

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
October 21, 2002

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met with the officers of the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Monday, October 21, 2002, at 7:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mr. Reginald M. Felton, President
 in the Chair
 Mr. Kermit V. Burnett
 Ms. Sharon Cox
 Mr. Walter Lange
 Mrs. Patricia B. O'Neill
 Mr. Larry Bowers, Acting Secretary/Treasurer

Absent: Mr. Stephen Abrams
 Mrs. Nancy J. King
 Mr. Mihyar Alnifaidy, Student Board Member

After introductions, the agenda was set forth::

1. Code Blue
2. Parent Involvement/Communication
3. Academic Excellence/Curriculum Issues
4. CIP Testimony Format/Process

Code Blue

MCCPTA thought that security guards should supervise students, especially when sending elementary children to portables. Some elementary schools did not use portables since it was deemed it was unsafe to expose small children to high traffic areas. Others disagreed and thought each school had a different strategy to ensure the safety of all its students with the mental health needs of students and staff taken into consideration. It was pointed out that Code Blue does not address the needs of special education students, especially those who have jobs in the community. There was a disparity among schools on the use of parent volunteers: some schools welcomed volunteers and others refrained from using them.

There was a brief discussion about the letters (all translated) that were sent to staff and parents. There was information available in the media and on the website. Much was learned from this crisis, and the process will be refined as a result of the lessons learned.

One parent noted that bus drivers were calling in sick because they thought it was unsafe. Staff responded that there had been good attendance by drivers.

There was a discussion on the impact of the crisis on athletic games. Staff was investigating alternatives to fulfill the schedules and qualify for the playoffs. There was a concern voiced about seniors and applications for college.

Overall, Code Blue was successful in protecting children and the school system was commended for its actions. Staff helped children feel secure and communicated effectively with parents, parents had been contacted to help, and letters and other communications had been made available to the community.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

MCCPTA thought parents should be involved in dialogues concerning (1) issues of curriculum, (2) expulsion/suspension and alternatives, (3) outreach programs in "parentese" not educational jargon, (4) special education programs in the community, (5) an MCPS tutorial on how to access the system, and (6) how to help parents to help their children.

The Board pointed out that Policy ABC, Parental Involvement, will be finalized by the Board on October 28, 2002. The policy addresses two-way communication and how MCPS structures outreach to be consistent throughout the system in communicating with parents. Parental involvement is essential to a strong academic performance by students. The *Aim High* brochure is a guide on how to access the system. The principal is key in helping parents understand how to help their children and how to access the system.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

MCCPTA acknowledged that MCPS has done a good job of writing the new curriculum and results have been excellent. There are issues to be addressed regarding gifted and talented, special education, ESOL, and the implementation of curriculum. There needs to be a plan for staff development and the transition to the new curriculum.

Board members replied that staff training is a priority. All staff have been trained on the early childhood initiative. Consistency of teaching and grading is critical throughout the system, and the new grading and reporting policy will address most of those concerns. The new policy will require grades to be based on academic indicators and course outcomes.

CIP/TESTIMONY

MCCPTA thought the time was right to change the format for the facilities hearings. It suggested one night of testimony and one night of dialogue on facilities needs and funding issues.

Board members replied that a dialogue should include other agencies such as the County Council and Park and Planning Commission. The state and county face a funding deficit, and all agencies must work together for what is best for children.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JDW:gr