

Communications and Public Engagement Committee Meeting

November 2, 2009

10:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. with the following committee members and Board staff present: Dr. Judy Docca (chair), Mr. Michael Durso (member), Mrs. Patricia O'Neill (member), Ms. Shirley Brandman (Board of Education president), Ms. Mr. Roland Ikheloa (Board chief of staff), Suzann King (staff assistant), Ms. Martha Sequeira (reporter), Ms. Kathy Yorro (staff), and Ms. Laura Steinberg (staff assistant).

MCPS staff present: Mr. Brian Edwards, chief of staff, Office of the Superintendent of Schools, Ms. Aggie Alvez, director, Department of Communications; and Mr. Dana Tofig, director, Office of Public Information.

Committee Minutes

Action: The minutes of the February 5, 2009, committee meeting were approved unanimously as presented.

Presentation of the "Draft Live Board Blog"

At the last meeting, the committee discussed the need to explore the use of a Board blog for communicating with the public. It is anticipated that the blog will: further the Board's efforts to outreach the community with issues that the Board identifies as priorities, be pro-active and not reactive, provide the community with insight regarding Board work and decisions, and be used for those items for which there is a Board consensus. After the Committee reviewed a sample of the blog, discussion focused on: how to take advantage of available resources, how the blog will clarify the Board's approach on different issues, how the blog would be different from the Board's current web page, the responsibility for maintaining the blog, and the need to develop a protocol for what gets posted to the blog. It was also noted that this blog was only an initial proposal that needs consensus from Board members.

Action: The Committee asked staff to develop a set of guidelines/protocol regarding approval of the content to be posted on the blog, and provide information about the impact the blog can expect to have on staff time.

Welcome-Public Information Director

The Committee welcomed Mr. Dana Tofig, the new director of Public Information who joined MCPS on October 19, 2009, after serving as the Communications Director for the Georgia Department of Education.

Update on Items from Previous Meetings:

1. Board recognitions on Student Achievement. The Committee reviewed a handout from staff that summarized the proclamations provided at events attended by Board members, letters and other acknowledgments provided to students in recognition of their achievements, and other events that are recognized with a letter from the Board president.
2. Meeting with Student Leaders. Staff provided information about the December 1st meeting with MCR, MCJC and SGA leaders. It was suggested that the meeting should start earlier, maybe at 6:00 p.m.
3. Cluster meetings. It was reported that the Board Officers met with the president of MCCPTA to discuss the presentation and structure of the clusters' meetings with the Board to make them more of an interactive dialogue. It was suggested that the meetings should start at 7:00 not at 7:30 p.m. (7-9:00 p.m.).
4. Back to School Fair. It was reported that the Back to School Fair was a success and sent a powerful message to the community. It was suggested by a committee member that shirts/t-shirts with the Board logo should be ordered and paid by each individual so that Board members are easily identified at community events. Mr. Durso had suggestions for a vendor and information about this idea will be passed along to other Board member colleagues.
5. Briefing regarding Delegation meeting. Staff provided information about the meeting with the Maryland delegation. It was noted that Board members received the same information packet that was sent to the delegation and MCCPTA. The MCCPTA leadership was also invited and encouraged to attend. Staff also reported the need to discuss funding and the Collective Bargaining Bill. It was noted that there will be three meetings between the Board, the Delegation, and MCCPTA within a month period; it was suggested that the meeting schedule with MCCPTA and the Delegation be reviewed. Staff discussed assigned seating for the November 17th meeting so that the Delegation members will be seated with cluster coordinators.
8. *MPCS Drop in Coffees*. At a previous meeting, the Committee discussed ways to enhance communication with the public. It was suggested that Board members participate in the Department of Family and Community Partnerships' "Drop In Coffees" (on January 22, February 20, and April 17) in which parents can come in, ask questions, and get information about MCPS.

ACTION: Staff will work with Board members to ensure a Board presence at each of the coffees.

9. Engagement of parent groups and MCPS' Parent Council. At a previous meeting staff was asked to survey schools regarding the presence of parent groups. The results of the survey showed that the Department of Family and Community Partnership already included those groups in the Department's outreach efforts.

Discussion of Board Members Profiles on ITV. At a previous meeting, it was suggested that a video clip be posted on the web for each Board member providing background information.

ACTION: The committee decided to postpone this activity.

Parent Academy Seminar. The Committee reviewed a proposed list of topics that would be included in a Parent Academy “seminar” about the Board of Education. It was also suggested that another seminar be held on the appeals process and the ombudsman. Discussion focused on the format, presenters and handouts for the seminars.

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

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