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Mr. Ewing expressed his appreciation for the comments submitted to the Board by MCAASP. Dr. Lynch said that MCAASP wanted to make sure there was movement on this issue; however, they were reluctant to go too far in providing their comments. He thought that the plan would be successful when it became operational in every classroom. Dr. Vance commented that if he brought a major focus to the superintendency it would be this one. For a number of years, the focus of minority achievement had been managerial. Now he thought the focus should be strongly instructional which would be a major perspective for him.

Dr. Lynch said that the next issue was "doing less with less." They were concerned about maintaining the level of services when they had lessening support. He asked how they would tell the public that they were being forced to cut back on the level of services provided to the community. Mr. Ewing agreed that the public would expect services to remain the same even though the school system had less resources. The message had to be clear that, while everyone was devoted to the education of children, services would be decreased because they had fewer resources. People had to be told that the Board was trying to get some resources back, but the Board needed the help of the public to do this. Next year was going to be tough as well, and there was nothing wrong with turning citizen complaints into citizen support for the public schools. The message had to go out that MCPS needed the support of citizens and organizations. He pointed out that a key constituency was the legislative delegation, and the Board would need their help this year. Citizens should contact their legislator to get their support for increased revenues.

Mr. Ewing remarked that without additional funds, the next round of cuts would be very damaging. The county executive was working with the County Council and key members of the delegation and the Board to come up with a common strategy. They also had to worry about protecting social security and teacher retirement. He agreed that there would be complaints from parents, but he felt that this could be used as an opportunity to enlist their support.

Dr. Pitt pointed out that they were in double jeopardy because of local revenues and people in the state who were actively working to change the flow of that revenue. The issue of capping the retirement system was still out there and had the potential of hurting everyone. He suggested that MCAASP members work with their friends around the state about these issues. Dr. Cheung added that they also needed to lobby the business community because they were important players, and the legislators listened to the business sector. Mr. Gerald Johnson, principal of Maryvale Elementary School, reported that the Maryland Chamber of Commerce was working with educators around the state to see how business could support education.

Dr. Vance commented that it was naive to assume that when there was economic recovery that "happy days would be here again."

There would be intense competition between the school system and other government agencies for funds, particularly in the area of public safety. This was an outgrowth of the urbanization of the county. People wanted more police and a faster response time, which became a big ticket item. The second issue was an increase in social services. Education needed to form a coalition, make its case, and fight for what it had and reclaim what it had lost.

Dr. Lynch said that last year MCAASP had been part of a public employees council, and Mr. Potter had presented that group with a bare budget. He felt that this was a good experience because all the employees in the county had access to the same information. The educators had an opportunity to convince the police and fire personnel of needs and issues in education. He thought it was important to get everyone together to share factual and up-to-date information which would help cut down on rumors. Mr. Ewing agreed that they had a vast array of mutual interests with those groups in the area of safety, health, and social services, and these people could be natural allies for education. He thought they needed to think of big city techniques because the county was urbanizing.

Ms. Dawn Ellis, principal of Burtonsville Elementary School, commented that the issue was accountability because schools and principals were on the firing line right now. They were already receiving complaints, and most parents found their answers unsatisfactory when there were 33 children in a class without an aide. They had a set of policies to provide individualization of instruction, but they could not follow these policies. She did not know how to change the expectation of the community. Mr. Ewing thought they needed to give the schools a rationale they could use. People needed to know that MCPS did not have the resources to do certain things. The same message had to be delivered in schools and be confirmed by the central office.

Dr. Pitt cautioned that they had to keep things in perspective. Their average class size was not 33, and they did have aides. However, they did not have the resources and flexibility they had a few years ago. If they overreacted, they would do more harm than good. The issue was not that they were going to have hundreds of larger classes, but that they would not have the flexibility to solve problems. They were not the only county in the state or the metropolitan area that was hurting now. Parents had to recognize that MCPS would do the best it could with existing resources. He had appeared on a television program where people had contended that MCPS had all kinds of fat and had to cut administrators. People in the schools believed there was fat in the central office and that there were services that could be done away with. He believed that people in the schools were still sending mixed messages to the community.

As a parent, Mrs. Brenneman said she would rather hear "let's all pull together and make it work." If principals pulled together to make it work, the community would react positively. Ms. Ellis

did not think principals would have a problem in delivering that message.

Ms. Gutierrez stated that it was very important to look at the problems in the larger perspective. They were not alone because there was a nationwide crisis in education. They were going to have to work at forming a new coalition to support resources for education. There was a danger in being passive and hoping that next year would be better; however, she knew that principals would not take that attitude. They had to turn this situation into a much more aggressive defense of public education involving parents, business, and the public sector. She believed that what was happening now was a reflection of the last ten years of the wrong public policy at the national level. She did not think that the solution would be an immediate one because it involved a basic restructuring of public education.

Mrs. Hobbs agreed with Ms. Ellis that parents received negative signals from the teacher dealing with a class of 33. This, in turn, formed a negative impression of that school. They had to show teachers how much they were appreciated, and it was up to the principals to convey that appreciation. Principals had to be much more creative about resources and work with the PTA on additional volunteers or meeting the needs of the school.

Dr. Frank Masci, principal of Walter Johnson High School, pointed out that there were fewer people now to help with problem solving and creative thinking. For example, they had lost the teacher specialists, the area supervisors, and now the reading teachers. Some of the tools they had counted on to help schools had been removed.

Ms. Joy Odom, mathematics supervisor, remarked about additional state requirements at the state level. She agreed that something had to give, but someone needed to tell her what that was so that she could share the information with the rank and file. Dr. Dawn Thomas, social studies supervisor, reported that they had lost the teacher specialists. On one day during the opening of school, she had received 55 calls asking for help. She had been told she had to find a way to deal with this situation, but she had less staff to be creative with. She wanted someone in authority to tell her how much she was accountable for.

Dr. Audrey Leslie, supervisor of secondary instruction, reported that she had tripled the number of schools she had dealt with a year ago. They had prided themselves on a quick turnaround to parents with complaints, but the turnaround time was beginning to lengthen. Dr. Pitt said that had to happen because people did not know what the area offices did. People did not recognize these services until the staff performing them was cut. For example, the teacher specialists were not seen by every teacher but did provide help to principals and teachers needing help.

Dr. Cheung saw the MCAASP membership as the instructional leaders of the school system. He thought the Board needed to establish

better communication to get the input of MCAASP. He felt that there were many, many good people in the school system who needed the leadership of MCAASP. He also thought that effective leaders would see this situation as an opportunity, and he wanted to know how they could counteract these negative messages. Dr. Lynch replied that they were frustrated because they did have some great ideas, but they were sitting here in June not knowing what was coming in September. They needed to know how to get involved in decisions so that they could share this information with staff. He pointed out that it would be better to provide principals with the rationale behind decisions affecting their schools than for the principals to read about the decision in the JOURNAL.

Ms. Linda Weber, principal of Rosemary Hills, stated that it would be useful to provide principals with a fact sheet so that they could explain situations to parents. For example, she had told parents she could not test every child for gifted and talented services because of the cutback, but it would help if she had a list of all the cuts such as transportation. She needed to make some sense out of the issues affecting her school and its services in order to provide this information to parents. She, too, didn't need to read about these issues in the newspaper.

Mr. Ewing explained that right now the Board was in a difficult position because it had not voted on the budget in light of ongoing negotiations. In addition, there were proposed organizational changes that had not been made. There would probably be other organizational changes as a consequence of some creative thought about how to manage better, but right now they were in a transition period which left everyone uncertain. The most important thing the Board and the superintendent could do was communicate effectively and tell people what was going on. They had to make sure that information that could be shared, was shared. He said they had to figure out how to use the talents of their staff without overburdening them, and there was no simple answer to that.

Dr. Masci commented that one of the common threads was fear of the unknown. MCPS had never had cuts this deep before. On top of that, people were faced with the uncertainty of the Maryland School Performance Plan. Dr. Leslie suggested that it would help if MCAASP could meet with the Board more often than once or twice a year.

Ms. Gutierrez was hearing that there was a need for better communication and better information. She heard them asking for priorities and guidelines. She agreed that there needed to be an on-going flow of communication, and MCAASP should contact the Board when something was not clear. She suggested that perhaps they could start a regular flow of correspondence to handle the communication problem. As a Board member, she would find the input from MCAASP to be invaluable.

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Mrs. Hobbs did not think they could have more meetings because other groups would request the same courtesy. She indicated that she would rather be paired with a principal and a supervisor and have a buddy system of sharing information. Mrs. Brenneman reported that she tried to visit schools, and she would like to hear about the positives and negatives from principals. Right now she was hearing from a lot of teachers but not principals.

Dr. Cheung agreed that they did need regular input from MCAASP, especially about the policy implications of issues under consideration by the Board. He liked the idea of an informal session with a few people rather than a formal Board meeting. Dr. Lynch explained that they had avenues through the superintendent and deputy to deal with operational issues, and they did use these avenues. Dr. Pitt reported that for the last two years he had tried a new budget approach involving consultation with a group of principals.

Dr. Lynch said that their last issue was principal and community relations. There was a growing concern among front line people when some group has decided that a principal was no longer effective. The principal was tried in the public arena of editorials and newspaper articles. This was a difficult situation for principals and for MCAASP because they felt that some principals had been left hanging as a target for some segment of the school community which was not necessarily a cross-section of the community. Dr. Pitt agreed that this was a touchy matter. If he responded to a newspaper that he had no comment because it was a personnel matter, this fanned the flames. If he did comment, it opened up a situation that could not be closed off and might become a legal issue. Ms. Gutierrez thought that they needed a clear policy statement here rather than dealing with and resolving problems through newspaper headlines, but the issue was not that simple.

Dr. Lynch thanked the Board members for a productive discussion, and Mr. Ewing expressed the Board's appreciation for the meeting.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

HP:mlw