

## **Communications and Public Engagement Committee Meeting**

May 25, 2012

10:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. with the following committee members and Board staff present: Dr. Judy Docca (chair); Ms. Shirley Brandman (member), Mr. Michael Durso (member); Mr. Ikhide Roland Ikheloa, Board chief of staff; Ms. Suzann King, staff assistant; and Ms. Martha Sequeira (reporter).

MCPS staff present: Mr. Brian Edwards, chief of staff, Office of the Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Marcia Vogel, supervisor, Office of Communications; Mr. John Landesman, coordinator, Department of Family and Community Partnerships

County Executive Office of Community Partnerships Representatives present: Mr. Bruce Adams, Director; Mr. Daniel Koroma, African Community & Caribbean Community; Ms. Karla Silvestre, Latino Community & Gilchrist Center; Ms. Diane Vu, Asian American Community, Middle Eastern Community & Language Access; Rev. Tim Warner, African American Community, Faith Based Community & Poverty/Self-Sufficiency; and Ms. Kathleen Stobie, Volunteer Center.

Parent Leadership Group: Mr. Bowen Fong, Asian American Parent Advocacy Council; Mr. Antonio Hernandez-Cardoso, Chair, MCCPTA Multicultural Awareness Committee-Latino/Hispanic Parent Groups; Mr. Byron Johns, Chair, NAACP/Education Committee Parents' Council; and Ms. Kristin Trible, former MCCPTA President.

### **Committee Minutes**

The minutes of the February 1, 2012, committee meeting were approved.

### **Presentation by the Parent Leadership Group**

Information was provided on how the Parent Leadership Group (PLG) started from a Study Circle group and decided to continue meeting on a regular basis. A diverse group of 12 to 20 people meet on a monthly basis, usually in the evenings, after work, to provide multi-cultural awareness, as well as a wide perspective in different topics. Given that the PLG represents a large part of the community, and feel that they can provide different perspectives, needs, views and input of constituents and be of service to the Board in its community engagement efforts. Not only can the PLG be an asset to the Board of Education, but to the County Council, the Office of the County Executive, and MCPS to ensure that the public is informed on different topics, as well as to ensure that decision-makers have input from a set of diverse community members.

Discussion focused on the difference between this group and the MCPS Parent Advisory Committee, how the PLG can assist with the public discourse on education matters, and how the Board and the PLG could collaborate in future community engagement endeavors. The

committee expressed that it would like to invite the group to come back to the committee, as well as possibly arrange a time for members to attend a PLG meeting.

### **County Executive Office of Community Partnerships**

Mr. Bruce Adams, director of the County Executive's Office of Community Partnerships provided the committee with a short history about the creation of this office. Noting how important trust-building and relationship-building are in community engagement, the respective liaisons then shared the following information about their outreach strategies and current initiatives:

#### Ms. Karla Silvestre - Latino Community & Gilchrist Center

The Gilchrist Center is a place for immigrants to get connected to services. One of the goals for the upcoming year is to provide new resident orientation. For individuals who have been here longer, the Center offers a civic engagement class to discuss how the county works and to provide the community with an opportunity to speak with leaders about what is working and what is not working.

Ms. Silvestre staffs the Latin American Advisory group, public safety work group, Latino Youth Collaborative Group, and the El Salvador sister city program. The sister city program has been instrumental in expanding the network of authentic communication and to gaining a deeper understanding of the culture of this large and emerging community.

#### Rev. Tim Warner - African American Community, Faith Based Community & Poverty/Self-Sufficiency

Rev. Warner discussed how the institutions and things that have traditionally tied the community are changing, so we have to think about new models of engagement. He is examining how to strengthen classic organizations, while finding out where new products of leadership may be, and determine issues that the community may coalesce around. There are certain chronic issues that have not been resolved so we must think of new ways of getting them resolved.

Rev. Warner discussed the topics discussed by his African American advisory group, the role/influence of the merging Pan-African community, and trying to build relationships in the faith community around the issues involving poverty. He discussed the Neighborhood Opportunity Network, the self-sufficiency initiative to try to eradicate poverty, the interest in bringing the Evergreen Initiative (which focuses on wealth building initiatives in communities) to Montgomery County, and the interest having a processing facility in Montgomery County to provide food to Montgomery County residents.

#### Mr. Daniel Koroma - African Community & Caribbean Community

Mr. Koroma stated that it was important to recognize the diversity within the African American community, including the differences in culture and how to engage the different populations. The advisory committee started in 2008 with 9-10 people has grown to 35-40 actively engaged members. Mr. Koroma discussed his work Montgomery College and how that work may be imported into MCPS. Noting that the County Executive would be going on an official trip to Ethiopia, Mr. Koroma discussed the Sister City Program with Ethiopia and how that program is also being used to engage the community.

Mr. Koroma noted that September is African unity and heritage month and June is Caribbean Heritage Month.

Ms. Diane Vu - Asian American Community, Middle Eastern Community & Language Access

Ms. Vu stated that she is working to ensure that all county departments are in compliance with Title 6 and the County Executive's Order regarding providing language access to county constituents. She noted that she staffs the Asian American Advisory group which has two main goals: providing support to small business and to non-profit groups. Noting that nonprofits are led by legacy leaders, she noted that small businesses and non-profits have been working in solos and not collaboratively. Ms. Vu discussed her efforts to have small businesses and nonprofits come together around common issues, her grassroots efforts to meet and engage the community, and her efforts to create a pipeline for new/emerging leadership in the county.

Kathleen Stobie: Volunteer Center

Ms. Stobie stated that Volunteer Center is staffed with two permanent employees, who essentially work to match individuals who are 55+ years with volunteer opportunities. Ms. Stobie discussed the center's relocation, the need to increase the center's web/virtual presence, how the center works closely with MCPS's student service learning hours coordinator to help students fulfill their community service requirements, the challenges reaching ESOL students and its efforts to reach out into the community.

Additional committee discussion focused on opportunities for harnessing shared resources in this effort and ways to encourage effective parent and community advocacy and empowering each population with a voice. The committee will follow up with the Parent Leadership Group and the County Executive's Office of Community Partnerships to continue collaboration.

**Update from the Department of Family and Community Partnerships**

Mr. Landesman indicated that the Department continues to provide support to schools and collaborate with different organizations. Discussion focused on the upcoming Back-to-School Fair in August, how focus groups are used to obtain information from parents about their local schools to help the schools improve, and the work (and changes in) Study Circles.

**Update from the Office of Communications**

Mr. Edwards discussed the superintendent's staff reorientation work, which has resulted in changes to the Department of Family and Community Partnerships (DFCP). DFPC will be headed by the "Chief Engagement and Partnership Officer," which is a new position who will be reporting to Kimberly A. Statham, the newly appointed deputy superintendent of Teaching, Learning and Programs. The equity work of Troy Boddy and the Study Circles work will be blended. Once this new Officer comes on board, Mr. Edwards anticipates more outreach to different groups, and a focus on family, community, and business partnerships.

Mr. Edwards also highlighted the following work of the Office of Communications:

- Principals will be provided with a communications update that contains information about what is going on so that they can incorporate the information in their school newsletters.

- There will be a new card entitled “Stay Connected to MCPS” to provide parents with information about resources in MCPS
- More outreach is occurring with the Spanish-speaking community, including twitter and *News Update* in Spanish
- Curriculum 2.0 will be rolled out to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade next year along with a new report card, so the Office is working on a communication materials for parents
- The last of the superintendent’s spring forums has occurred so staff is working on a report concerning the forums as well as an outreach plan for next year
- Staff is also working on a renovation of the MCPS strategic plan for which outreach will be needed

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.