

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY
AND
HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL**

April 5, 2006

The Board of Education of Howard County and the Howard County Council held a joint quarterly meeting on Wednesday, April 5, 2006, at 8:15 a.m. The meeting was held in the Board Room of the Department of Education, 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, MD 21042.

Present:

Board of Education

Joshua M. Kaufman, Chairman
Diane B. Mikulis, Vice Chairman
Patricia S. Gordon
Mary Kay Sigaty
Courtney Watson

Howard County Council

Christopher J. Merdon, Chairman
Charles C. Feaga
Guy Guzzone
Ken Ulman

Sydney L. Cousin, Superintendent
Sandra J. Erickson, Deputy Superintendent
Raymond H. Brown, Chief Operating Officer
Mamie J. Perkins, Chief of Staff
Susan S. Shown, Executive Assistant

Sheila Tolliver, Administrator
Jeff Meyers, Legislative Assistant
Ronald Weinstein, County Auditor

Mr. Kaufman called the meeting to order at 8:20 a.m. and welcomed the members of the County Council.

Bridge to Excellence – Math Presentation

Mr. Scott Ruehl, Coordinator of Secondary Mathematics, and Ms. Kay Sammons, Coordinator of Elementary Mathematics, described the prekindergarten through grade 12 mathematics program that was developed and implemented to meet the challenges of achieving county standards of performance, as well as preparing students to meet graduation requirements.

Ms. Sara Andino, Oakland Mills HS, described her experience in the mathematics coteaching program and how it not only accelerated her achievement in mathematics, but also prepared her to perform in higher-level courses.

Mrs. Erickson pointed out the tremendous success of the coteaching program and added that the program gives special education teachers the opportunity to work in an inclusive environment.

In response to Mr. Ulman's question concerning the cost of the coteaching program at the two pilot schools, Mrs. Erickson explained that the basic cost is the salary of two additional teachers for each of the two schools. The program also uses the Cognitive Tutor software, but the same software is provided to all schools and is not exclusively used in the coteaching program.

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Dr. Cousin stated that there is also a coteaching model for language arts. All students must pass the High School Assessments in order to graduate, and the coteaching program assists students who are in danger of not passing the tests. He also noted that the program helps to change the students' attitude towards school so that they want to learn and be successful.

Mr. Guzzone asked if other programs at the two coteaching pilot schools also contribute to the success of the students, i.e. after-school programs at Oakland Mills HS. Mr. Robert Glascock, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, responded that there are other supports in the schools, and he acknowledged that the Oakland Mills community is very active in providing after-school academic programs. He noted that the coteaching program is a controlled environment, and the success of the participating students is measured by internal and external assessments. There are also intervention programs to help students learn to read and to meet the special needs of some students. Staff is looking at ways to measure the success of individual interventions; however the programs must be measured collectively when looking at the school's success.

Mrs. Watson stated that the students must pass four high school assessments in order to graduate, and the requirement is an unfunded mandate.

Ms. Sigaty pointed out that Oakland Mills HS is well supported by its community, and even though Hammond HS does not have the same level of after-school opportunities provided by the community, students in the coteaching program enjoy the same success as Oakland Mills HS students.

Mr. Feaga stated that he was very impressed with the program, especially for an important subject like math.

Ms. Gordon summed up by pointing out that the students in the coteaching program are learning and they are able to master mathematics skills.

Wellness Policy Update

Mr. Brown explained that the wellness policy was developed to meet the requirement of law and to respond to public health concerns. A very comprehensive approach was used to develop the policy and involved staff and community. Physical activity and nutrition are incorporated in the policy, although there have always been separate guidelines for each.

The policy addresses what happens only during the school day and incorporates state guidelines concerning the sale of a la carte items. Approximately 85% of what is currently being provided for snacks will no longer be served. Vending machine selections will be reduced so that sodas account for no more than 50% of the available beverages, and the machines will be turned on only at the end of the school day.

Staff will evaluate the impact of this policy on the school day and students.

Capital Budget – Long-term Structural Deficit

Mr. Kaufman stated that the school system and county are in a period of uncertainty of how revenues will be raised to fund needed maintenance and systemic renovations to existing school facilities.

Dr. Cousin added that a sustainable method of providing funding for capital projects, other than bonds, needs to be identified. The county was fortunate that the excise tax generated more-than-expected funds; however, those funds will be exhausted this year. The capital budget has increased 22% simply through inflation. The problem continues year after year as projects are deferred. Mr. Brown noted that the true increase in capital budget needs is closer to 35-50%, due to the rising costs of labor and materials.

Mr. Guzzone asked if projects are anticipated to continue coming in within the budget based on the state formula and whether or not the state will increase the formula. He also commented that the school system should be proud of completing school construction projects below the budget. Dr. Cousin explained that the state determines the construction formula only once a year, and he cautioned that bids for school construction projects will not continue to come in below the budget as the costs of doing business continues to increase. Mr. Brown noted that the low bid for the Centennial Lane ES project was \$2 million over the budget.

Mrs. Watson commented that the school system's capital budget will most likely be \$20 million less than requested and, unfortunately, renovation projects are the first to be cut.

Mr. Merdon asked what the capital budget shortfall is anticipated to be over the next five years. Mr. Kaufman responded that it would be very hard to try to project the deficit because of the many unknowns that affect available funding.

Educational Foundation

Ms. Mary Schiller, Manager of Community Partnerships, provided a status report on the Educational Foundation. She stated that once the remaining six board members are identified, the Foundation would begin its work. A kick-off celebration is scheduled for Wednesday, September 6, 2006.

Mr. Kaufman explained that the Educational Foundation is independent of the school system, and its bylaws require that projects must support the mission of the school system.

Graduation Schedule

Mrs. Linda Wise, Assistant Superintendent for School Administration, reported that members of the County Council have been invited to attend and participate in graduation exercises. School staffs have been advised of appropriate decorum for elected officials.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.