

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Strategic Planning Committee
March 13, 2009
Minutes

The meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee was called to order at 11:03 a.m. with the following committee members and staff present: Dr. Judy Docca (Chair), Ms. Laura Berthiaume, Mr. Roland Ikheloa (chief of staff) and Kathy Yorro (recorder).

The following Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) staff were present: Mr. Larry Bowers, chief operating officer; Mr. Brian Edwards, chief of staff, Office of the Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Jody Leleck, chief academic officer; Ms. Jody Silvio, executive assistant to the chief academic officer; Mr. Eric Lang, associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction; Mr. Jamie Virga, associate superintendent for organizational development; Ms. Susan Marks, associate superintendent for human resources; and Ms. Aggie Alvez, director, Department of Communications and Family Outreach.

Also present was Dr. Rebecca Newman, president, Montgomery County Association of Administrative and Supervisory Personnel (MCAASP).

Agenda Items:

1. **Welcome and Introductions.** Dr. Docca welcomed everyone and asked for introductions.
2. **Approval of Minutes.** The committee unanimously approved the minutes from the Strategic Planning Committee meetings of October 7, 2008, and January 30, 2009, as submitted.
3. **Principal Surveys.** Mr. Bowers introduced the discussion of the principal surveys currently being conducted by various offices within MCPS. He then asked Mr. Lang, associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and Ms. Susan Marks, associate superintendent for human resources, to review with the committee the materials presented on surveys conducted by their offices.

Office of Curriculum and Instruction – Mr. Lang presented the results of the principal survey conducted by the Office of Curriculum and Instruction (OCIP) in collaboration with the Montgomery County Association of Administrative and Supervisory Personnel (MCAASP) and the Office of Shared Accountability and explained that the purpose of the survey was to assess how well OCIP is meeting the needs of schools and to identify opportunities for improvement. He briefly reviewed the charts presented on the percentage of responses to individual survey questions, including sample comments by principals. He then reviewed with the committee the results of the survey that were sent to all principals, assistant principals, assistant school administrators, and magnet coordinators.

Results of Survey:

- The survey was distributed electronically to all principals, assistant principals, assistant school administrators, and magnet coordinators.
- The themes that came out of the feedback from the surveys were timeliness and openness.
- Administrators are “satisfied” with OCIPs efforts to communicate.
- OCIP will work on formalized communication process with schools.
- Principals indicated that they don’t get feedback – want feedback on their feedback.
- OCIP working on direct support to schools—many do not know who to directly contact for support.
- OCIP has provided a School Support Contact List to administrators to assist in direct contact.
- OCIP working on getting specialists out to schools.
- OCIP staff felt that this was an extremely positive process for providing feedback for the entire Office of Curriculum and Instruction.

The committee asked if a model such as the Help Desk would be considered for support to administrators. Staff, as well as MCAASP, feel that there is a downside to that process. OCIP has specific experts to respond to administrators, and their goal is to determine how their departments can get administrators to the appropriate supports in the quickest fashion. Principals have indicated that they are looking for direct contact. The committee felt that the Support Contact List provided to administrators was very helpful and that “feedback on the feedback” to administrators was very important.

Office of Human Resources – Ms. Susan Marks, associate superintendent for human resources, presented the results of the principal survey conducted by the Office of Human Resources (OHR) in collaboration with the Principal’s Advisory Committee, the MCPS/MCAASP Joint Collaboration Committee, and the Office of Shared Accountability to assess the level of satisfaction with customer service provided administrators regarding staffing issues. She explained that the Office of Human Resources was encouraged by the improvement in the level of satisfaction with the support provided to schools in the hiring process.

Results of Survey:

- The survey was distributed electronically to all principals, assistant principals, assistant school administrators, and business managers.
- Good response to survey.
- High level of overall satisfaction with staffing of schools.
- Respondents are satisfied with communication with OHR, but can be challenging during peak times.
- Timeliness of responses varied greatly depending on “who you deal with.”
- Overall, respondents were satisfied with customer service provided, but not always consistent depending on staffer.
- Schools need more clarity regarding OHR processes – do not understand the process for communicating decisions.
- General Areas for Growth included need for addressing overall inconsistencies in performance across the office, clarity regarding OHR processes, recruitment of

better qualified minority candidates must continue to be a focus, and process for placement of involuntary transfers should be reviewed.

The committee was very pleased to see such satisfaction with OHR services, especially in the area of involuntary transfers, and the participation results. The committee asked if they had a sense of the reason why principals did not respond. Dr. Newman, president of MCAASP, indicated that her office is addressing that issue. MCAASP stresses the importance of responding to the surveys, has encouraged principals to respond, and has extended the window for response on the surveys. She indicated that principals are very busy and that the surveys are not a “requirement or high priority.” She also indicated that principals are overwhelmed with surveys from outside groups. She indicated that some principals respond only to the MCPS surveys.

The committee asked if staff felt that the principal advisory groups will help with two-way communication with the principals. Dr. Newman indicated that the principals on the advisory groups need to know that they are “representing all principals”

Staff reported that they are very pleased with the satisfactory comments on both surveys, but know that there is a lot of work to do.

Mr. Bowers indicated that the Department of Facilities Management had recently conducted a principal survey and that the results would be brought to the committee in the near future.

Followup/Action:

- Schedule Department of Facilities Management Principal Survey for committee review.

4. Strategic Plan, *Our Call to Action: Pursuit of Excellence* –Goals 3, 4, and 5

Goal 3 – Strengthen Productive Partnerships for Education

Mr. Bowers explained that there were no changes within the milestones of this goal and that major revisions had been made last year. He asked Ms. Alvez, director of the Department of Communications and Family Outreach, to review the refinements to this goal.

Ms. Alvez indicated that the most important change to Goal 3 included the work on Building School Capacity. She indicated that this initiative reflects the work that has been ongoing, working directly with parents across the county. She indicated that the initiative had been moved to the top of Goal 3 to reflect the importance of those efforts.

Ms. Alvez explained that there were minor changes to Goal 3. Discussion/changes in this goal included:

- Renaming “Navigating the System” to “Parent Guide to Montgomery County Public Schools” which will be in print (translated in six languages” along with a video component.

- Minor language changes in other areas including “Ask MCPS,” “Parent Advisory Council,” and “Translation Management System” changed to “Language Assistance Services.”
- “Conquista tus Sueños (Realize Your Dreams)” has been added back into the Goal 3 initiatives to reflect MCPS efforts to empower Latino parents by teaching strategies to improve communication.
- Addition of “Partners for Success” to reflect the partnership between the Department of Family and Community Outreach with the Office of Special Education to coordinate family support services for students with disabilities.
- Addition of “Individual Family Support” to reflect parent support in advocating for their child in working with school staff in understanding the instructional programs, special education process, and support at conferences or school meetings.

Committee suggested that under the “Parent Guide” that MCPS consider producing a video to present to incoming parents providing information on the pathways and options for programs that MCPS offers (magnet, arts, etc.) to give the parents the concept of decision points along the way during their child’s K-12 education. Ms. Alvez explained that a lot of time has been devoted to this effort without making the product voluminous. They are in the process of putting together a “bite size” video that will direct parents to the school system web site.

Goal 4 – Create a Positive Work Environment in a Self-renewing Organization

Mr. Jamie Virga, associate superintendent for organizational development, reviewed the minor changes to Goal 4 including:

- Addition of language regarding Highly Qualified Paraeducators
- Addition of language regarding minority recruitment and online recruitment using teleconferencing software.

Committee members asked if language could be added to Goal 4 under “equity” regarding diversity of religions. Staff felt that this would fall under “cultural competency” and that the MCPS school comprehensive calendar reflects all religious observances. Staff also indicated that sensitivity to religions is included in teacher training.

Staff discussed the agenda setting process and scheduling discussion of initiatives that would come before the full Board or to the Board committees. It was suggested that the committee hold discussions to determine what items should come before the committee vs. going to the full Board. One item that would need to be brought before the committee is the topic of Career Lattice. Communication to the full Board would be via a memo because this item is going to come up very quickly based on stimulus money.

Goal 5 – Provide High-quality Business Services that are Essential to the Educational Success of Students

Mr. Bowers explained the background of the addition of Goal 5 to the strategic plan. He explained that in this goal, the milestones are broader and there are no specific data points. Mr. Bowers noted that among the language additions/deletions, Goal 5 is where language has been included regarding Energy Efficiency and Conservation which would

include the targets for recycling. At this point, Mr. Bowers indicated that he would like to bring the principal survey from the Department of Maintenance to the committee for their review.

The committee asked if information on nutrition and building maintenance would fall under “exceeding customer needs.” Mr. Bowers responded that Ms. Kathy Lazor, director of food and nutrition services, would have extensive information on that and he would provide that information to the committee. He also indicated that perhaps Ms. Lazor could attend a committee meeting to present survey results for Food and Nutrition Services. Mr. Bowers also suggested that Mr. Benson attend a committee meeting to present the process for developing his portion of the strategic plan.

The committee discussed scheduling Goals 1 and 2 for review at the April 21 meeting.

Followups/Action:

- Review scheduling of items for committee review vs. full Board review.
- Schedule Career Lattice for upcoming committee meeting.
- Schedule review of principal surveys for the Department of Maintenance and Food and Nutrition Services.
- Schedule discussion with Mr. Benson on strategic planning process for Materials Management.
- Schedule review of strategic plan Goals 1 and 2 for April 21 committee meeting.

5. Prioritize Work Outlined in Committee Work Plan

The committee reviewed items included in their work plan submitted to the full Board on February 23. Priority for items included:

- Review of Goals 1 and 2 of the strategic plan at the April 21 meeting.
- Bring back additional items of the strategic plan (overview, strategies, final review of entire plan)
- Continue discussion/review of definition of equity and core values (from Board retreat on May 8).
- Discussion of Graduation Rates and new formula – May
- Periodically review strategic planning process with different offices.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:28 p.m.