reform and grading and reporting, those items will be removed from the committee's work plan.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next committee meeting is scheduled for July 21, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 120.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.