The Board of School Trustees of the Monroe County Community School Corporation met in work session, for which proper notice had been given, at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 7, 2008, at the School Administration Center, 315 E. North Drive, Bloomington, Indiana.

**Board members present:** Jeannine Butler, Susan Daniels, Teresa Grossi, Valerie Merriam, Lois Sabo-Skelton and Sue Wanzer

**Board member absent:** Jim Muehling

**Also present:** James Harvey, Superintendent; Tim Thrasher, Comptroller; Peggy Chambers, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Personnel; Mary Lovejoy, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Mike Shipman, Director of Assessment and School Operations; Janet Tupper, Administrative Assistant; and Mercedes Rodriguez, Reporter for *The Herald-Times*.

President of the Board, Teresa Grossi, called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Dr. Grossi noted that Mr. Muehling was out of town.

1. **The Project School** – Present on behalf of *The Project School* were: Daniel Baron, Vi Taliaferro, Heather Rock, Heather Baron Caudill, and Kandi Krothe. Mr. Baron said the purpose of this presentation was to explain the concept of *The Project School* – from a belief statement and structure and curriculum that grow out of that. He said this is the second school in Indiana designed by teachers; one will be opening in Indianapolis in August. He shared a packet of information to guide the presentation. He said they spent six months identifying core beliefs and the school has been in planning for two years. He said *The Project School* will be a sister school to the one in Indianapolis and the focus of the school is on each child.

Mr. Baron said parents, community, government officials, etc. are invited to a curriculum summit every year beginning in June 2009 and at the end of the year they will celebrate with a museum of authentic work. He said the community will come together to identify issues and then the community comes back to assess their work. He said that Charlotte Zietlow is on the Board of Directors for the school but could not attend this meeting. Ms. Taliaferro read her letter of support (a copy is included with the official record of this meeting). Noting that they are professional developers, Mr. Baron said they would like to develop an internship for teachers to visit classrooms and they would reciprocate. They would like to be a laboratory and critical friends with the school system.

Dr. Grossi asked if they are targeting kids from lower socio-economic status. Mr. Baron said they hope to have a diverse population. Dr. Grossi heard concerns that it will become an elite school. Mr. Baron said that is their greatest fear because anyone can attend the school. Ms. Merriam asked what will happen if they do not get the diversity they want. Mr. Baron said they would change the content in response to the children they serve. Ms. Rock said the school is not designed to meet the needs of a specific kind of child.

Ms. Taliaferro said there are some very bright children who do not do well in school and she would ask when is the appropriate time to target a child who needs special attention. She said she would try to reach the parents, noting that some parents who did not do well in school have attitudes they are not welcome. She said these are issues the school would have an opportunity to deal with. Mr. Baron said most people in poverty do not do well in school and they blame it on the school. He said when they come they are coming to hear again that their children are failing. He suggested that meetings with parents should be held in a different setting (not school – perhaps home, Boys Club, churches, community centers, etc.) He said his key role is parent and community liaison.
Ms. Wanzer agreed that there are people who do not want to come to school because they associate it with failure but she does not want anyone to think that our (MCCSC) staff has not already engaged. Ms. Rock said The Project School is multi-age so families will spend more time with one teacher. She said having a year-around approach to the school year will help continue relationships. Ms. Wanzer said everything they talked about is wonderful and MCCSC does the same kind of things. She said the school system’s issue is money and The Project School’s issue will be money too and it will draw off money from the school system. She asked how does that help the community and why not work with the school system. Mr. Baron responded that people in power are served well by the system. He said they will have less money per child than the school system and they can demonstrate what they can do with less, i.e. results in changes in achievement levels with less money and if successful what an opportunity for the school system to learn. In response to another question, Mr. Baron said they will not have a teachers union but will pay comparable salaries. He said students will have over thirty additional days of instruction than in the school system. Ms. Caudill said change is slow in a large system and kids cannot wait. She said that she fully understands the budget concern but she also feels good about what they can do for kids given the nature of autonomy they have while being accountable. She confirmed that they will serve students with special needs.

Dr. Butler agreed that parent involvement is critical, noting that she has worked with parents who have children with difficulties. She said she thinks many parents do not know how to care for their children but they do care. She said the Fairview Restructuring Committee has been working all year and these are some of the things they discussed. She said it would be nice if we could require parental involvement. She asked if they are requiring parental involvement and if not, what they will do that Fairview has not done to get parents to care. Mr. Baron said they cannot keep anyone out but they want them to understand their responsibility as a parent and what are our responsibilities with them. Dr. Butler agreed but her question was how they will affect that. Mr. Baron said if you go into the relationship with a disposition that something is wrong with your child or judgmental in any way, although not intended, it will fall on deaf ears. He said their intent is to develop one-on-one relationships with parents to help them see a genuine showing of deep commitment and demonstrating that they are trustworthy. Dr. Butler said the message implies that our school system and teachers do not do those things. Dr. Grossi pointed out that Fairview teachers spend evenings and weekends with families, making dinners for families and that is where Dr. Butler is coming from. Ms. Caudill said this has never been about what Fairview is or is not doing; it is about a community need that has not been met in a large system.

Dr. Sabo-Skelton suggested that every community has more needs and we need all the help we can get. She welcomed people to try things and to be innovative. She said when she took her seat on the Board she took an oath to help children of the MCCSC school system and she looks to that first and we do collaborate with other schools. Ms. Taliaferro said all of the needs that children have are not at Fairview; we are talking about children whose educational needs are not being met. She said it is not a challenge and if they are not going to school or not learning then let us stay focused on children who do not go to Fairview who are not being reached. She said it is not your fault and it is a pressing need. Ms. Wanzer said her concern is still the money that a charter school drains off the school system.

Ms. Daniels asked if thought had been given to what will happen if The Project School does not meet AYP. She said the comment about doing it better and for less concerned her. She said we have a lot of needs and she wondered if they have a contingency plan. Mr. Baron said they are under the same constraints of No Child Left Behind and it is hard to project a contingency plan without knowing what is not working.

Dr. Grossi said this was a wonderful start of communication. She reiterated that concerns are fiscal but we do not know how much money we will get. Dr. Butler concluded that everything they espouse is
educationally sound and good for all kids. The presentation ended with a brief discussion of how schools are funded and how public school funding is affected by private and/or charter schools.

2. **Fairview Restructuring** – Present for this discussion were Karen Adams and Trudy Litz, Fairview Principal and Assistant Principal respectively. Dr. Lovejoy shared key work that has taken place during Fairview Restructuring Committee meetings. She highlighted the agenda of each meeting and referred to the Restructuring Plan developed by the group. She said the plan calls for an additional half-time person to allow the principal additional time to accomplish instructional leadership tasks that need to take place at Fairview. She said the position would be posted and interviews will take place.

Dr. Grossi said depending on the person who fills that position, she wants to make sure no authority and decision-making will be taken away from the principal and assistant and faculty; that was her caution. Mr. Harvey said they have had this conversation and they have been sensitive to that concern. Dr. Grossi asked whether we need another administrator. She asked if there is another option that the DOE (Department of Education) would approve. Dr. Butler said she has the same concerns and she called Title I. She said she resents that they are telling us what we can and cannot do and it seems to be coming from Title I. She said she asked why no choice and was told that is just the way it is.

Dr. Lovejoy said that she, the principal and assistant principal have a collaborative relationship. She said this person will work directly with her and she could assure it will continue to be collaborative. During ensuing discussion Board members voiced their opinions and/or concerns about the role of this additional administrator. Mr. Harvey advised that this has been very frustrating with the committee and as they progressed they learned that many choices were already made, most likely by Title I. He said there are other significant things the restructuring committee has done and we simply will try to fashion the job description and person to get the best fit. Dr. Grossi suggested that the job description impact kids as best we can. Dr. Butler said she has been consistent all year about not adding more administrators in place of direct services to kids. She asked if this will be taken from the Director of Learning position. Mr. Harvey said no; money for this position comes from Title I. He confirmed that when budget priorities were confirmed there was discussion about adding a half-time special education teacher and reducing the class size ratio to 15 to 1.

Dr. Grossi commended the principal, assistant principal and Fairview staff for all they have done. Dr. Butler assumes they will have great input in determining who will fill the new half-time position. Mr. Harvey said we can use Board policy on selecting a principal and there is faculty, staff and parent involvement. He added that he has been on this committee all year and they worked very hard. In response to Ms. Merriam’s question, he said funds are available to keep kids in the same school when they continue to move. Mr. Shipman responded that improving on that depends on the circumstances. He said Mike Clark in Transportation works to provide transportation under the McKinney-Vento law and they are doing the best they can. He said our first effort is to try to keep them in the community, by working with agencies to not evict during the middle of the month, etc.

On behalf of the Board, Dr. Grossi extended thanks to those who continue to work on these issues and on the restructuring plan.

3. **P.L. 221 Plans** – Dr. Lovejoy presented copies of each school’s P.L. 221 Plan to Board members. Dr. Grossi explained that at the May 20 meeting the Board would be asked to approve the plans. She further explained that although comments will be welcomed, approval of the plans will be by ‘yea’ or ‘nay’.

The work session adjourned at 6:50 p.m.
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