

# MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY

January 21, 2006

The members of the Board of Education of Howard County held a retreat on Saturday, January 21, 2006, at 9:00 a.m., at the United Way Building, 6620 Amberton Drive, Elkridge, Maryland. The meeting was open to the public. The following were present:

Joshua M. Kaufman, Chairman  
Diane B. Mikulis, Vice Chairman  
Patricia S. Gordon  
Mary Kay Sigaty  
Courtney Watson  
Kitty Blumsack, Facilitator, Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)  
Sydney L. Cousin, Superintendent  
Sandra J. Erickson, Deputy Superintendent  
Raymond H. Brown, Chief Operating Officer  
Mamie J. Perkins, Chief of Staff  
Roger Plunkett, Business, Community and Government Relations  
Robin Shell, Ombudsman, Board of Education Office  
Susan A. Shown, Recording Secretary, Board of Education Office  
Arlene Conway, Board of Education Office  
Florence Jackson, Board of Education Office

Chairman Joshua Kaufman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Ms. Blumsack facilitated the discussion among Board members for the following topics. Consensus of Board members and/or considerations are indicated for each item.

## What Counts Public Forum

Three major goals identified:

- Desirable Student Behaviors (most responses).
- Parental involvement.
- Teacher preparation.

Board recommendations:

- Continue to create opportunities to capture opinions – one more round on these three areas.
- Expand *Coffee & Conversation* forums – on these topics—create additional ones (at least three community groups on these areas). Invite *What Counts* participants to become part of the conversation. Create committees or focus groups to come up with ideas, get input from these focus groups.
- Develop systemwide outreach and involvement.
- Board sets aside funds to support efforts in each of the areas (development of materials, identifying best practice programs).

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- Find ways to integrate people's ideas into existing structures in the school system – highlight when ideas came from *What Counts*.

### Policy Review Process

#### Considerations:

- Is the new policy review process working and does the implementation of the new and revised policies result in the Board's intent?
- The number of policy review committees is overwhelming and is creating a burden on staff.
- Policies need to be reviewed on a regular basis, and the process may need more time to work.
- Policy review schedule is too short and does not allow appropriate training to be provided to staff. Training in policy implementation is very critical for school administration.

### Board Committees

#### Recommendations:

- That the Board move to a committee structure with the following committees identified:
  - Policy.
  - Finance, Audit and Budget – operating budget.
  - Curriculum and strategic planning.
  - Facilities and school planning – capital budget.
- Each committee will have three Board members serving on them.
- The Board work group continues to investigate the best committee process.
- The recommendation will be included on the agenda for a future Board meeting.

### Move to Seven-Member Board - 2006

#### Board room remodeling:

- Issues include sight lines with the audience and with each other.
- Board members to sit lower than at the present dais (closer to the floor).
- Table should facilitate discussion.
- Ability to see visual presentations (screens so all can see).
- Ability to hear each other.
- Space for Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Chief Operating Officer, Chief of Staff, and Student Member at table.
- Staff members should feel part of the discussion.
- Common storage area for Board documents (hallway).

Mr. Brown will provide the Board with three possible options. He reminded the Board that the budget for the project is \$300,000.

Alternative meeting sites will be identified for Board meetings during the renovation.

### New Board Member Orientation

Ms. Gordon developed a handbook for new board members that included interviews with staff to describe their roles and responsibilities, etc. One session was held to review the handbook.

Mrs. Mikulis and Ms. Sigaty will build on the work Ms. Gordon has done and create a program of sequenced activities throughout the year with staff and with MABE starting in November and concluding at the end of the year. Modules would be developed and would be conducted by staff and existing Board members.

#### Considerations:

- Past board members can play a role in facilitating the discussion.
- If only one returning Board member, the Board will go for a period of time with only six total members until the seventh member of the Board is chosen.
- Professional development facilitator will also work with Mrs. Mikulis and Ms. Sigaty.

### Board Leadership and Other Items

How do Board members share information in a timely manner when they have attended professional learning opportunities?

#### Considerations:

- Schedule time on the quarterly agenda to allow Board members to discuss their attendance at professional meetings.
- Schedule time (allow five minutes total) on the agenda of public Board meetings for Board members to share highlights of conferences and meetings.
- Prior to the meeting, Board members should talk to the chairman and provide each Board member with a written report, which summarizes the meeting or conference and what was learned.

### Board Member Roles and Responsibilities When Representing the Board

#### Expectations for Board members:

- Remember that each Board member represents the Board of Education.
- Board members will support those things that are in the best interest of the school system.
- Board members have a responsibility to report back to the Board.
- Board members should be aware of “conflict of interest” issues.
- Board members should get guidance from the Board for participation on specific committees, i.e. spending and affordability committee.
- Board members should advocate for the school system.

#### Considerations:

- Update the Board Handbook to include new committee information, e.g. Federal Relations Network (FRN).
- In general, update the Board Handbook.

### Internal Communication

Individual Board member's meetings with staff (Handbook, p. 34, II.C.):

- If a Board member sets up a meeting with staff, the Board as a whole should be aware of the meeting, the topic discussed, information shared, and the outcome of the meeting.
- Staff will update the list of titles and positions for people to contact for information.

E-mail (Handbook, page 38):

- Language in the numbered areas (1-4) should be more general, including general principles of polite and courteous correspondence.
- Two kinds of e-mails: work tools and public correspondence.
- Copy the Superintendent and Board members on e-mails sent to staff (not necessary when forwarding e-mails to staff members from the community). Chairman should use his/her judgment in forwarding e-mails so confidentiality will not be violated.
- Individual Board members should not respond to requests for help on the public e-mails.
- They may, however, respond to other e-mails as an individual, but the response must include the phrase "I am responding as an individual Board member," and the whole board should be copied.
- Ms. Sigaty will schedule a meeting with appropriate staff to discuss problems experienced by Board members with the CLC e-mail service.
- Update this section of the handbook.

Visiting Schools (Handbook, page 38)

- Add language to the first sentence to state that, "as a courtesy, the Board Member should contact the building administrator to schedule a visit."
- Board members should inform the Assistant Superintendent for School Administration (Mrs. Wise) of their visits to schools.
- Board members are encouraged to use Board office staff to schedule visits.
- An individual member of the Board does not have authority to fix problems in the schools.

Board Members' Role During Commencements (Handbook, pages 36-37)

- Look up law on to whom the graduates are presented (podium language).
- Board member always brings greetings and congratulations to the graduates on behalf of the Board (not more than three minutes) at commencement.
- Central coordinator is needed to work with school staff to welcome elected officials and to let them know where to stand, sit, etc.
- Board members hand out diplomas.
- Refer to Mrs. Watson's e-mail suggestions from last year.
- Update this section in the handbook and remove extraneous material.

Role of the Chairman (Handbook page 32)

- Mrs. Erickson and Mrs. Shell will draft something for the handbook as a uniform response from the chair to e-mails.

- Board chair can delegate the duty of responding to correspondence to other board members.

#### Public Forum Protocols

- Public Forum is not a venue for vendors.

#### 2006-2007 Board of Education Goals

- Improve communications and public relations (Ms. Gordon, Mr. Kaufman, Mrs. Mikulis).
  - Public relations – communicating with media, getting the Board’s message out, Board member letters to the editor, articles, proactive meetings with media around themes, etc.
  - Launch a website that supports the school system goals and objectives and is user friendly.
  - Create a matrix to record all the Board is doing in this area.
  - Effectively manage the Board’s relationships with local and state officials to achieve school system goal (staff working on this).
- Governance (Ms. Gordon, Mrs. Mikulis, Ms. Sigaty).
  - Annual self-evaluation of the Board.
  - Successfully integrate the internal auditor into the system.
  - Establish a new Board office structure.
  - Update the Board Handbook (process TBD)
    - See notes from retreat regarding internal communication, school visits, commencement, etc.
- Continue to investigate the use of a committee structure (Mr. Kaufman, Ms. Sigaty, Mrs. Watson).
  - Make a recommendation to the Board.
  - If established, create committee protocols for the committee’s work (assign membership and start the work of the committee).
- Implement plans for the Board’s growth to seven members (Senior staff, Mrs. Mikulis, Ms. Sigaty).
  - Create an orientation program for new Board members (build on current program – see retreat notes).
  - Remodel the current Board Room – see retreat notes.

#### Next steps

- Update the Board Handbook as appropriate.
- Begin work on 2006-2007 Board goals.

The retreat concluded at 2:30 p.m.