

MONROE COUNTY COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION
BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
Work Session, February 10, 2009

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, February 10, 2009, at the Temporary Administration Building, 401 East Miller Drive, Bloomington, Indiana.

Board members present: Jeannine Butler, Valerie Merriam, Jim Muehling, Lois Sabo-Skelton, Vicki Streiff and Sue Wanzer

Board member absent: John Hamilton

Also present: Tim Hyland, Superintendent; Tim Thrasher, Comptroller; Peggy Chambers, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Personnel; Mike Shipman, Director of Assessment and School Operations; Linda Richardson, President of the Monroe County Education Association; and Janet Tupper, Administrative Assistant.

President of the Board, Jeannine Butler, called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. She noted that this meeting was scheduled for the Board to discuss staffing.

Staff Allocation Procedures and Class Size Ratios

Ms. Chambers shared a written information report, which is included with the official record for this meeting. She stated that staffing is one of the most challenging parts of her job. She reviewed the procedure for determining staff allocations, noting that schools put together a committee and the committee submits a report of staffing needs. Those reports are sent to the Superintendent by February 1 and the Board receives those reports verbatim by February 28. On March 1, she begins to meet with building principals about staffing – reductions, additions, transfers, etc.

Noting that any individuals who will receive a RIF (Reduction In Force) notice must be notified by April 10 this year, Ms. Chambers said it is important that we do it right because if we do not reduce in every way that we should and find ourselves over-staffed in the fall, we are stuck because we cannot reduce at that point – although staff can be added. She mentioned that last year several people were on the RIF list and they were all brought back. She reiterated that it is very critical not to over-staff.

Ms. Chambers said the staffing allocation procedures often do not set well with everyone and one reason is that ratios that are approved do not reflect actual class sizes. Staffing is allocated based on averages so some classes may have 10 students and some may have 35, especially at the middle and high school level. She said another reason people often discuss this is because allocations and methods for making those allocations are not always clear. She said as much as we have tried to standardize that we need to help them understand how numbers were determined.

Ms. Chambers reviewed staff allocation ratios adopted last year (included in the information report). She said many people have told us they are coming to our schools but not many have told us they are leaving. She said she went back to Board reports from the 1980s and ratios were in place but dispensations were given for programs such as high ability, department chair, ESL, etc. She said the problem with taking enrollment and dividing it by a ratio is that it does not take into account teacher preparation time. She shared examples and noted that middle schools have struggled to meet the 1 to 28 ratio. She said we have to decide if we want to make exceptions for some classes such as orchestra. In response to a question, she said if we use the formula, it takes those prep periods into consideration.

In response to Ms. Streiff's question, Dr. Hyland said he heard Jeff Henderson (principal at BHS North) say

he was not asking for more but he staffs social studies and physical education more than 1-28 whereas science and math may come in below 1-28; he just wants flexibility to staff in such a fashion that it works. He said it is not just the ratio but it is the contacts per day. Ms. Merriam agreed that it is the number of students per day and when you look at that it is the middle school teachers who are swamped. Ms. Chambers confirmed that one teacher said she is tired of spending nights and weekends grading papers. Dr. Hyland said there are some districts that grant an additional grading period for English teachers for grading.

Dr. Butler said she believes the principals are asking for the Board to tell them how much staff they have but they want to decide how to allocate the staff, and she agrees. Ms. Streiff agreed that the principal must decide how to allocate staff assigned to the building and ultimately that determines if the school can financially offer a class.

Ms. Merriam said once the Legislature ends, and that is April, we will have just passed the time for informing people. She said there are several unknowns, including how much money we will receive, how many students will go to the Project School, etc. Ms. Chambers said we can only staff on what we know now. During ensuing discussion, Dr. Hyland agreed that it is a difficult tightrope to walk in that people who receive RIF notices will look for jobs while on the other hand we have substantial turnover in this district every year so surprises of that type can be worked out. Ms. Chambers added that principals want to have every teacher hired before they leave in June. She said attrition is a way to address some concerns and her recommendation is to stay with the ratio in the best interest of the district but next year we may look at something very different.

Board members discussed concerns for the unknown, including state funding of the General Fund and what might be expected from the federal stimulus package. Ms. Chambers said the Special Education Department has tremendous staff needs and a lot of the stimulus money is expected to help in that area. She confirmed that Bloomington New Tech High School (BNTHS) is staffed at a 1 to 25 ratio as agreed upon and required by the New Tech Foundation. She reviewed with the Board the staff FTE (full time equivalency) at BNTHS and explained how the career education program is funded. Board members talked about projected enrollment at BNTHS and how that may affect staffing next year. Dr. Hyland said it is our intent that BNTHS teachers teach five periods per day and staff will be allocated on the basis of enrollment. Ms. Chambers said good principals will advocate for staff and it is her job to support them and to support the school system. She reiterated that we staff on the numbers we have, not what we are hope for. She said Aurora is a little different because they have students coming and going and they are staffed at a 1 to 15 ratio; they hope to be able to staff on the basis of 120 students but they are a long way from that so we will have to wait.

Mr. Muehling understood that we staff on the basis of enrollment and any attrition this summer will hopefully solve the problem if there is over-staffing because we lose students. Ms. Chambers said yes; it is important to say this is not an exact science, there is no way to accurately predict and sometimes we have to address the problem after the fact.

In response to Ms. Merriam's question regarding how we offset the growing number of students with special needs, Ms. Chambers said the Board allocated \$75,000.00 this year for class size needs. She said thirteen assistants were hired this semester as additional support in the form of class size aid; the assistants may take five or six students out to work on literacy and that can help.

Board members spent some time talking with Ms. Chambers about how students are counted in each building. Dr. Sabo-Skelton said she hopes we will stay creative in that this Board has been terrific in not cutting programs but figured out ways to maintain and it may be difficult to understand new state mandates.

The topic of equal prep time was discussed at length. Board members agreed that utilization of faculty is not uniform throughout the district and when we look at equity it should be with the idea of increasing prep time

for teachers who have the fewest amount of prep hours per week.

Future Meetings – Board members confirmed that they will meet in retreat at the Temporary Administration Building at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 10. Ron Barnes will facilitate the meeting and Superintendent-elect J.T. Coopman has agreed to participate. The next regular meeting of the Board will be Tuesday, February 17.

The work session adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Jeannine Butler, President

Valerie Merriam, Vice President

Vicki Streiff, Secretary

John Hamilton, Assistant Secretary

Jim Muehling, Member

Lois Sabo-Skelton, Member

Sue Wanzer, Member