

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

October 11, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. with the following Board members and Board support staff present: Shirley Brandman (chair), Phil Kauffman, Michael Durso, Laura Steinberg, and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Staff members present: Judy Pattik, Chrisandra Richardson, Gwen Mason, Brain Bartels, Felicia Piacente, Bruce Crispell, Julie Morris, Maureen Ryan, Lori-Christina Webb, Frank Stetson, and Brenda Wilks.

Other attendees/guests: Channing Cooper, Kandese Allen, Alicia Cellen, Courtney Green, and Jenelle Diljohn.

Minutes

The minutes from July 19, 2010, were approved, as amended.

SPECIAL EDUCATION POPULATION PROFILE

Ms. Richardson provided information on the federally defined disability categories and enrollment trends by disability. MCPS enrollment figures mirror those of the state as a whole. While Learning Disabled remains the largest group in MCPS, there has been a decline in the number of students identified as Learning Disabled. Autism, Other Health Impaired, and Developmental Delay are the fastest growing groups. She went on to say that service delivery requires looking beyond the primary disability because there is no one uniform student profile. As a result, services needs for students with the same disability range from intense to full inclusion. The goal is to provide a continuum of services, with the law requiring efforts to ensure placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

In response to Board member inquiries, staff provided information about how MCPS plans to address the facility needs of our special education programs. Program locations are highly dependent on enrollment projections. To determine program locations, staff looks at needs, enrollment growth, geographical locations of populations, and other factors unique to each school. Cluster supervisors review every special education student enrolled in a program such as the preschool autism programs to identify the best program location.

Mr. Crispell spoke about the 6-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process and commented that the commitment to providing special education programs/services in home schools sometimes requires placement of portables. He also said that planning staff is proactively planning for special education programming during new school construction and modernizations. For example, even at schools not yet identified for a special education program, facility designs include plumbing rough-ins in two to four classrooms so that grooming rooms can easily be added when a special education program is located at a school. Mr. Crispell also provided information on the upcoming roundtable process that will include SEAC representation, to consider co-locating the Carl Sandburg Learning Center at

Maryvale Elementary when the school is modernized. This would enable the Carl Sandburg program to be housed in a new facility at the Maryvale Elementary School site. The modernization of Maryvale Elementary School is scheduled for completion in January 2018.

Ms. Richardson explained a process map has been created, that involves multiple stakeholders, to assist in making decisions regarding program placements. The process map includes a close review of projections to identify locations for growth or reductions, consultation with the Department of Facilities Management, review by the Office of School Performance, and timeline for contacting principals and the school's Parent Teacher Association leadership to gather input, as well as a timeline to finalize the recommendations. Special Education and Facilities staff meet monthly to monitor enrollment and adjust projections and locations if necessary in order to be as accurate and timely as possible. Mr. Crispell added that facilities staff is also more engaged with Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to best represent the needs of a school's special education community. SEAC representatives are invited to participate in various "roundtable" groups as facilities issues are addressed. Ultimately, the goal is to make sure that programs are located not where space is available, but where there is a need.

ACTION

- Mr. Kauffman asked that staff compare the profile of MCPS' special education population with Fairfax County and provide overall percentage and breakout all categories; does Fairfax provide comparable or greater special education services?;
- Ms. Brandman suggested that when the Board is presented preliminary facility plans for approval, staff should highlight those areas that allow for future build out to accommodate special education programs.
- In preparation for the operating budget, Ms. Brandman asked for any data evaluating the effectiveness of hours based staffing for IEP needs, and any other data to substantiate which special education programs and initiatives are working.
- Mr. Kauffman thought there should be a way to survey special education parents to get specific feedback data on various programs.

SECIT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Mason reported that a project team with broad array of stakeholders has been formed to begin addressing the short and long term recommendations approved by the Board for improving MCPS Transition services to our special education students. The first meeting is scheduled for the end of October with the initial work to focus on the recommendation regarding course offerings. Committee members asked that progress on implementation of recommendations be regularly shared.

ACTION

- Ms. Brandman suggested that a committee member bring greetings to the Project Team.

INSTITUTE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Board members viewed a Take Ten program describing the Institute of Middle School Professional Development for Special Education followed by a discussion with staff. Ms. Mason explained that the Institute is based on a collaboration/partnership between MCPS and Towson University. The Institute provides support for middle school teachers working with special education students in general education settings with opportunities to observe exemplary practices regarding differentiated instruction, co-teaching and implementation of Universal Design for Learning. The Institute is located at Tilden Middle School. Currently MCPS has a grant from MSDE, which provides substitute dollars for release time for teachers to come and observe. This opportunity for observation is integral to the Institute.

ACTION

- Ms. Mason stated that there will be an update memorandum to the Board in January 2011, after two years of the institute at Tilden.

REPORT ON DISPROPORTIONALLY

Mr. Bartels shared the status of the work of the Disproportionally Steering Committee. He explained that two teams, a Professional Development Project Team and an Accountability Project Team have been set up to implement recommendations from the Disproportionally Report. All recommendations are on track for being implemented. Potential budget implications include funding for staffing as well as professional development around targeted intervention strategies.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.