

APPROVED
27-1994

Rockville, Maryland
May 25, 1994

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Wednesday, May 25, 1994, at 7:40 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Carol Fanconi, President
in the Chair
Ms. Carrie Baker
Mrs. Frances Brenneman
Dr. Alan Cheung
Mr. Blair G. Ewing
Mrs. Beatrice Gordon
Ms. Ana Sol Gutierrez

Absent: Mr. Stephen Abrams

Others Present: Dr. Paul L. Vance, Superintendent
Dr. H. Philip Rohr, Deputy
Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

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

Mrs. Fanconi welcomed the executive Board of MCCSSE. She explained that Mr. Abrams worked on Capitol Hill and was involved in an emergency session of Congress. Mrs. Martha Strombotne, president of MCCSSE, thanked the Board for scheduling the meeting. She noted that the Board and MCCSSE had just reached their first Agreement in eight or 10 years without having to go to a mediator.

Mrs. Evelyn Gaston, vice president of the Building Service Chapter of MCCSSE, stated that it was their understanding that the Board had approved a pilot contract for building services in one cluster with a projected savings of \$100,000. They did not believe that contracting out would be in keeping with the Board's statement that funds for public education were not simply an expense but rather an investment in their students. Many people moved to Montgomery County because of the high level of education and the support components including transportation, food services, safety, and the cleanliness of the schools. Contracting out would not assure these services.

Mrs. Gaston asked whether contracting out would give parents, students, and the community the friendly and safe atmosphere that the building services employees provide. She noted that at the majority of schools the building service employees served as mentors for students and had been doing that long before the

implementation of the mentor program. She suggested that the absence of building service people as role models and mentors would result in the employment of more counselors and security monitors.

Mrs. Gaston pointed out that building service staff frequently identified what could be injurious or life-threatening facilities problems, and by initiating repairs, they avoided potential major problems. She asked whether contract employees would do this. She was concerned that contract employees would not be properly screened or trained to support the educational program. These people would be janitors and not fulfill the MCPS role of building service worker. The majority of the current workers were taxpayers in the County, and privatizing the building service jobs would result in a loss of tax base, severance pay, and an impact on the County's welfare service.

Mrs. Gaston felt that there was a major difference in cleaning office buildings and cleaning a public school. They anticipated that in many instances the contractor would not be able to provide needed services and that students, staff, and the community would not have the clean and safe environment they had come to expect. Building service workers viewed their role as a partnership with the Board in education, and Mrs. Gaston encouraged the Board to reconsider all attempts at privatization of building service work.

Mrs. Jessica Dunkley, president of the Office Employees Chapter, stated that their latest and most recent interest was Global Communications. Yet in 1988 the Paperwork Reduction Committee recommended to the Board that MCPS should provide all locations with the capability for electronic mail, computerized payroll, supply and material ordering, and forms on disk. It had taken five years and the Corporate Partnership report to get to this point of making electronic communication a reality. In her school, the reality was a bulletin board for communication and beepers for emergencies. Not all facilities had E-mail, and there was no standardization of computer equipment in MCPS. Everyone was permitted to choose their own hardware and software, and many secretaries had two computers on their desks -- one IBM compatible and one Mackintosh for SIMS. Forms continued to be on paper and typewriters had to be used.

Mrs. Dunkley said she was also concerned about the lack of training for office employees. There were a few courses being offered in June on television, but June was a busy time in the schools. They had no coverage for offices and no time to practice; therefore, the suggestion was made that office employees tape the program, but no time was provided for doing this. She cited the ads for secretaries in the Bulletin and the demands for various computer skills, working under pressure, meeting deadlines, and good human relations and public relations

skills. She wondered how secretaries could acquire this knowledge without training. Mrs. Dunkley said that office personnel needed career enhancement programs, updating, and training. Courses were available on the outside, but their salaries did not permit them to enroll. Even if they enrolled in computer courses, they were unsure as to what system MCPS would be using. She pointed out that some office personnel were not qualified for the jobs they were doing today.

Mrs. Dunkley noted that they received excellent support from Dr. Raucher in training on IBM machines, but the training was lacking for the MAC unless the MAC was used for SIMS. She commented that the secretaries were not main frame users, analysts, or programmers, but they did need help in using the software, applications, and equipment to do their jobs efficiently. She remarked that the Board was talking about Total Quality Management, but they did not have a standard for computers and training for the use of those machines. She suggested employing someone to answer questions and installing a computer lab staffed by knowledgeable people to provide advice on technical problems. She wondered when they would remember they had 750 plus office employees who had worked for many years to support the school system and the Success for Every Student plan, but who needed support and a standardized and organized computer plan.

Mrs. Fanconi thanked Mrs. Dunkley for her remarks, and Dr. Vance asked Mrs. Dunkley to submit a copy of her statement. Mrs. Fanconi asked that she be provided with a copy of the 1988 Paperwork Reduction Report. Mrs. Dunkley recalled that at that time she had visited Price Waterhouse where they had a computerized payroll system accessible from all locations. She further recalled that in 1988 it would cost about \$170,000 to bring all MCPS offices on line. Mrs. Fanconi pointed out that the Council had funded the first year of the Global Access plan, but not the out-years. It was important to pull all of this information together to convince the County Council.

Ms. Gutierrez said they had raised some key issues, but for years when they did not fund educational computers, she thought the bulk of the funding was going for administrative computers and local networks. She thought it would be worthwhile looking at what the plans had been, and Mrs. Strombotne assured the Board that MCCSSE would be pleased to work with them on this issue. Dr. Cheung recalled that back in 1988 he had looked at computerization in MCPS, and at that time they were mainframe oriented and slow in catching up with business regarding PCs.

Mr. Don Harden, transportation chapter present, said he would like to discuss contracting out of bus services and random drug testing. The contracting out issue had devastated the morale of bus drivers, and most of them felt they were going to lose their jobs. They were angry and demoralized because they had spent

many years building relationships and providing service. Now they felt they were no longer needed because someone could do the job cheaper. They were now part of the throw-away culture. MCCSSE showed a video on contracting out bus drivers which was aired on the Crusaders Program.

In regard to random drug testing, Mr. Harden said that all drivers were randomly tested every year, but they had to report to a designated testing center on their own time. He believed this was illegal and against Fair Labor Standards. He felt that drivers should be compensated for following the directions of management.

Mrs. Strombotne pointed out that, while not mentioned in the video, Laidlaw was one of the companies cited and was one of the bidders for contracting out in MCPS. MCCSSE was concerned about Laidlaw's record in hiring drivers and the type of people who would be employed. She said that MCPS drivers did not know whether they would have a job this summer or next year, and she thought this was the time to put this at rest and buy it forever.

Mr. Don Hunter, maintenance president, was also concerned about contracting out. They had lost painters and floor tilers, but they had not been able to get a grasp on how they were comparing for cost savings. He had problems with contractors and wondered whether they were tested for tuberculosis and criminal backgrounds before they entered school buildings. He asked whether when a contractor lost people and rehired if they did any sort of checking on the replacement staff. He would like some answers on cost savings and accurate comparisons and asked that these figures be provided to MCCSSE.

Ms. Nancy Bernard, educational assistants president, reported that assistants were being assigned to three or four different classes each morning. She called attention to a brochure from Daly Elementary School which stated that each student would meet individually with an instructional assistant to match each lesson to student needs, which was a pilot program. However, when the reclassification study consultants look at the job of instructional assistant they lowered the score because they chose to believe these staff members always worked in a classroom under the direction of a supervisor. The Personnel Department concurred. If they worked under supervision at all time and had no need to know the curriculum, a directive should be issued that they were not to be alone in classes. If this were not true, the Board might want to consider looking again at the 1,000 educational assistants remaining at Grade 10 who did not need to know the things they had to do.

Mr. Sam Bailey, secretary-treasurer of MCCSSE, thanked the Board for making this time available. His subject was another form of contracting out, which was called "consultants." About a year

and a half ago, Mrs. Strombotne had written to the superintendent, and the answer was that consultants were used only when necessary. However, the list of consultants was growing rapidly. The picture presented was that an employee worked his or her way to the top of the pay scale, retired, and then returned to MCPS to double or triple dip. He asked whether they had really closed the area offices or were these people working as consultants on salary.

Mr. Dan Kostka, security president, felt that the current security measures adopted in the last two years had some serious inadequacies regarding training and delineation of authority. They needed state-of-the-art training in enforcement. He invited the Board to re-examine the original National Alliance for Safe Schools consultant study.

Mrs. Strombotne reported that she had listened to the presentation last week on staff development when several Board members inquired about where the supporting services employees fit in. She suggested contacting the Corporate Partnership for outside funding for supporting services training. Right now there was only one MCPS member involved in providing this training for MCCSSE members. Mrs. Strombotne would be pleased to work with the Board on getting funding for such things as computer technology. She pointed out that when she had started out with MCPS there were lots of opportunities for staff development, but these opportunities were all gone.

Mrs. Strombotne said her last issue was to see a new school named after Vincent Foo. She and her members felt it would be a great honor to name a school after him, particularly in the Clarksburg area. Mrs. Fanconi suggested that Mr. Foo's retirement video be shared with school naming committees.

Mrs. Strombotne stated that they had brought a lot of things to the Board's attention. They would like to continue to work together on all issues, and they were asking that the Board not contract out transportation and other services that were so valuable because it was not going to be cost effective and would be detrimental to MCPS.

Ms. Gutierrez thanked MCCSSE members for their remarks and their useful perspectives regarding Board policies. She suggested that they might want to look at the federal guidelines on drug/alcohol and random testing.

Mr. Ewing said it would be useful to know what it was that went away regarding the staff development training for MCCSSE members over the last several years. He suggested that they look at what staff developed seemed to be of the greatest value to MCCSSE if these courses could be restored. MCPS could provide MCCSSE with a listing of courses offered several years ago and those offered

today. As they recovered from the recession, revenues would continue to rise, and the Board would want to focus on things that were important including staff development. Mrs. Strombotne thanked him for the suggestion and said they would be back to the Board with their list.

Mrs. Gordon commented that she had been a school-based supporting services employee for a number of years. It was not that the training was lacking, but that the training was only available to professional staff when it would be of use to supporting services. She wondered how much technology training was being made available to MCCSSE members when it was being provided for the professional staff. The Board might not have to do anything additional, but rather just open up the in-service courses to support staff. Mrs. Strombotne replied that courses were offered to teachers and instructional assistants could apply for admission if there were spaces available; however, there were never spaces available. It was frustrating to be part of the team and not receive the training the other members did.

Mrs. Fanconi pointed out that most of the funds were now school-based, and they might have to increase funds to schools and encourage principals to use it in expanding training for all staff. Dr. Cheung stated that he enjoyed the presentation. He thought the Board should encourage management to offer staff development for all staff because more and more training was school-based. Otherwise, they might end up with a piecemeal approach. In any event, they had to make sure they had adequate resources for all staff to participate in training.

Mrs. Strombotne recalled that at another meeting Mrs. Brenneman had talked about a bus driver who was not aware of training. Mr. Kostka had mentioned the need for security training. She wondered what would happen if someone accosted a bus operator as he or she was loading up the children. In regard to the sexual harassment policy, the conflict resolution committees had not been set up in the schools. If that were done in as many schools as possible, this would make people feel more comfortable if they had someone to talk to about their concerns. MCCSSE planned to do some type of this training during the summer. Mrs. Fanconi asked that she be kept informed about the training so that she could attend if her schedule permitted.

In regard to sexual harassment, Dr. Cheung recalled that about 150 schools had conflict resolution programs. Dr. Vance explained that those were for students and peer mediation. Mrs. Strombotne commended the Board for its sexual harassment policy; however, they would like to see this move a little faster because there were a lot of grievances being filed. Mrs. Fanconi commented that a lot of people did not understand how big MCPS was and what it took to get things done. The County Council and the public had to understand that employees were with children,

and someone had to be hired to be with those children, while employees were being trained. She hoped that MCCSSE would add their support to get this across to the public and the Council.

In regard to contracting out, Mrs. Fanconi pointed out that the superintendent had not made a recommendation to the Board. This was scheduled for June 14, and there would be opportunity for public comment prior to the Board's taking action. She thanked MCCSSE for their presentation and comments.

Re: ADJOURNMENT AND REOPENING OF
MEETING

The Board adjourned to a closed session at 8:50 p.m. The Board reopened its meeting at 9:50 p.m.

RESOLUTION NO. 377-94 Re: BOE APPEAL NO. T-1994-1

On motion of Mrs. Gordon seconded by Ms. Gutierrez, the following resolution was adopted unanimously by members present:

Resolved, That the Board of Education adopt its Order in BOE Appeal No. T-1994-1, a transfer matter.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:52 p.m. to a closed session.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

PLV:mlw