

# **MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

September 19, 2008

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

Staff and invited guests: Judy Pattik, Kay Romero, Sam Campbell, Carey Wright, Gwen Mason, Joan Sabaka, Ann Turner, Deborah Szyfer, and Steve Zagami .

## **MINUTES**

The minutes from July 18, 2008, were approved.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ALTERNATIVE CENTERS**

As directed by the Board of Education on September 9, 2008, the committee reviewed the current practices for obtaining input about facilities needs for the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) from parents and community members at Special Education Centers and Alternative program sites. Representatives from the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA), and the Stephen Knolls parent community were present. Invitations had also been extended to representatives from the Special Education Continuous Improvement Team (SECIT) and a parent of an alternative program student. These individuals were not able to attend but provided input to the committee chair which was shared with the committee.

Staff from the Division of Long-range Planning described current practices for soliciting input. Representatives from the parent organizations also shared their experiences. Committee members were advised of efforts by MCCPTA clusters to reach out to Rock Terrace School and Carl Sandburg Learning Center and include their facilities needs in the FY 2010 cluster comments. Discussion suggested that these outreach efforts would not be precluded if SEAC were assigned responsibility to do outreach. In addition, committee members were advised that last year SEAC did invite staff from the Division of Long-Range Planning to address community members directly at an open meeting to solicit their feedback on special education center facilities and this was planned again for October 2008. Committee members were also advised that there is an annual retreat where staff discusses the CIP with stakeholders through MCCPTA and this past summer representatives from the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) were also included. In addition, this year, for the first time, staff in the Division of Long-Range Planning sent a memo to the administrators at all special education centers and alternative programs specifically soliciting input on facilities needs

Ms. Cox commented that the system is making an effort to be in touch with those special education centers not represented by organizations such as MCCPTA.

MCCPTA cluster outreach is not a requirement and nothing will guarantee cooperation. Her original resolution was intended to provide a defined pathway for special education parents that was clear and enduring. There is nothing that would preclude the MCCPTA from representing those in the catchment area. Also, individual parent or community members are welcome to comment about the schools. Furthermore, CIP staff should reach out to the administrators in the buildings and not depend on parent input. There have to be clear lines of communication. Finally, it was not her intent to bring special education and alternative centers together since there is a difference between the population and the parent community.

After reviewing and discussing the current practices for obtaining input from special education centers stakeholders, there was consensus among committee members that SEAC was the appropriate entity to represent the facility needs of special education centers which did not have affiliated Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). Recognizing that: (1) SEAC is authorized by COMAR to provide stakeholder input on issues related to special education; (2) the Division of Long-Range Planning has already begun engaging with SEAC; and (3) the current chairs of SEAC support having the committee's charge expanded, the committee members unanimously supported charging SEAC with responsibility to reach out to parents, guardians, and students of the special education centers not affiliated with a PTA and to represent their input about these facilities in the CIP process.

**On motion of Ms. Cox and seconded by Ms. Brandman, the following resolution was unanimously recommended for Board adoption:**

Resolved, That the Special Education Advisory Committee's (SEAC) charge be amended to include acting as a cluster (as defined in FAA-RA, *Long-Range Educational Facilities Planning*) in identifying and providing comments and testimony regarding facility-related interests of the school communities served by special education centers with non-Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) affiliated parent organizations; and be it further

Resolved, That staff from the Department of Special Education Services and the Department of Facilities Management work with the leadership of SEAC to provide information and support equivalent to that provided PTA clusters, to help the committee fulfill this charge; and be it further

Resolved, That the Board of Education will allot SEAC the same amount of time as a PTA cluster during public hearings on facilities issues.

With regard to alternative programs, the committee discussed the absence of any existing umbrella advocacy organization that serves this stakeholder community. One of the challenges to establishing such an entity is the transient nature of the student population. Last year the Division of Special Education and Student

Services invited the Division of Long-Range Planning to a joint meeting with community members from the Emory Grove and McKinney Hills programs to discuss a specific facility related issue. This joint session proved a successful effort to gather direct community feedback. Staff advised the committee that each alternative program schedules regular community meetings during the fall and spring. It was suggested and agreed as a recommendation that staff from the Division of Long-Range Planning should begin attending the spring meetings with alternative program stakeholders to directly solicit their input into the CIP. In addition, it was reiterated that staff continue to reach out to alternative program administrators as well to ascertain their input on facility needs.

**On motion of Ms. Cox and seconded by Ms. Brandman, the following resolution was unanimously recommended for Board adoption:**

Resolved, That the superintendent direct staff to continue and expand upon existing outreach efforts aimed at directly engaging alternative program stakeholders in the facilities planning process, including meeting each spring with alternative program community members to directly solicit their input and soliciting feedback from alternative program administrators about their facilities; and be it further

Resolved, That the Board of Education direct the superintendent of schools to review and revise Regulation FAA-RA, *Long-Range Educational Facilities Planning*, to reflect the charge to the Special Education Advisory Committee in facility planning and the necessary outreach staff has identified for the alternative program centers.

**ACTION:** The resolutions are to be placed on the full Board's agenda.

### **CENTRAL IEP REFERRAL TRENDS**

Staff provided a handout that showed that the disability with the highest referral rates were emotionally disturbed (163) and other health impairment (36). Staff explained the process for the Central IEP and the options available for placement after assessment of all of the data and recommendations.

The committee noted that the number of ED referrals is high and inquired if there was adequate capacity in the ED clusters. Staff explained that in reality there is a decrease in the overall ED population, but the numbers are carefully reviewed when the budget is developed to assure adequate space and staffing. Staff explained how these numbers fit into the Staffing Plan and the work of that committee.

**ACTION:** Staff will provide trend data on CIEP referrals and list of schools for the past five years at the next Committee meeting.

### **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

Ms. Steinberg is in the process of developing the Board's Legislative Agenda. Board concerns include reimbursement for students placed by state agencies at RICA as well as general state aid reimbursement for educational programming at RICA. It was suggested that the issue be presented for MABE consideration.

**ACTION:** Ms. Steinberg will work on Legislative Platform. She will also follow-up with Baltimore RICA, and provide input for Mrs. O'Neill, our legislative liaison, to take to MABE.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the committee will be held on October 17, 2008, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 120.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.