

**MONROE COUNTY COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION**  
**BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES**  
**Work Session, August 19, 2008**

**MEMORANDA**

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, August 19, 2008, at Bloomington High School South, 1965 S. Walnut Street, Bloomington, Indiana.

**Board members present:** Jeannine Butler [arrived when indicated in minutes], Teresa Grossi, Valerie Merriam, Jim Muehling, Lois Sabo-Skelton, Vicki Streiff and Sue Wanzer [arrived when indicated in minutes]

**Also present:** James Harvey, Superintendent; Tim Thrasher, Comptroller; Mike Scherer, Director of Extended Services; and Janet Tupper, Administrative Assistant. Others present for discussion of specific topics are referenced in the notes of this meeting.

President of the Board, Teresa Grossi, called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

1. **School Transportation Budget** – Present for this discussion: Mike Clark, Director of Transportation; Jeff Henderson, BHS North Principal; Jennifer Hollars, BHS North Girls Athletic Director; Jay True, BHS South Assistant Principal; Donna Noble, Jackson Creek Principal; Gale Hill, Tri-North Principal.

Mr. Clark reviewed transportation cost estimates and suggestions for reducing expenditures. (Documents shared with the Board are included with the official record of this meeting.) He said in recent discussions they have talked about increasing transportation charges for athletic and music trips from one-half the labor cost to full labor cost. He noted that some corporations limit the number of miles. In response to questions, Mr. Thrasher said his estimate is that the school system needs to cut \$200,000 in transportation expenditures. He said it is uncertain because it depends on what happens with fuel prices, but the school system needs to recoup \$150,000 in transportation expenditures by January 1, 2009.

Mr. Thrasher suggested that the best thing to do is to put in a long-range approach that would carry into subsequent years to avoid coming back to the Board every year. Regarding the idea of a levy for fuel, Mr. Thrasher said he has talked with an official at the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF) and he really thinks we are not in good shape in terms of our assessed valuation. He said he asked specifically about the 35% homestead credit and it is helping homeowners but not with commercial taxes. He does not think the circuit breaker will be a problem in this county. He said the county meeting on September 8 will be important for the school system.

Mr. Henderson shared statistics regarding the type of transportation trips BHS North students take: 216 trips are athletic in nature: 91% are over 60 miles and 20% are IHSAA (Indiana High School Athletic Association) tournament trips. He said if they limit trips to Conference Indiana it would mean rescheduling 66% of their games. He said if they cut the mileage limit for trips to 40, they would change 34% of their games and would have to find additional games. He noted that contracts are made four years in advance; therefore, changing the schedule is a four-year process at best. He said that would be trading one financial burden for another because penalties are assessed when contracts are canceled.

Mr. Henderson said 45% of all athletic trips could be taken in mini buses at an estimated \$15,231 annual savings. He explained that part of the purpose of a high school schedule for athletics is to prepare for sectional tournament play and they need to play schools similar in size (5A), which puts them outside the 40 mile radius because there are not a lot of schools their size. [Dr. Butler arrived.] He said their proposed solutions are a combination of things: (1) investigate the possibility of purchasing mini buses (two per school); (2) train coaches to drive them to eliminate driver cost – estimated savings of \$14,000 annually; and (3) assess a fee for activity participation that requires transportation.

Mr. Henderson said they have been fortunate that parents have been willing to help support activities but they are now more interested in helping to purchase mini buses or paying for a charter bus because they want to provide support that helps solve the problem. Noting that they realize whatever we do there is a portion of our organization that will be unable to pay activity fees he said the parent organizations are willing to help those students. He reiterated that they feel the best way to resolve the problem long term is to purchase mini buses, train coaches as drivers and assess fees.

Responding to questions, Mr. Henderson said the penalty varies from sport to sport and school to school and it depends on the anticipated gate receipts. Mr. True said they also sent a letter to parents advising that it is inevitable that they will have to assess fees. He said everybody realizes that it is necessary; the question is how much to assess. He said they could supplement parent fees with a school-wide fundraiser. In response to a question, Mr. Clark said mini buses cost \$35,000 to \$40,000. Mr. Thrasher said two mini buses are included in the 2009 School Bus Replacement Fund but he will need to check to make sure that will be permitted. [Ms. Wanzer arrived.]

Ms. Noble said in addition to limiting the radius to not more than 50 miles for travel to schools, they also do not take cheerleaders. Additionally, they only take one bus and limit the number of participants in track, cross country and swimming. She said if they are playing Tri-North or Batchelor, they do not transport. Dr. Hill said they pay 50% of transportation costs out of their athletic budget. Further discussion ensued; Mr. Thrasher said our Transportation levy is at maximum. He said we do have leeway to use school bus replacement fund money. Mr. Harvey mentioned that the 12-year amortization schedule for buses just changed (it was 10 years). He said we may be able to look at 12-year replacement, although there is some concern over the warranties. Mr. Clark added that the ice melt used on the streets is causing additional rusting on the bottom of vehicles.

Mr. Harvey said he has not talked with elementary schools about the possible elimination of the strings shuttle. He said we have teachers under contract to teach strings and if we do not transport children we would not have students for the program. He confirmed corporation sponsored expenses include: strings, ALPs, curricular field trips and Honey Creek. Mr. Henderson noted that the position at high school is if they go to a fee they will assess a fee to any ECA (extracurricular activity) that uses transportation – not just athletics. He suggested the possibility would exist that the same kind of fee could apply to the elementary strings program. Mr. Harvey agreed that some of these things will have to become fee based. Mr. Clark said 50 or fewer students are transported for the strings program; however, they are bused to and from a number of schools so there may be only one or two children on some buses. He said we use corporation drivers for these trips; if contract drivers were used we would have to pay an additional fee for use of their equipment. In response to a question, Mr. Henderson said to address this problem some districts are talking about a four-day week, eliminating Mondays because Friday is when many athletic events are scheduled. It was noted that Legislative action would be needed for this to happen.

The Board discussed other transportation expenses that may be eliminated including summer school. Mr. Harvey confirmed that the cost of summer school is a large amount for the small number of students who attend and reimbursement from the state is 50% of the actual cost. He said when he looks at the numbers he wonders how much difference we are making in summer school as opposed to tutoring during the school year. Mr. Henderson said they would rather see NovaNet classes available all day for credit recovery instead of summer school or in extended day. Mr. Harvey said that everything is available on NovaNet except science; however, the state's position is that if a student fails biology, s/he can take it on NovaNet. Dr. Lovejoy reported that high school attendance in summer school is very low. She said we are not the only school corporation looking at eliminating summer school.

Dr. Lovejoy responded that the state reimburses 51% across the board; including NovaNet classes taken

during the summer. Mr. Harvey said if students are receiving remediation, we have to provide transportation and some buses have 6 or 7 students on them. He said transportation costs are more than \$120,000. He wanted to make sure the Board talked about this possibility (eliminating summer school).

Mr. Thrasher explained that the problem in the Transportation operating fund is a \$300,000 problem; however, we have the capability of coding some expenditure for contract drivers to the School Bus Replacement Fund. He said the things we are talking about doing to help the operating fund are important but we do not have to gain the entire \$300,000. He confirmed, however, that moving expenditures to the School Bus Replacement Fund is just switching pockets.

Dr. Grossi said she would like to see more specific recommendations. She asked when a fee needs to happen if it is implemented. Mr. Thrasher suggested implementing some things immediately to help get through this year. Dr. Grossi reiterated that the Board would like to receive recommendations. Mr. Muehling said he would be interested in knowing the impact on the General Fund if expenditures are moved to the School Bus Replacement Fund. Further discussion ensued. Mr. Henderson said their projection for a fee is \$20 per activity. It was agreed that an information report would be presented to the Board on September 2<sup>nd</sup> with specific recommendations proposed at the September 16 meeting. Mr. Harvey said this needs to be a part of the budget discussions and the timeline will start at the last meeting in October for adoption at the first meeting in December.

2. **Middle School Task Force** – Present for this discussion: Melinda Hamilton, Kimberly Williams, Karin St. John, Myra Farmer, Valerie Gliessman, Lora Snow, Donna Noble, Lisa Rodgers, Lessa May, Bob Austin, Lynne Snyder, Nancy Martin, Jeff Rudkin, Rita Knox, Martha Bowman, Lucy Papier, Terry Daugherty.

Dr. Lovejoy thanked Middle School Task Force members for their hard work. Their presentation included: (1) Research – presented by Martha Bowman; (2) Grade Configuration – presented by Lucy Papier; (3) Survey Overview – presented by Dr. Lovejoy; and (4) Top Priorities – presented by Lessa May. In conclusion, Ms. May reviewed next steps for the task force. She said they are ready to look at some model middle level schools and will be visiting model sites in the coming months. She said a survey will be distributed to MCCSC teachers this fall asking about effectiveness of middle school education. Board members asked questions and discussed information presented. Ms. Bowman said they are trying to emphasize community involvement in school. Mr. Harvey announced that the Community Foundation is devoting \$50,000 per year for each of the next three years to help us to begin to develop an after-school program of middle school kids in MCCSC and in Richland-Bean Blossom Community Schools.

Dr. Grossi said her assumption is that the group started with their charge to continue on the graduation work group. Dr. Lovejoy said that is correct; it was her understanding and assumption that middle school principals met with Mr. Harvey last year and they were interested in moving 6<sup>th</sup> grade students to middle school because they were either coming or going in two-year middle schools. She said she was surprised when research came through that grade configuration is not as important as what goes on in the building. She said they are being very cautious and very deliberate in their approach.

Noting that this is a marvelous study they are approaching, Dr. Sabo-Skelton asked if they plan to ask students about their feelings. Nancy Martin said she asked her 7<sup>th</sup> graders whether they would prefer to come in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 90% (anonymously) said they would like to be in middle school in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. In response to a question, Dr. Lovejoy said no more than 100 students should be assigned to each teacher. She said state guidelines are one counselor per 250 students. Lynne Snyder said their ratio is 1 to 380. Bob Austin said that is misleading because of what our counselors are asked to do with that time; if they were simply counseling students it would be different. Ms. Snyder said counselors are responsible for the

largest part of ISTEP and NWEA scheduling. She explained the time requirements.

In response to Ms. Merriam's question, Ms. Noble said the length of the school day is always an issue because philosophically when in the middle school environment you want to have teaming time. She said she has asked teachers' teams to meet 30 minutes per week but they are doing that on their own time; they teach until 2:30 and they are allowed to leave at that time. Ms. Martin noted that they have 43 minutes of prep time per day and high schools have 70 minutes prep time. She said they are transitional teachers.

Regarding licensure, Dr. Lovejoy said it was also her understanding that there was some changing in middle school assignments and many have not had a lot of training in middle school years. One teacher said new teachers are teamed so that others offer professional development. Ms. Martin said a lot of contract language does not take into account the importance of professional development training for middle school teachers. Kim Williams said an elementary teacher would bring much experience and training to the team in a '6-8' configuration. Ms. Noble said when she is looking at people for a position she tries to find a balance between teachers who are high school licensed and elementary teachers who have an endorsement so that on teams they play off each other.

Ms. Streiff said it sounds like space may be an issue if class sizes were lowered and grade 6 was added to middle school. Mr. Muehling said we would have to open a fourth middle school; and that idea has been discussed. Ms. Merriam asked if there is a recommendation that does not cost money. Mr. Muehling asked if 6<sup>th</sup> grade is moved and the staff goes with them, would that affect the overall pupil-teacher ratio.

Mr. Daugherty pointed out that they have not talked about an alternative for middle school students. He said we have some students who during 7<sup>th</sup> grade we see are not going to make it and we need to have an alternative program for those students to bring them back into schools by the time they get to high school. Dr. Sabo-Skelton said her dream plan is Aurora Junior and we know there will be a need for something like this. She said we are looking at it and how it might work with the plan recommended by the task force.

Dr. Lovejoy asked what the fate of the Middle School Task Force is with the interim superintendent. Dr. Grossi said continuation of initiatives and where we are going will continue. She said the Board is hoping to be able to announce a permanent superintendent in December. She said one stipulation is that our initiatives will continue and we would not hire someone who will not embrace those initiatives.

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

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Teresa Grossi, President

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Jeannine Butler, Vice President

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Valerie Merriam, Secretary

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Susan P. Wanzer, Assistant Secretary

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Jim Muehling, Member

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Lois Sabo-Skelton, Member

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Vicki Streiff, Member