

APPROVED  
33-2000

Rockville, Maryland  
December 1, 2000

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Friday, December 1, 2000, at 3:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present:                   Mrs. Patricia B. O'Neill, President  
  in the Chair  
  Mr. Stephen Abrams  
  Mr. Kermit V. Burnett  
  Ms. Sharon W. Cox  
  Mr. Reginald M. Felton  
  Mr. Walter N. Lange  
  Mr. Christopher Lloyd  
  Ms. Mona M. Signer  
  Dr. Jerry D. Weast, Secretary/Treasurer

Absent:                   Mrs. Beatrice B. Gordon  
  Mrs. Nancy J. King

Ms. Molly Ruhl, Clerk of the Montgomery County Circuit Court administered the oath of office to Mr. Burnett, Ms. Cox, and Mr. Lange.

Re:    **STATEMENT BY MS. COX**

"This campaign has renewed my appreciation for human kindness and generosity of spirit. So many people provided an incredible amount of help.

Of course, some of them had to ... I couldn't have done it without the support of my family, including my mom, my dad, my sisters and brother, my wonderful husband and sons who worked tirelessly and gave up many Saturdays to hand out literature, stickers and candy at parades and events.

I wouldn't have won without the amazingly generous gifts of time, talent, energy, ideas and emotional support for my friends, neighbors, and the new friends who offered their help. For some of them it was virtually a full-time job. I owe all of them more than I can ever repay. And, I always appreciated my opponent's commitment to the high road.

Someone commented to me that they thought running a countywide campaign takes courage. I disagree. True courage so often goes unrecognized that we sometimes confuse commitment or tenacity with courage. While it doesn't take courage to run for office, the real courage of others inspired me to run.

I was inspired by the courage of Bea Gordon's principled position and solo voice not to

increase class size and Mona Signer's courage in consistently putting forward the best interest of children without regard to personal or political consequence.

As an advocate for children, I have encountered other individuals whose courage is awe inspiring. When I was MCCPTA president, I met a young man at an African American Parents' Council meeting. He was the quintessential successful single guy, beginning a career in technology, his whole adult life before him. That young man traded his bachelorhood for parenthood to take care of his sister's child, a high school student who had run into trouble at home in Chicago. Because of that young man's courage, that child had a second chance.

When I worked for the Collaboration Council, I met a mother who was making the rounds of government offices trying to find help for her son who wanted to drop out of school. He wasn't doing well and wanted to do to work for his father who was spending 16-hour days, six days a week in the family store. This mother was desperately and courageously trying to find the help her child needed to finish school and have choices for the future beyond the family store.

From those who dedicate themselves to helping our most profoundly troubled students to those who work every day with our hormonally charged middle and high schoolers, there are countless examples of real courage among parents, staff and community members. Their dedication to the education and welfare of children inspired me to serve on the Board.

I will strive to be a Board member who has the heart to grant hardship transfers so that a troubled child gets a second chance. I will strive to ensure our schools offer students and parents the programs, supports and interventions that will help children successfully turn education into the key to a better future.

I look forward to working with staff, community, and my fellow Board members to intelligently craft goals and policies, implement strategies and evaluate our effectiveness against the measure of the best interest of children.

This parallel to a classic movie's theme of courage, brains and heart does not mean that I think the superintendent is the wizard. Although, I'm sure, he feels he's not in Kansas anymore!

We are all here for the children. Our school system and our community, including business and government, have the courage, brains, and heart to find the best strategies for improving achievement for all students. And as long as we take ourselves a little less seriously than we take our jobs, our students and our citizens will know, there's no place like Montgomery County."



**Re: STATEMENT BY MR. LANGE**

“What a privilege it is to be here today, to be installed as a member of the Montgomery County Board of Education at this time in history.

These are exciting times and challenging times. I don't think public education has ever had the national attention that it has now.

Both presidential candidates have been giving major emphasis to education. George Bush has adopted the slogan ‘Leave No Child Behind,’ from Children's Defense Fund.

And Al Gore has said ‘It is time to treat and reward teachers like the professionals they are.’

They are both right.

We in Montgomery County have had a long and proud tradition of an excellent school system. However, while some of our students do extraordinary things, many are average, or less than average. Our responsibility is to provide the best possible education for all of them.

During the weeks and months before the election, I met with families all across Montgomery County, who represent the broad diversity of our residents, whose children have the full range of learning and physical abilities. I met with educators at every level who described the challenges they face every day. I met with community leaders and elected officials who described the many complex issues that affect the schools and the related programs and services for communities and families.

What I learned confirmed what we already know: that all parents care deeply and want the very best for their children; that the vast majority of educators cares deeply and wants to do the very best for the kids.

We in Montgomery County have such tremendous opportunity to set an example for the nation. We have dedicated and concerned citizens and elected officials and a truly dynamic multicultural community. We have it all. We just have to mobilize all this energy, empower our people, and provide opportunities for the full participation of everyone. People need to know how to help; they need to know that their help is wanted, needed and important.

Marci Syms says that the educated consumer is the best customer. I believe that. I believe that parents and community members will be more active participants, more effective advocates, better partners when they know more. When they feel that their

participation is truly important.

What must be done is to truly work on the goals the Board of Education adopted in 1991 and reaffirmed just last year.

**1. Ensure Success for Every Student**

For every child, regardless of background, language, ability or family wealth. So we must work on reducing class size, strengthening the ESOL program and the special education program, and providing counselors in realistic numbers.

**2. Provide an Effective Instructional Program**

We must continue our efforts to strengthen the curriculum and ensure that it is aligned, coordinated, and consistent and to recruit and retain the very best teachers.

**3. Strengthen Productive Partnerships for Education**

Recognizing that schools and teachers cannot do it all, we must build relationships with all stakeholders: parents, teachers, employees, students, community members, faith-based communities, business people, members of our many ethnic and cultural communities, and elected official at all levels. We need to encourage more mentors, more volunteers. We need to ensure that families and children have access to support systems.

**4. Create a Positive Work Environment in a Self-renewing Organization.**

A positive work environment that is characterized by mutual respect for all staff and teachers, for parents and community members, for students. An environment that provides opportunities for ongoing learning and development for staff. An environment that supports and encourages the idea of lifelong learning.

Our schools have a large mission: To provide the best possible education for all children... But what does that mean?

We must do more than provide the foundation for careers, for earning a living.

Will our children have the habits of heart and mind so that they can work with others for the common purpose? Will our children understand the interdependencies of industry and agriculture, science and law, and economics and the arts?

Will our children understand the history of their peoples? Will they appreciate the many things that all cultures hold dear? Will they be able to work together, in mutual respect?

Will our children be prepared to speak (and write) with clarity of thought and with a sense

of justice about the challenges that face present and future generations?

And with all of this will they remember what we and they learned in Kindergarten (thank you Robert Fulghum):

- Share
- Play fair
- Clean up your own mess
- Don't take things that aren't yours
- Live a balanced life – learn some and think some, and draw and paint and dance and play and work every day some, and
- When you go out in the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together.

So as we in MCPS continue to do our work, let us look out for one another, let's hold hands, and stick together.

We have lots to do.

I close with a quote that I found some years ago: 'It is not enough to be busy, The question is what are we busy about.'

I can think of nothing more important to be busy about than the business of educating young people. I am honored and privileged to serve on the Montgomery County Board of Education. I look forward to working with each and everyone so that together, we can provide the best possible education for all of our children."

**Re: STATEMENT BY MR. BURNETT**

"I will start out like most athletes by thanking God because He put me here. It is an honor to be a Board member for another term. It is for me truly a dream that has come true because I worked hard for this and wanted to do this for many, many years of my life. I started out at Howard University in the School of Education and got my degree in elementary education because I loved children. But, my life took a different turn, and I went into the military with my commission as a second lieutenant.

When I moved back to the Washington, D.C. area, a good friend who had been the dean of education at Howard University was now the president of Albany State University. He said, 'There are other ways to work with children, and you need to find the way that is appropriate for you.' I know that I have. This is my calling, and I am glad to have answered it.

Without a doubt, I did not get here alone. To the 212,000 votes, I appreciate every one. To all the people who supported me (even though I did not have an opponent) and still

believed I had a job to do on the Board, I will not let you down in the next four years. This is a promise. To my favorite fan, and I never really met her, Gene Winegartener's daughter, Molly, was quoted in *The Washington Post* magazine. She voted by absentee ballot from Philadelphia, and said she voted for Kermit because of Kermit the Frog. She also voted for me because if this poor guy loses, how pathetic it would be. 'So, I voted for him to make him feel good about himself.' And, being here today, I truly feel good about myself.

To my fellow Board members, Chris, Reggie, Pat, Steve, Mona, Bea, and Nancy, I have learned so much from you. What makes me the Board member I am today is you, who have had confidence in me and supported me. I have learned from each one of you how to be a good Board member, and I appreciate that.

To the staff who have answered my questions, thank you so much for enlightening me and helping me to understand a bureaucracy that is very difficult to comprehend. Thanks to my godfather, he knows who he is.

To me, this is the most important job in Montgomery County. I do not want to take anything from the County Executive or members of the Council. This job affects 135,000 children who are our future – future doctors, future lawyers, future service workers, future teachers, future county execs. We prepare them to take on the role of responsible citizens. We prepare them to move this county forward. This is way I see it as an important job.

A free and appropriate education is our fundamental right and is not to be taken lightly. It is the cornerstone of the nation and our measure of success. To use Molly's words, it is one of the things that will make a child feel good about themselves when all other things are not equal. Each and every one of us must reach out to our children regardless of race, creed, color, or nationality. Not only to reach out, but to embrace.

There are many things we have started over the past couple of years. The one I am most proud of and thank Dr. Weast for is our *Call to Action*, which uses the goals the Board established. It will be difficult to complete everything I would like to, but I will refocus myself in certain areas that are key. Those areas include the following: I want to work with parents to get them more involved in their children's education; it is paramount that they do. I want to place more emphasis on alternative programs because those children are sometimes forgotten. I want to improve the academic performance of African American and Hispanic students. I do not know if we will be able to close the gap in the next four years, but I want to continue to work in that direction and raise the standard and expectation for every child in MCPS. There is a lot of work ahead of the Board, and there is so little time. I look forward to working with the Board, community, and staff to accomplish our goals. This is a great county, and this is a great school system. In the words of Malcolm X, education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the

people who prepare for it today. Thank you.”



Re: **PRESENTATION TO RETIRING BOARD MEMBER**

Mr. Felton gave a brief statement followed by a presentation of mementos that were reflective of Ms. Signer's service on the Board of Education.

Re: **STATEMENT BY MS. SIGNER**

"For the past four years, it has been my honor and privilege to serve on the Montgomery County Board of Education. My service on the Board has given me the chance to repay the Montgomery County Public Schools in some small measure for the wonderful educations my own children have received and to work on behalf of all children so that they have those same opportunities.

I owe a debt of gratitude to many people, and although time will not permit me to name all of them, I do want to mention a few. First, my family – I want to thank them for the sacrifices they made during my term of office. My husband, Rob, gave me the opportunity to pursue this dream, and his support never wavered. He often rearranged his own work and travel schedules to accommodate mine, and he was there for our children when I could not be. My children, Scott and Laura, never complained when I missed their activities because of the press of Board business. More importantly, their school experiences informed my decisions as a Board member because I had first-hand knowledge of what goes on in our classrooms. They have been an everyday reminder of why I chose to run for office. Laura, even though I am no longer on the Board, you still have to do your own laundry.

I thank the Friday lunch bunch, especially Mary Ann Bowen, Jean Mallon, Phyllis Feldman, Ginny Hillhouse, and Candy Shimming for their support and encouragement. And, I promise whatever I pursue in the future, Friday afternoons will always be yours.

I thank MCPS staff, especially those in our schools, who have created a school system for which we are justifiably proud. I am also grateful to staff in the Board of Education office – George Margolies, Fran Brenneman, Roland Ikheloa, Lois Stoner, Lori Rogovin, Roz Phillips, Gail Holder, and Dee Niles, whose behind-the-scenes support enables Board members to carry out their responsibilities effectively. To Paul Vance and Kathy Gemberling, whose stewardship during the recession in the 1990s kept MCPS on an even keel. To Larry Bowers, whom I first saw in 1990 when he ran the slide projector during Harry Pitt's operating budget presentation. Larry, in the intervening ten years, you have grown a lot – grayer. To Dr. Weast, you do not fool me one bit. Beneath that farm-boy persona lies a razor-sharp intellect and keen political instincts. I urge you to continue to reach outside MCPS for new ideas and programs, building on what we do well, and looking critically at what needs improvement.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Board members, past and present, who so graciously shared their knowledge and expertise with me. To Sharon DiFonzo, who began giving me valuable advice on election night four years ago and has not stopped since. You are the only person I could call at 2 a.m. and know you would be awake, too. To Marilyn Praisner, whose ability to ask tough questions and get the answers, is a model for all of us. To Roscoe Nix, a truly gentle man who understands that the Board of Education exists for the benefit of children. To Reggie Felton, a consensus builder whose sense of humor was a welcome respite when we took ourselves too seriously. We could always count on you to cut to the heart of the issue by asking 'and, so in layman's terms, this means?' And, Reggie, even though you do not live in Potomac, you still have champagne tastes. To Bea Gordon, my friend and mentor for the last four years, who has been leader not only on this Board, but also statewide and nationally. Her wealth of knowledge will be sorely missed. To Chris Lloyd, the fifth student Board member with which I have served. You have shown courage and maturity well beyond your years. Because of your unique status as a student, you have knowledge that an adult Board member will never possess. Bring that knowledge to the table, and always remember that this school system's mission, the sole reason it exists, is provide you and the 135,000 students you represent with the best education possible. And, finally, to Sharon Cox, it has been my pleasure to know you first as a colleague in MCCPTA and now as a friend. I congratulate you on your election to the Board, it is richly deserved. And, I know that for the next four years you will always put children first.

Re: **STATEMENT OF MRS. GORDON**

The following statement was read by Mr. Lloyd:

"I am sorry that I can't be at the swearing-in this afternoon. I am on the NSBA Magna Award judging panel and we are meeting today and tomorrow. I have asked Chris to make my comments for me because I admire his integrity as a Board member and know that he represents all that is right in public education today. My words of appreciation seem woefully inadequate when compared to the opportunity that I have had to work with so many fine professionals over the last 20 years. My comments are best summed up in a poem 'Oh, I've Been Lots of Places,' with apologies to Dr. Suess.

Today is my day,  
I am off and away

Oh, I've been lots of places  
And seen lots of faces

I met lots of people over these 20 years  
Some brought me great laughter and others brought tears

There's family named Lisa, Christina, and Steve  
In my abilities they always believe

My mom and my dad they were so proud  
'We knew you could do it,' they said out loud

And then there are friends from Page, PB, and Tamarack  
They have been there to give me a pat on the back

Church ladies at Copeland's for lunch  
Thank you for being such a wonderful bunch

I came up through the PTA ranks  
And lots of people deserve sincere thanks

They're Drs. Villani, Pitt, Rohr, Fountain, and Vance  
Mrs. Gemberling, Larry Bowers, Bob Hacker, all gave me a chance

Oh, I've been lots of places  
And seen lots of faces

Elections I won with so many votes and no pregnant chads  
Mary Ann and Phyllis heard Blair Ewing yell, 'Gads!'

Jon Simms, Carrie Baker and Shervin Pischevar  
Outstanding student members – have all really gone far

Reggie, Mona, Chris and Alan Cheung, too  
All honorable Board members I'm glad that I knew

The Board Office helped me to grow  
Unfortunately, around and not head to toe

Tom Fess, Mary Lou, Roland, Fran, and Gail  
Remember you're always the wind in my sail

Mary Helen, and Cindy and Melissa Woods  
Over dinner we have shared our can'ts and coulds

Oh, I've been lots of places  
And seen lots of faces

The meetings were many, the perks were a few  
Working with old friends and meeting the new.

They called me Prez at MABE and NFUSSD  
With honorable people those groups I have led

Conferences, meetings, seminars, workshops – what fun  
At least there were great meals when we were all done

I've visited 130 schools and read lots of books  
Eaten cafeteria food – what wonderful cooks!

The warehouse, cook chill, offices, and depots, too  
I've visited them all one time and some quite a few

Great secretaries, IAs, bus drivers and clerks  
Super teachers and principals for MCPS works

Oh, I've been lots of places  
And seen lots of faces

Nancy, Pat, Walt, remember your foes to respect  
Your governance duties please don't neglect

Kermit and Steve ask questions, read the report  
With Dr. Weast hold down the fort

Sharon, I know that you'll keep kids first  
Remember you're in this for better or worse

Oh, I've been lots of places  
And seen lots of faces

Presidents, governors, some meek and some mild  
None is as wonderful as the face of a child

Keep that child's face as a vision  
Whenever you make a decision

Oh, I've been lots of places  
And seen lots of faces

I'll go many more in the 20, I guess  
But no place will be quite like MCPS!"

Re: **STATEMENTS OF BOARD MEMBERS**

Board members welcomed Mr, Burnett, Mrs. Cox, and Mr. Lange and thanked Mrs. Gordon and Ms. Signer for their work on the Board of Education and wished them well in all future endeavors.

Re: **ADJOURNMENT**

The swearing in was adjourned at 4:35 p.m. and was followed by a reception.

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PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY

JDW:gr