

APPROVED  
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Rockville, Maryland  
December 19, 1988

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Monday, December 19, 1988, at 8 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Dr. James E. Cronin, President  
in the Chair  
Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo  
Mr. Blair G. Ewing  
Mrs. Catherine E. Hobbs  
Mr. Chan Park  
Mrs. Marilyn J. Praisner  
Dr. Robert E. Shoenberg

Absent: Mr. Bruce Goldensohn

Others Present: Dr. Harry Pitt, Superintendent of Schools

Re: ANNUAL MEETING WITH MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
COUNCIL OF SUPPORTING SERVICES EMPLOYEES

Dr. Cronin congratulated Mr. Vincent Foo, president of MCCSSE, on the new property recently acquired by his organization.

Mr. Foo hoped that their annual meeting with the Board would be informal. He did not have a written agenda but rather a collection of topics to discuss. He pointed out that the school system was growing in numbers of students and in numbers of employees which were now over 12,000. He commented that during negotiations with the Board MCCSSE tried to get in their contract items any issues that would help employees feel comfortable working for the system and to help them be good employees.

Mr. Foo congratulated Dr. Cronin and Dr. Shoenberg on their election to the presidency and vice presidency. He welcomed Mrs. Hobbs to the Board.

Mr. Foo reported that there were a few things the Board should be aware of. For example, the diagnostic study would lead to a full-scale pay equity study. This was proceeding according to a time schedule but was a few weeks behind that schedule. The questionnaires and interviews had been completed, and the consultant was preparing a report which would be out in a preliminary form in mid-January.

Mr. Foo recalled that a few years ago he had shown the Board a video tape on video display terminals. They had negotiated a committee to look into the hazards of VDT's, and that committee had almost completed its deliberations. They should have a report to the superintendent in January. He reported that MCCSSE had been part of the cost containment committee, but from everything he had read on cost containment, the prospect for success was not very hopeful. He

hoped he would be proven wrong and they could propose substantial savings. Dr. Pitt did not think they could reduce costs, but he hoped they could reduce the speed of the increase.

Mr. Foo stated that he had a concern about what was going on in the country because a lot of pension funds were putting their money into junk bonds. Even the federal government had concerns that banks were making these transactions. He asked for some kind of assurance about MCPS funds. Dr. Pitt had assured him that the investments were conservative, but Mr. Foo wanted more than an assurance. Dr. Pitt agreed to supply with Mr. Foo with their investment profile.

Mr. Foo said that the other broad concern was the proposal by the governor to cap the state's contribution to the teacher retirement system. MCCSSE would be doing its part to defeat this proposal, and they would be working with AFL-CIO in Annapolis.

Mr. Foo pointed out that there was a shortage of labor in Montgomery County. He sat on the Private Industry Council, and businesses were asking what could be done to supply them with the needed workers. He believed that the school Board would be in competition for these employees. For a couple of years emphasis had been given to the teacher shortage, and he hoped that the Board would keep in mind the fact that workers in the services area were in short supply. He believed they needed to do a lot more training and retraining of their employees. He called attention to the changes in office equipment and the need for technicians to service this equipment.

Mr. Foo reminded the Board of the J/I/M financial secretaries who were not 12-month employees. He hoped that the superintendent and the Board would consider doing right by these employees. There were six people in the intermediate schools in this situation. He commented that as the school system expanded there were certain demands in the system that had been neglected because of limited resources. However, they could only neglect these for so long before there was a problem. For example, the Payroll Department and the Personnel Department needed more help, and he thought they should look at the Transportation Department as well. He noted that there were bus route supervisors who were 10-month employees but really worked 12-months. He also pointed out that they were using bus operators as trainers but still kept them on the bus operator schedule.

In regard to the ICB, Mr. Foo said they were getting many, many complaints from clerical workers on the amount of work being done for the ICB. He had a stack of letters from school personnel regarding this situation, and some employees were keeping logs on the numbers of hours they were spending on ICB work. He read a letter from one employee who cited problems in arranging for afterschool use of the school building and the amount of time spent in this activity. He felt that the secretaries were doing a lot of work that should be done by the ICB, and this was of great concern to MCCSSE.

Dr. Cronin reported that about three weeks ago financial secretaries,

other secretaries, and building service workers came in to the ICB and gave a report. He would provide Mr. Foo with a copy of the follow-up minutes and ask for his response.

Mrs. DiFonzo said she had heard from someone on the financial services committee of the ICB who indicated that a study had been done several years ago. There was not one secretary in MCPS who was unable to get her MCPS work done because of the ICB requirements. She said that it was probably a function of how the question was asked, and she hoped that they asked the questions in the appropriate fashion. Mr. Foo replied that secretaries were taking work home or staying late to complete their work. This was not an exception because MCPS did have a dedicated group of employees. Ms. Jessica Dunkley added that secretaries did stay late and did work through their lunch hour and did take work home. As a secretary, she reported that ICB concerns were present every hour of the work day. She noted that they had many forms including payrolls and energy management forms and wondered whether the school system was reimbursed for this work.

Dr. Pitt explained that the ICB paid the difference in cost if a person worked on the weekend; however, the ICB was now looking into centralized scheduling which might be something worth trying. Mrs. Praisner pointed out that this had been under discussion for several years, and she hoped that before it was instituted that there would be pilots in a couple of schools and an evaluation of those pilots. Dr. Pitt pointed out that one problem with centralized scheduling was the loss of local flexibility. Dr. Shoenberg commented that they could not complain about secretaries' being overworked and refuse to allow ICB to take on that chore.

Ms. Dunkley expressed her support for making the J/I/M financial secretaries 12-month positions. Dr. Pitt agreed to look into this. Mrs. Praisner asked if MCCSSE had had an opportunity to look at the county's pay equity study. Ms. Dunkley replied that there was to be a briefing on this report on December 21. Mrs. Praisner suggested they call the county and obtain a copy of the report.

Ms. Diane Davidson said it was no surprise that the financial crunch was hurting all of them. She did not know why shortages were coming so soon in the fiscal year. She cited the issue of a workshop on centralized laminating facilities and the discovery that laminating could not be done because the center was out of funds. She also pointed out that there was now a charge to the school by the Book Processing Facility for bookplate labels. She wondered if the next step would be to charge the schools for medical insurance forms or leave forms. Dr. Pitt pointed out that if the County Council had its way there would not be a Book Processing Facility and every school library would be doing all of the work. MCPS provided centralized support for libraries and librarians so that they could spend more time with students. He requested details on the bookplate forms so that he could follow up on this issue. He pointed out that the Processing Center handled thousands of books every year which freed up school personnel to work with students. Mrs. DiFonzo asked Ms.

Davidson if she could give the Board some idea of the hours the Processing Center saved individual schools.

Mr. John Green brought greetings from the building services employees. He reported that last Saturday his chapter had had a breakfast meeting to discuss a variety of concerns. They continued to try to be supportive of new policies, and they hoped that new policies would make some differences. He noted that building services and supporting services all considered themselves to be part of the educational process in Montgomery County. He hoped that the Board would continue to send messages to employees that all employees were part of the school system and part of the educational process. Mr. Green said they were receiving a lot of mixed signals especially about the ICB issue. They did not see the community and the officials looking at this area quite fairly.

Mr. Green expressed the support of his unit for what Ralph Crawson was attempting to do with the Special Olympics and having a training center for the handicapped. He hoped that the Board of Education would support those efforts. Dr. Pitt explained that the building service issue was still being arbitrated. He appreciated the professional attitude that was being shown by MCCSSE and Mr. Foo. Dr. Cronin indicated that the Board would continue to fight for their interest on the ICB issue.

Ms. Marty Strombotne reported that about a week ago there was an article about Seneca Valley High School and open lunch. The students had received two weeks of punishment and had to stay in school for lunch. As a food services manager, she took exception to the statement that it was "punishment" to eat in a school cafeteria. Dr. Pitt commented that he ate in the CESC cafeteria every day. The school lunch operation was mostly self-supporting, and he felt they did an outstanding job as a business. He would match the MCPS food services operation with that of any operation in a large organization. He felt that all the food services people did an outstanding job. Dr. Cronin suggested that it might be a good public relations device to invite the reporter to lunch.

Mr. Ewing commented that the point made about future shortages of workers was one they needed to pay close attention to. He hoped that Dr. Pitt would continue to pursue that issue and look at categories where there were shortages. Dr. Pitt replied that the Personnel Department was pursuing this, and he called attention to an article which stated that Giant could not open a new store because of lack of workers.

Mr. Foo suggested that perhaps there were areas where MCCSSE could be of assistance to the Board. They were all dedicated to providing the best school system in the country. He pointed out that there was a certain type of person who worked in the school system because most employees wanted to work with children and were unusually dedicated. Dr. Cronin suggested there might be areas where MCCSSE could provide assistance in working with the state. Dr. Pitt said he would not be surprised if the governor initiated legislation on the pension fund.

He thought that MCCSSE and MCEA needed to work with MCPS as well as working independently.

Mr. Ewing commented that he would have a hard time suggesting how MCCSSE employees could do better. He said that Mr. Foo and his board of directors did an outstanding job. Mrs. Praisner commented that one of the things she appreciates is that Mr. Foo did not wait for the annual meeting with the Board to let the Board know about issues. It was helpful to have him let the Board know when an issue was surfacing before it developed into a problem.

Mrs. DiFonzo recalled that a few years ago she had been invited to attend a retreat with the maintenance supervisors. She had addressed them about the importance of the work they did, and one gentleman stood up and said that in his over 20 years with MCPS this was the first time anyone had told him that his job was important. They needed to be sensitive to the fact that they were all part of the team. She hoped that the school system would working on bringing together all of the elements of the school system to share their common experiences. They had the superintendent's A&S conference, but they did not have anything where MCCSSE, MCAASP, MCEA, the central office, and the Board could get together to share goals and frustrations. For example, the Watkins Mill Cluster had held a human relations day for all employees.

Dr. Cronin explained that they had the ABC awards, and he wondered if there were other ways of recognizing people. Dr. Pitt added that they did try to recognize people and he sent a lot of letters. Unfortunately MCPS was so big that it was difficult to get people together. They were encouraging schools to get together as a staff, and in some places this was done well. The school system worked because they all worked. Ms. Davidson suggested that one way to begin was to get rid of the signs saying "faculty" room and "faculty" mail. People had to start thinking and saying "staff." Dr. Cronin thanked the members of MCCSSE and on behalf of the Board wished them a happy holiday.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

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PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY

HP:mlw