



Board Meeting

January 13, 2003

Terry R. Troy, *President*
Robert S. Magee, *Vice President*
Eugene C. Chandler
Ruth R. "Robin" Rich
Robert B. Thomas, Jr.
Karen L. Wolf
Mark M. Wolkow
Molly P. Harris,
Student Representative
Jacqueline C. Haas, *Superintendent*
Secretary/Treasurer

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER - President of the Board of Education of Harford County Terry R. Troy called the regular business meeting of the Board of Education to order at 7:00 p.m. January 13, 2003 in the auditorium of Edgewood High School. Mrs. Troy asked for a quorum call which recorded all Board members present except Vice President Robert S. Magee who was excused due to illness. Mrs. Troy directed that Board Member Mark M. Wolkow lead those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Board Member Robert B. Thomas, Jr. reported that the death of a faculty member at Joppatowne Elementary School, Linda Shuler, has left the community in shock. Mrs. Shuler, a 31-year educator who was a reading specialist at Joppatowne Elementary, perished in an automobile accident the previous Saturday. Mr. Thomas said Mrs. Shuler, a former first grade teacher, had taught both of his children and was the "consummate professional and outstanding educator who will be missed." Mr. Thomas led a moment of silence in memory of Mrs. Shuler. Mrs. Troy recognized County Council Members Roni Chenowith, Richard Slutzky, and Dion Guthrie who were present in the audience.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Connie Woodson, leader of the Harford County Public School Achievement Gap Pilot Program, thanked the Board for its support in funding and supporting the program which is "making a difference in the lives of 13 young people in three schools." She said that children are benefiting in many ways from the program which offers assistance to at-risk young people. Mrs. Woodson introduced teacher Dyann Mack and several students in the

program including Rodrigo Poreues, Olajuwon Brown, Brandon Dingle, Anita Kohli, and Elise Galloway who presented the Board with information about what they were learning and how they were benefiting from the program. Mrs. Wolf told Mrs. Woodson that she was “just the right person” for the job.

Mike Burnham, chief custodian at Magnolia Elementary School and president of the local chapter of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) asked the Board to fully fund the maintenance and operations budget. He said that there had not been enough money to complete essential school repair work in the budget for the past several years. He said fully funding the maintenance budget would allow the Harford County public schools “to shine.”

Geri Bishop of Tudor Lane near Bel Air addressed the Board about proposed changes in the middle school Family Life (sex education) curriculum. She said parents had not been directly informed about the prospective changes. About those on the Family Life Citizen Advisory Committee who have reported studies showing there is increased sexual activity among middle schoolers, Ms. Bishop said “if an 11-year old sneaks out to drive the family car we don’t give him his driver’s license.” She said the sixth grade is “much too soon” to teach young people about sensitive sexual issues and wondered how educators would field particularly sensitive questions. She complained that the lack of direct information to parents had “kept them in the dark” on the issue. She said that parents should be the ones to “parent children” and called for parent workshops to educate them on the issues if there is the belief that some parents are not providing proper information about human sexuality.

OLD BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

Acting on the motion of Board Member Robin R. Rich and the second of Board Past President Eugene C. Chandler, the Board voted unanimously to approve items on the Consent Agenda including: Affirmation of Monthly Contract Awards, Minutes from the Board Business Meetings of October 14, November 25, December 9, and December 16, 2002 as well as the Board Work Sessions of November 18 and November 25, 2002; Affirmation of Student Appeal Hearing Decisions 01-01-02, 02-01-02, 03-01-02, 04-01-02, 05-01-02, 06-01-02, 07-01-02, 08-01-02, 09-01-02, 10-01-02, and 11-02-02. Mr. Thomas asked the Superintendent to seek a determination if the Board is required to approve minutes of Board work sessions.

APPROVAL OF CHANGE IN HIGH SCHOOL MIDDLE STATES PARTICIPATION

Director of Secondary Education David A. Volrath brought the issue of the Approval of Change in High School Middle States Participation which had first come to them at the December 9, 2002 meeting. Mr. Volrath reminded the Board of the report which he and

three high school principals had brought to them, noting that the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools had served the Harford County Public School System from its introduction in 1938 until the late 1980s. Mr. Volrath said the review includes a self-evaluation during ten-year cycle reviews. He said the program evaluated programmatic issues, facilities and the types of initiatives provided by the schools. He said, over the past 15 years, the Maryland State Department of Education has taken an increasingly significant role in providing evaluation of student achievement in secondary schools. He noted the Project Basic Fundamental tests, followed by the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) in eighth grade, and, now, the coming of the High School Assessments (HSA) as indicators that there is a significant accountability process which makes the Middle States evaluation redundant and no longer essential. Mr. Volrath said the cost of the program as well as the time it takes from schools and school communities to prepare for the reviews is a significant and no longer needed burden on the schools. In answer to a question by Mr. Thomas, Mr. Volrath said that 18 of Maryland's sub-divisions participate in the Middle States process while six do not. Mr. Volrath said there is a growing number of school systems which are opting out of the process. Mr. Volrath supported Mr. Thomas' assertion that there would remain significant means of accountability if the Middle State process is discontinued in the Harford County Public secondary schools. Mr. Volrath reiterated that the current accountability requirements go much more directly to student achievement than does the Middle States process. Mrs. Rich expressed the Board's direction that secondary principals develop ways by which members of their staffs can visit other school systems to broaden the perspective of those educators, considered to be the most significant loss from the Middle States system which uses teams of educators to process the evaluations. Acting on the motion of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler and the second of Mrs. Wolf and Board Member Mark M. Wolkow, the Board voted unanimously to support the Superintendent's recommendation that Harford County Public Schools withdraw from membership in the Middle States Association for an initial period of five years. A committee will review the decision after four years and provide recommendations for beyond the fifth year.

AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PURCHASE OF ELECTRICITY

John Markowski, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services, and Supervisor of Purchasing, John Miller, reported to the Board on the outcome of its previously approved execution of Supply Agreements for electricity based on competitive bids opened by the City of Baltimore, Bureau of Purchases on January 6, 2003. The Board had provided its authorization to participate in the process at its December 16, 2002 meeting. Mr. Miller reported that the bids were opened on January 6 and evaluated on January 7. Only those accounts that achieved a savings were moved to the new energy providers with the exception of primary service accounts which were awarded to the low bidder. He said a "slight savings" – not as much as previously hoped – will be realized. He said 16 accounts are involved in the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, those for 12 months to Constellation and the 24-month accounts to Pepco. Mr. Miller said the system is "lucky" our accounts are not going up. In expressing his pleasure that the system will be saving some money, Mr. Wolkow moved and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler seconded the motion to approve the contracts.

The Board voted unanimously to support the motion.

PRESENTATIONS

PSAT/SAT REPORT

Gerald Scarborough, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, presented the Board with a report on the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment (PSAT) and Scholastic (SAT) assistance programs in the Harford County Public Schools. In both the mathematics and language arts sections, Dr. Scarborough said efforts had been made to infuse SAT-type items into the curricular offerings as well as the staff development activities which have taken place. He said the PSAT/SAT assessments present rigorous and challenging tests that incorporate higher level thinking skills for those high school students who voluntarily take them. He said utilization of the program with all students would communicate a clear message of high expectations throughout the school system and in turn address the improvement of student achievement with a focus on closing the minority achievement gap. He added that the Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students report recommends equitable and widespread access to appropriate high-level educational opportunities. Dr. Scarborough said the offices of Curriculum and Instruction and Research and Evaluation have been investigating commercial products and services to support and expand the assistance we can provide students and teachers. Increased use of the PSAT/SAT assessments will serve to provide a greater number of students with the opportunity to identify their strengths, provide practice for getting familiar and accustomed to the testing format, set an academic expectation for HCPS and the students, and provide data to evaluate instructional programs as well as shaping staff development offerings. Dr. Scarborough provided the following facts about the PSAT/SAT program: In October, 2002, there were 3,125 students who took the PSAT assessment, the PSAT is administered in October each year, the SAT is administered approximately seven times a year at Bel Air High and two times a year at Aberdeen High School, the PSAT costs approximately \$10.50 per student, and the practice SAT booklets are provided at no cost. He said that commercial products provide a personal skills feedback report that highlights key areas for improvement, practice lessons and quizzes keyed directly to weakest skills, and opportunities for students to re-work the original test, learn from prior mistakes and further reinforce their skills. Dr. Scarborough said the cost will be approximately \$4,000 per high school for the purchase of the site license and software package with enables schools to share individual student data and support materials. The second year, the cost would be about \$2,000 per school. PSAT fees are \$30,000 to administer to one grade level. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler asserted that any program must be able to disaggregate data in order to provide information for minority students. Mrs. Wolf said the system needs to do something to provide high expectations for all students and to make sure that all students are encouraged to pursue the higher level learning skills programs. In January, former Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Deborah J. Heiberger provided the Board with a report about the recent history of the SAT/PSAT program in the Harford County Public Schools. The Curriculum Planning Group concluded that improving SAT scores must be a system wide goal, with a commitment of support and resources from each curricular office and school. The Superintendent recommended consideration of key

components identified to improve student academic achievement as assessed by SAT, and the fiscal implications for critical specific needs including teacher professional development and an electronic student database with the capacity to establish long term achievement records for each student. The Board agreed to take the recommendations under consideration.

NEW BUSINESS

PRESENTATIONS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Jacqueline C. Haas provided the Board with a report on the progress of the Federal 'No Child Left Behind' and the production of a master plan to address the State's 'Bridge to Excellence.' Mrs. Haas said the newly developed Maryland School Assessments (MSA) will be administered to grades three, five, and eight in reading and math and to grade 10 in reading this year. She said the assessments in reading only are slated to be administered to students in grades four, six, and seven next school year. Mrs. Haas said that after school and Safe and Drug Free schools programs will be combined. She mentioned that there has yet to be delivered a definition of "highly qualified teacher" as mandated by 'No Child Left Behind.' Mr. Thomas said that three states – Vermont, Alabama and Nebraska – have already dropped out of the 'No Child Left Behind' program, telling the Federal government to keep its funding rather than those states submit to what they consider to be unrealistic requirements under the act. He said he seeks "major pitfalls" in the requirements and that he is "not a proponent" of the Federal act. He predicted that many Maryland school systems may be expressing their dissatisfaction with the process.

Director of Public Information Donald Morrison presented the Board with the current situation involving the use of inclement weather days and when they would be made up for the 2002-03 school year. Mr. Morrison said four inclement weather days have been used and that three had been included in the calendar. He said the fourth day is currently scheduled to be made up on Monday, June 16, 2003. He added that the Board's options are limited with only four inservice days and the first day of the spring break available to make up the fourth day and any subsequent days missed, if the school year is not to be extended to June 17 and beyond. Mr. Thomas said that the Board needs to be prepared to take action on the use of available days within the school year rather than extending the year further into June. Mr. Wolkow agreed, pointing out that some schools are not air conditioned, and that education in those buildings in the heat is "untenable."

DISCUSSION

BOARD MEMBERS NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Wolf asked and was assured by Mrs. Haas that parents would continue to have the option to opt their children out of any Focus Area III (Family Life and Human Development) instruction. Mrs. Haas told Board members that they would receive a

comparison of Homeland Security color security codes with those from the State and County as well as the school system. Board members asked that the information be disseminated to all employees and the community, especially teachers. Mrs. Haas said the information could be printed in the Harford Schools newspaper. Mr. Thomas said it could also be disseminated through the Harford County Emergency Operations Center mailings.

Mr. Thomas added that the General Assembly session got underway on January 8 and that the Charter School bills – HB 11 and SB 5 – have already been filed. Mr. Wolkow thanked the Edgewood High School principal Joe Schmitz and staff members along with Bob Slagle, PTA president, for their efforts in hosting the first of the meetings to be held at Edgewood High. Mrs. Troy said that the Board will vote on the proposal to move areas of Family Life instruction into the middle schools at its Monday, February 10 meeting (Edgewood High School, 7:00 p.m.). She said that a summary sheet of the proposal will go home to parents prior to that meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on the motion of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler and the second of Mrs. Wolf, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board of Education of Harford County will continue its business meetings at Edgewood High School for the January through March quarter, holding its next regular meeting on Monday, January 27 beginning at 6:30 p.m. The Board was to have held its third and fourth budget hearings on January 15 and January 21 with the vote on the budget to take place on January 27.

MORE INFORMATION

The school system is attempting to prevent duplications and reduce production/ mailing costs of the printed versions of B-Line. Those who are able to access B-Line on line and who would like their copy of the printed version of the document discontinued should e-mail the Director of Public Information: drmorrison.gs@hcps.k12.md.us; Or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

In addition, for those who would like to receive emergency or other important school announcements automatically at their e-mail address(es), check the schools-out.com initiative on the home page of the HCPS web site.

For more information on Board meetings or other matters affecting the Harford County Public Schools, contact the system's Director of Public Information, 410-588-5203; or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

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providing access to programs.
*Inquiries related to the policies of the Board of Education of Harford County should
be directed to
the Director of Public Information at 410-588-5203.*