

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION AD HOC COMMITTEE**

October 19, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. with the following Board members and support staff present: Shirley Brandman (chair), Sharon Cox, Roland Ikheloa, and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Staff present: Carey Wright, Gwen Mason, Judy Pattik, Heath Morrison, Steve Zagami, and Matt Kamins.

MINUTES

The minutes from September 21, 2007, were approved as presented.

REVIEW OF THE CHARGE FOR THE COMMITTEE

The president of the Board asked each Board committee to review its charge and report back to the Board regarding whether any changes are necessary. The committee noted that there had been a discussion to make this a standing committee of the Board and to drop the Ad Hoc designation. In addition, committee members had proposed consideration for broadening the committee's charge to include other special needs populations.

The committee thought there should be a discussion on the role and purpose of this committee and what the committee is trying to accomplish. The Special Education Ad Hoc Committee was originally established in 2003 to engage in dialogue with individuals and groups concerned about children with disabilities to gather input on concerns and issues relating to the delivery of special education services. Over the years and with the county's changing demographics, issues have been taken up by the committee which have implications beyond special education, such as disproportionality, the impact of HSAs, staffing concerns, and suspensions. Special education students are also represented in the FARMS population and in the African American and Latino populations. As the committee has focused recent discussions on moving toward a model of having all schools embrace all students and accept responsibility for students irrespective of whether they are designated special education or general education, it was suggested that the committee could broaden its focus to include students of other special populations who need appropriate supports in order to be successful in the general education environment such as ESOL students, students in alternative programs, and gifted/talented students. This would still allow for attention to the needs of special education students but would also address implications for other special needs populations. Staff was supportive of the suggestion to broaden the title and purview of the committee. Staff agreed that there are issues impacting special education that affect other offices, such as the Office of School Performance, the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs, and the Department of

Student Services. There could be standing MCPS staff assigned to the committee to address the system's, as well as individual populations' needs.

ACTION: Board staff will work with the MCPS offices to consider options for broadening the committee's scope and provide a proposal for the committee's consideration at an upcoming meeting.

ALIGNMENT OF GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFFING, INCLUDING REVIEW OF STAFFING PLAN COMMITTEE'S PRIOR RECOMMENDATION

The committee was interested in the collaboration between offices in staffing schools. Community members and the Staffing Plan Committee have raised questions about how students are counted in determining staffing formulas and have questioned the separate staffing processes for special education and general education. These questions take on renewed importance as the system moves toward greater inclusion and more co-taught classes.

Staff explained that there is collaboration between the Office of School Performance (OSP) and the Office of Special Education and Student Services (OSESS). Staffing for regular and special education is based on projected and actual enrollments to provide for all students. When class sizes increase, the general education reserve provides more staffing. OSESS provides staff for the needs of special education and coded students in the school. IEP needs determine staffing in the school based on the total number of hours for schools with hours-based staff instruction. Staff explained that if a special education student is included in general education classes 50% or more of the time, this is a trigger for staffing consideration. Individual schools can adjust staffing for school needs in order to take ownership of all students.

Staff indicated that OSP and OSESS are looking at formulas and structures for greater collaboration so that both offices can be in sync to monitor class size and give supervisors an opportunity to talk about individual student needs across special education and general education lines. OSP and OSESS are planning a budget initiative on how to look at staffing implications of greater inclusion. More information on this planning process and any initiatives will be brought to the committee at a future time.

ACTION: Report back on the development of OSP and OSESS collaboration formula and how to address cross cutting staffing needs.

UPDATE ON THE PENDING EVALUATIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY (DSA)

There was a concern by the committee to know what special education programs were being evaluated by the school system. Staff explained the distinction between initiatives which are being formally evaluated by the Department of Shared Accountability (DSA) and

initiatives which are being “monitored” by OSESS. Staff commented that DSA was conducting formal evaluations on the transitioning out of secondary learning centers, the Collaborative Action Process (CAP), and programs for students with emotional disabilities. There is not a formal evaluation of hours-based staffing pilot, but OSESS is collecting data to analyze the effectiveness of this initiative. Furthermore, OSESS is monitoring Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) data.

The committee was interested in getting more information on the special education programs which are being formally evaluated as compared to those being monitored for analysis. Committee members wanted more information about the current process used to determine whether an initiative receives a formal evaluation.

ACTION: Draft a memorandum to the Acting Director of the Department of Shared Accountability asking for information on existing evaluations looking at provision of services to special education students and the timeframe for completion. Schedule a discussion with the committee in January/February to review pending evaluations. (Dr. Wilson)

DATA COLLECTION FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION PROCESS (CAP)

The committee was aware that DSA was conducting an evaluation of CAP which has been implemented over the past few years within MCPS. Committee members were under the impression that the study was nearing completion and had therefore requested an update on the data collection process. Staff offered some perspective on the CAP process. CAP is a four-step problem-solving model for the intervention of student behaviors prior to coding a child as needing special education. Initial monitoring by staff indicate that the CAP process has resulted in a decrease in the students identified for special education from the total number of students referred for some intervention through CAP. The committee asked if CAP had an impact on disproportionality in special education. CAP has frequently been described as one of the tools which will address overrepresentation of minority students in special education. Staff did not have data to share reflecting disaggregation by race and ethnicity but anecdotal feedback suggests that CAP has not yet had a significant impact in decreasing the overrepresentation of minority students in special education. Committee members asked for more data and follow up. Discussion ensued about the need to develop data collection tools that are manageable for staff, but comprehensive enough to generate data necessary to evaluate CAP’s effectiveness. DSA is looking at the problem-solving infrastructure, analyzing the data and time issues, response to a child’s behavior, and the rubric on case reporting and implementation fidelity. The DSA evaluation will also address CAP’s impact on disproportionality. The timeline for completion of DSA’s formal evaluation is next fall.

ACTION: Schedule for the committee discussion when the DSA evaluation is complete.

CROSS FUNCTIONAL GROUPS FOR UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

The concept of Universal Design in technology is to make curriculum and instructional materials accessible to individuals with disabilities through technology based accommodations. UDL benefits non-disabled individuals, as well as whose learning may be facilitated by alternative formats for materials and tools. The Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs (OCIP) and OSESS had a presentation by Dr. Rose, a nationally recognized UDL expert with an overview of key factors, and staff plans to build cross functional teams to develop a blueprint for UDL. The committee asked to be kept up to date on the cross functional groups and any budget impacts. The committee requested that UDL presentations should be advertised to encourage all parents to learn more about this alternative format.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS AND FOLLOWUPS

1. Develop a proposal for consideration of expanding the charge of the committee
2. Report back to the committee on the formal process of collaboration in staffing between OSP and OSESS
3. Report back to the committee on the formal evaluations being conducted by DSA on special education services, including timeline for completion (January/February)
4. Schedule a discussion with DSA regarding the evaluation of CAP
5. Continue to update the committee on progress implanting UDL

WORK PLAN

Review of Special Education Suspension Data
(DSA Report of September 19, 2007)

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.