

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
December 4, 2008

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Thursday, December 4, 2008, at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Mrs. Nancy Navarro, President
in the Chair
Mr. Christopher Barclay
Ms. Laura Berthiaume
Ms. Shirley Brandman
Ms. Sharon Cox
Dr. Judy Docca
Mr. Philip Kauffman
Ms. Quratul-Ann Malik
Mrs. Patricia O'Neill
Dr. Jerry Weast, Secretary/Treasurer

Absent: Mr. Steve Abrams

Ms. Loretta Knight, Clerk of the Montgomery County Circuit Court, administered the oath of office to Mr. Barclay, Ms. Berthiaume, and Mr. Kauffman.

Re: **STATEMENT BY MR. BARCLAY**

“During the Thanksgiving Holiday, I had a conversation with my cousin and he asked “Why would you put yourself through the stress of being on the Board of Education”? Without pause, I told him because of my children. When I said it I did not simply mean my children, but all children. All children who, just like mine, have hopes and dreams. Children who have varied learning abilities, come from a range of economic backgrounds, and are from all races and ethnicities need the same thing to be successful – a good education.

When I was a rep for the NAACP Parents’ Council we used to use the phrase OPC – other people’s children. We have to be committed to help other people’s children. My mission as a single Board member is to give support and a voice to those children and families who, many times, are not heard from and go unnoticed or don’t know how to speak up and take their rightful place in the dialogue.

We live in a privileged county with significant resources. Even though current times may make us concerned, the fact of the matter is we have a tremendous amount to work with. At the same time, we have a tremendous responsibility as our county is growing more and more diverse. Here in MCPS we have made tremendous strides – improving test scores, increased participation in highly rigorous courses – by national standards, we have a very successful school system. As we continue to grow more and more diverse we must ensure

that those successes are experienced by ALL children. In my view, we do that based on a growing commitment to equity. It is our systemic commitment to putting resources where they are needed that excites me about doing this exhausting work. In my humble opinion, EQUITY IS THE LYNCHPIN TO SUCCESS FOR EVERY CHILD!

If we are truly going to be successful in eliminating the “achievement gap” EQUITY IS KEY. If this system is serious about reducing the disproportionate suspension rate of African American, Latino, and Special Education students, then EQUITY IS KEY. If we are going to be able to eliminate the characterization of our schools as “red zone and green zone” and simply have high-performing schools across the board, then equity is the key.

I was told that a former Montgomery County official once said that the county budget is a moral document. What a way to think about it and I agree our school budget is a moral document. That document gives life to the vision we have for our children. Not simply on how much money we can spend on programs, but it gives life to our priorities. Our budget lets our constituents know that we value our staff and the work they do. It also lets folks know that we are committed to middle school reform and small class size. Our budget is one manifestation of the Board’s commitment to equity. To get to that budget, we need a Board that is guided by a vision of empowering ALL children.

So, when I reflect back on my cousin’s question – Why the Board of Education? – I would only add that, as much as I want and need to represent those who have not had a voice, I also believe in the power of young people to do great things when given the resources and the support.

So, I say thank you. Thank you for giving me the privilege of returning to a Board that oversees a school system that is trying to provide a stellar education for all young people of Montgomery County.”

Re: STATEMENT OF MS. BERTHIAUME

“Thank you all for being here tonight, as we begin a new journey together. I want to start by thanking those who made this possible. First, my husband, Dave, whose flexibility and willingness to support me in my quest to be a public servant has been so steady. I want you all to know what a fantastic role model he is to our children. I know I am the envy of a lot of women here tonight. Thanks to my children for their sacrifices, past and future, as well – I hope that I am providing a role model for them, not just about what women can do but also about the importance of giving back and of serving others, even when, especially when, it involves sacrifice. Thanks to my parents and to my in-laws for all their support, and especially to my mother and father, who drove around the east of the county putting out signs, and then my mom, who stood at Leisure World for hours, getting me hundreds of votes.

There are so many people who volunteered their time, who gave money and coffees and

who worked at the polls that there just isn't time tonight to thank you all by name. To all of those people, some of whom were named in the e-mail we sent out after the election, please know that I am deeply grateful for your support and your help. Many of the elected officials and community leaders in the room tonight supported me through official endorsements, word of mouth, and e-mails out to their supporters – thank you all. I want to thank my mentor in politics, Senator Jennie Forehand, who set my feet on this path. I also want to mention just a few people whose names most of you will not have heard, because they are ordinary, yet extraordinary people who have made a difference. Thanks to my trio of friends who gave up many, many hours of their time: Anne Simcox, Teresa Defino, and Bridget Newton. I also want to thank John Barkanic, my very diligent treasurer, Kate Ostell, who arranged all the coffees, and Matt Reese for showing up and working so very many football games and parades and other events. Finally, to all the hundreds of teachers and retired teachers who stood at polling places from before dawn to the bitter rainy end of the day, thank you.

I want to say a quick word of thanks to my friends and neighbors, Bob and Lyda Astrove. I appreciate your support and your dedication to ensuring that this school system changes its approach toward the special needs community. I look forward to working with you and the many other frustrated and overwhelmed special needs parents to bring us to a time when you really are valued partners in your children's educational choices. I also want to say to our special education teachers and staff, thank you. I will be at the MCCPTA ceremony honoring you come spring, because you deserve particular recognition as you go above and beyond every single day.

To the Parents Coalition as a whole, I am sure I will catch some grief from you, maybe justified, maybe not. That's OK, I can take it. I just want to let you know that ears do prick up when the watch dog barks. So here's to you. Bark away.

I got a lot of well wishes, e-mails, and notes from people after the election results came in. I even got a plant and some lovely flowers. I am grateful to all of the senders, but I was touched by two messages in particular. One said, I have never seen anyone work harder. It was really heartwarming to get that affirmation. The other said, you remained true to yourself on the campaign trail. That message brought tears to my eyes. Remaining true to why I ran and to my own conscience – that will be my touchstone. My first downpayment on this was to keep my campaign promise to take a 5 percent cut in my pay as a Board member, and I have made those arrangements.

I am going to keep my remarks very brief. I stand here tonight ready to listen and learn, ready to have conversations with anyone and everyone, whether that is with fellow Board members or members of the public. I look forward to working with all of our elected officials, because I think working across jurisdictional lines is very important. I remain convinced that what unites us tonight is far greater than what divides us, if only we are willing to see it. I also think we need to be reminded that children come with parents, and there is no getting around that fact, much as it often seems to be forgotten. The vast

majority of parents, of every background, want safe schools for their children. The vast majority of parents, of every color, want appropriate academic pacing that challenges their children without overwhelming them. The vast majority of parents, of every religion, want their children to have a good teacher in a classroom with clean air and a comfortable temperature in a modern building. There is no substitute for seeing our children first through the eyes of the people who know and value them most, and that is through the eyes of their parents. I am hopeful that in our diversity, in our common experience as people who value children, in our common identity as seekers of the American Dream, we will shape our children's education to enable them to meet the new challenges they will face, and that we will do so head on, eyes open, and willing to approach each other with honesty but also with respect."

Re: STATEMENT OF MR. KAUFFMAN

"In my day job, I work for the Department of Veterans Affairs. For a civil servant, there can be no greater mission than supporting our nation's veterans, especially those who have served during a time of war. Now, with my new position on the Board of Education, I am fortunate to be able to serve the needs of children. I cannot say which is more important, but the responsibilities are equally great.

I want to express my gratitude for those who supported me over the years and who assisted me in this campaign. First, thanks to my campaign manager, Sharon St. Pierre. Sharon did all the things involved in running the campaign, but more importantly, she kept me calm. I never had to worry about the details as I knew I could rely on Sharon to get everything done. I want to acknowledge my treasurer, Gareth Owen, who made sure that the checks were cashed, the bills were paid, and the reports were filed. Steve Bolen was my trusty confidant. I could always count on his daily 7:30 morning call to discuss and analyze where we were and what we needed to do. I want to thank Patti Twigg, who quickly and efficiently managed my e-mails and got out my messages as soon as I wrote them. I also want to thank all the other members of my steering committee, who gave up many Sunday evenings to brainstorm strategy. A special thanks goes to Maryland State Delegate Anne Kaiser, who performed outreach on my behalf to the members of our state delegation. Thanks to all the organizations, elected officials, and community members who endorsed my candidacy and provided needed support. Finally, I want to acknowledge my family. First, a giant shout out to my daughters Rachel and Jordi, who are viewing this webcast at their college dorms in Pennsylvania. They formed the sticker brigade, and just loved to get out of bed on summer weekends to attend another parade or campaign event. Prior to the election, they did their part in securing a flood of absentee votes for me from their college friends. Last, but not least, is my wife Beth. Beth has been a true partner and has been with me every step of the way, through two campaigns. This swearing-in is for her also.

In my campaign, I pledged, if elected, to work to ensure that the needs of every child were met, in every school, in every part of the county. Campaigning throughout our county only reinforced the view for me that there is more we must do to meet that goal. As a system, MCPS has much to be proud of. There is no doubt that it is one of the best school systems in the nation and it certainly meets the needs of many of its students. However, the perception remains that far too many of our most fragile students, those with special needs, face a system that only reluctantly provides them the education they are entitled to under the law. Even then, many believe that they must fight for even a basic education, much less one that maximizes their potential. Many of our more capable students are not challenged appropriately, especially in elementary and middle school. The minority achievement gap, despite our best efforts, has grown by some measures. I think that we can do better for all children.

We must also address the taxpayers in our county. We are facing a fiscal situation unparalleled in MCPS history. Now, more than ever, our citizens need to be assured, with greater certainty, that the dollars provided to MCPS are effectively and efficiently spent. If we expect the public, especially those without children in our schools, to continue to support public education, we must make clear what we are doing and why, for whom, at what cost, and with what results. People want to know and have a right to know how well their tax dollars are spent. If we do not address that issue more effectively, citizens will continue to say that the school system does not have interest in accountability, which is truly ironic, as MCPS is much more accountable for results than other government agencies.

Even as MCPS prides itself on continuous improvement, I hope that the Board of Education will consider new approaches to improve its oversight responsibilities. We need to provide improved access to community members if we are to learn about what is working and what needs improvement in our schools. We need to seek out a wider range of views when we evaluate programs and policies. While many school systems justifiably look to Montgomery County as a leader, we do not have all the answers. We can and we should look elsewhere to learn from other systems' successful practices.

Finally, I want to thank Steve and Sharon for their service on the board. They have been a source of guidance for me over the years and have welcomed me in the last month as I have tried to get up to speed on various issues. I know that I can count on them in the future and I wish them well.

It is an awesome responsibility to serve on the Board of Education, especially in a county like ours that puts such a high priority on education. MCPS is a system that prides itself on embracing new challenges and in that spirit I dedicate myself to the work that has already begun with energy and enthusiasm. I am honored that the voters have elected me and I am committed to doing what I think is right for all children.

Re: **PRESENTATION TO RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS**

Mrs. O'Neill made a presentation to Ms. Cox.

Re: **STATEMENT OF MS. COX**

"The past eight years have been a lot of work and a lot of fun. I have to recognize a few folks; and I'm going to start at the top. Hi Mom! Thanks for always making me feel like I can do anything.

Family and friends determine my quality of life. Our three intelligent, caring, and successful sons often advised and inspired me. (We are thrilled to welcome Patrick's smart and lovely fiancée. Finally I get to shop for a girl!) And, I couldn't have survived without my wonderful husband. Our 30th year together was the best yet, and not just because we celebrated in Napa and Sonoma! I am so lucky – life with you is still an exciting adventure.

I am also lucky to have so many true friends who helped me get elected and, most importantly, retain perspective. Sometimes you can forget that MCPS is only a small part of a big world. I especially have to thank Ginny and the Friday lunch bunch, Karon and Dave, Susan, Gabe, John, Angela, and Cassandra.

Within MCPS, folks in the Board office are so nice and much less schizophrenic than you might expect for people with eight bosses. Thanks to Roland for insights into MCPS culture; Glenda and Suzann for so professionally staffing the policy committee; Laura for legislative advocacy; and Becky, Kathy and Martha for keeping calendar, correspondence, and me on track.

There are so many folks in Central Office with whom I worked and for whom I have the utmost respect. Special thanks to all the folks who did so much policy work, especially Stephanie, Betsy, and Lori-Christina. There are many people I owe. I'm just going to name the ones I know well enough to embarrass.

Suzy Peang-Meth is one of the kindest and wisest people it has ever been my privilege to meet.

Robin Confino's encyclopedic knowledge of the system and no-nonsense honesty were invaluable for informed decision making. Plus, she's got a great sense of humor!

Mike Perich quietly directed a districtwide revolution in systems management that continues to build capacity and improve productivity in schools and offices.

Sherwin Collette – great mind, great vocabulary, and great accent. He also has a marvelous ability to negotiate the best value for the public's technology dollar.

Marshall Spatz and Joe LaVorgna both manage complex and detailed budgets and analyses. Each gentleman treats every Board member's question as if it were the most thoughtful and insightful inquiry ever – that's talent.

Larry Bowers is the g- to guy – a person of intelligence and integrity whose work ethic is unmatched. I realized how firmly entrenched Larry's rep as the omniscient and penurious chief operating officer was one day when, in the ladies room, someone was laying odds on how long it would be before Larry realized there was 2- ply toilet paper in one of the stalls. True story!!

Staff members don't always know your name, but they know you. My favorite was a building service worker who simply called me "Blondie." I'm sure his principal would have fainted if she had heard him, but it made me laugh. On the other hand, members of the community know you well and can be a little assertive in their advocacy. One gentleman was so intent on making his argument as he followed me out of a meeting, that I was forced to ask him to wait *outside* the restroom. That was awkward.

I was very fortunate get to know dedicated administrators, teachers, and support service workers, who, every day, strive to deliver to children a quality education experience. Their high expectations are shared by the wonderfully supportive members of our community, from parents and neighbors to business people. In Montgomery County, staff and community drive excellence.

Of course, I spent the most time with my colleagues on the Board and learned a lot from them. I have to thank Pat O'Neill for making sure I knew the ropes. I admired Steve Abrams' uncanny ability to articulate both the crux of an issue or problem and the choices available to resolve it. Pat and Steve consistently demonstrated that influence and leadership are invested in the member, not the seat or office held.

I so appreciated Reggie Felton, Kermit Burnett and Gabe Romero for supporting a board culture of responsibility to all children, while knocking down barriers for students whose performance was all too predictable by race, ethnicity, disability or socioeconomic status. Later boards on which I served benefitted from work done by those who reduced class size in red zone schools, invested in staff development, approved the systematic implementation of rigorous curriculum, and adopted measures and benchmarks to evaluate student progress.

I want to thank all my colleagues, especially those here tonight, who supported my chairmanship of the Board's policy committee for six years. If I have a legacy, it's in policy.

There are few Boards like us whose policies actively guide the system's strategic plan. Dramatic improvements to teaching and learning are being driven by the implementation of the Grading and Reporting Policy. That is how a Board brings to life its core value that every child can learn and succeed.

I am very proud to have led a successful initiative ensuring the Board's accountability to students and the public for governance decisions through the systematic evaluation of policy implementation.

Of course, there are a few other things I feel good about having had a hand in. With the majority support of my colleagues, my motions: put gyms back into the Capital Improvements Program; established the first upcounty secondary program for highly gifted students; created the Board's own advisory committee on special education; and ensured representation for special schools in the CIP process. I suggested the creation of our legislative platform in 2001, and oversaw the establishment of the Board's Communications Committee in 2004.

I am grateful for my 4-year tenure on the Harvard Public Education Leadership Project team and the Baldrige Steering Committee and related opportunities to help shape MCPS's efforts to eliminate institutional and individual racism and embed and sustain a continuous improvement management system.

In all of this work, my philosophy was that I was elected to use my judgment as the Board provided guidance and direction. I strove to carefully examine recommendations and initiatives to ensure they adhered to our direction and helped achieve adopted goals. To that end, I tried to: obtain and consider as much pertinent information as possible: not confuse special interests with children's interests or substitute anyone's judgment for my own.

I committed to do the public's work in public so that constituents would hear all arguments and know the reasons for my votes and actions. That philosophy served me well and I have absolutely no regrets. Now, I am ready and fairly giddy about embarking on the next phase of my professional life.

Congratulations to the newly elected members. I wish you and the continuing members all the best because Montgomery County's children and families deserve the best.

Finally, I hope to start a new tradition for outgoing Board members. Shamelessly ripping off the system's red hat awards, this recognizes a staff member who has consistently provided dynamic leadership, innovative problem solving, and served as a vigorous advocate for the best interests of children. Because he is a dynamic, innovative, vigorous advocate, please join me in congratulating the *first* recipient of the DIVA award, Jerry Weast.

That concludes the Cox farewell tour.”

Re: **COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS AND THE
SUPERINTENDENT**

Board members welcomed the newly elected members and thanked the retiring members for their work on the Board of Education and wished them well in all future endeavors.

Re: **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. and was followed by a reception.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JDW:gr