

MONROE COUNTY COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION
BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
Work Session, April 7, 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, April 7, 2009, at Bloomington High School South, 1965 South Walnut Street, Bloomington, Indiana.

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

Also present: Tim Hyland, Superintendent; Kathleen Hugo, Director of Special Education; Jan McCollough, Assistant Director of Special Education; Deb Prenkert, Title I Coordinator; Linda Richardson, MCEA President; and Janet Tupper, Administrative Assistant.

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

1. **Bylaw Changes Regarding Board Member Compensation and Insurance**

Mr. Muehling noted that this topic involves two separate issues. He said compensation came up a couple of years ago and as a result of Board action, Board members are compensated for Board meetings and executive sessions. He noted that if any compensation of meetings occurred in one day, Board members receive compensation for only one but they are not compensated for work sessions, even if they are held on another day. He said he thought the Board should consider revising the Bylaw to include work sessions, noting that it does help defray some time and expenses. He explained that the Indiana School Boards Association believes work sessions are covered under the same statutory provision and school attorney Tom Bunger agrees.

Dr. Hyland explained that some Boards use standing committees for finance, policy, etc., and those are advertised and minutes taken and members are reimbursed for attending. Ms. Wanzer noted that some Board members serve on more committees than others. Ms. Merriam said she feels taking compensation for that service is inappropriate. Dr. Butler said it seems there is interest in bringing this to a vote.

Mr. Hamilton said we are heading into very difficult fiscal times and asking people in the school corporation to hang tough and we will be making tough choices as we face declining revenues. He said particularly if it is rare (that the Board meets in work session on a separate day), it seems there would be no significant difference and would not be a good idea for the Board to say it will increase member compensation. He would not encourage doing it for the current Board; if at all, he would do it for future Boards. Mr. Hamilton said this Board has significantly increased pay in 2008 and he does not think it is a good signal to everybody else – to vote an increase for ourselves and to do it in the fiscal content.

Dr. Sabo-Skelton said we were inconsistent with what we did. She said she is not in favor of Boards having compensation and usually people on boards have money and benefits but this would open options for other people to serve. She said members can turn compensation back to the school system but for those who need the money, they can keep it; she supports it now just to make this consistent. She agreed that work sessions are seldom held on separate days but this will clean up the policy.

Ms. Wanzer said she agreed that it is better to increase compensation for the next board but somebody will always be staying on the Board. Mr. Muehling said he agrees with Mr. Hamilton regarding insurance. He said 36% of Boards in the state do receive health insurance but he does not think it is the right thing and it is a lot of money to spend while sending the wrong signal. Dr. Butler agreed that it is probably inappropriate for the Board to look at compensation with insurance given our financial prognosis. Ms. Wanzer said it is difficult economic times and a lot of people are out of work and

uninsured. She said she wants to insure everybody who is eligible to be insured so she would support a change in insurance. She noted the cost would be 1% (of insurance costs) if all seven Board members take insurance.

Ms. Merriam said members of the MCCSC cannot run for School Board and if we are to be treated as employees we cannot be School Board members; you cannot be an employee and a School Board member. Mr. Thrasher said technically according to IRS (the Internal Revenue Service) Board members are employees. Ms. Merriam said her concern is until we cover everybody in the school corporation that works more hours than Board members do, that we should not be considering insurance coverage. She said when she looks at salaries of what we pay some people, such as paraprofessionals, and some making minimum wage she does not see how we can take on more expense. She thinks Board members should be at the bottom of the list.

Ms. Streiff agreed, noting that she was surprised when she saw the figures. She said she would abstain from voting because she has a strong interest in this but she thinks the value of good insurance even if you pay a lot can be invaluable. She said at Board meetings she has heard of people who work for health insurance and that is an example of what health insurance means in our economy. She thinks asking Board members to pay the same as people who pay the most would be okay but it did not seem fair that Board members receive the amount that people receive who work all year long.

Ms. Wanzer said the difference (in Board contributions for health insurance) among categories is because at some time they chose more on salary instead of insurance benefits. Mr. Thrasher confirmed that was accurate. He responded that there are some differences between full time and part-time employees; people who work 52 weeks get more and that is pro-rated for part-time employees. He said the amount received varies by employee group and the number of hours worked.

Mr. Hamilton said roughly if you work one-half time you get about one-half contributions. He asked if there is an option for people to pay more to join the plan. Mr. Thrasher said it would take a change in our plan for that to happen. Mr. Hamilton noted that even if you could pay the full amount it would be better than the cost of insurance coverage outside the group. He suggested that everybody in American should have health care but he would feel terrible if he worked less than a half-time employee who cannot participate but could participate because he is a Board member. He would like to see if wider participation could be offered.

Dr. Sabo-Skelton said she hoped this matter could be tabled and brought up at another time. She thinks there should be a way that everybody, including Board members, could participate in some way. She suggested that the topics – compensation on insurance and compensation on meetings – should be separated.

Ms. Merriam recalled that earlier the Board approved changes in plans for secretaries for staffing, job descriptions and pay. She said she understands that we have not been able to fully implement these changes and we have made promises. She suggested that before we take on new expenses, this project should be completed and asked how long that might be. Mr. Thrasher said his analysis of the cost was pretty well complete. He thinks he is within a week of completing that analysis and his thought was to get the analysis of both secretary and maintenance and of our financial situation for 2008. He said there was a three-year settlement the last time we negotiated and we had to estimate enrollment but that did not materialize for the final two years. He said he needs to show the operating balance in December 2008 when the Board looked at secretaries and maintenance restructuring. He said any adjustments can be made retroactive to the first of the year.

Ms. Chambers noted that they presented the constraint recommendations but held Phase II along with the maintenance project so that Mr. Thrasher could do an analysis. She said they are all anxious to see that implemented but at this time the Board had not approved it.

Ms. Wanzer asked how many employees who work less than 17 hours per week are eligible for insurance. Mr. Thrasher said he found that of some 1600 to 1700 employees, about 1000 people participate in the medical plan now. Ms. Wanzer said she would be interested in knowing how many are not eligible. She said she supports offering medical insurance in any way we can and she wonders if it is possible to look at insurance for all employee groups. She said she would rather see us move toward offering insurance instead of additional money for employees. Dr. Sabo-Skelton agreed that we need universal health care.

During ensuing discussion, Board members talked with Mr. Thrasher about why some employee groups receive a larger contribution toward insurance; there is a long history of negotiations but some groups (especially those with less pay) wanted salary increases instead of insurance, some chose not to have insurance at all because spouses carried benefits and some work fewer hours and are not covered. Dr. Butler said according to Mr. Bunger, the Board can move this matter to action and take a vote, or table it and it stays on the table until brought back or it could be a topic on the agenda for continued discussion. **Consensus:** the Board will consider a vote on insurance for Board members.

2. **Topics for Future Work Sessions**

Dr. Butler had asked Ms. Tupper to receive work session topics from Board members, send a list to Board members for feedback and tabulate responses, with the top three to be considered most important for discussion. The results of that tabulation were distributed (a copy of which is included with the official record of this meeting) and the results were that the Board will discuss Board Bylaws and residency requirements on April 21. However, if Vi Simpson can attend the April 21st meeting, her presence and participation will take precedence over the Bylaws discussion.

Dr. Hyland suggested that the Board may wish to defer some discussion topics until after July 1 when Superintendent-elect Coopman is present.

Mr. Muehling noted that some topics are philosophical and some are micro-managing. Dr. Butler agreed that this was quite a list; she thinks that many have to do with philosophical discussions and of specific interest to specific people. She said as Board members we have a responsibility to do research on topics of interest for us. She mentioned some resources for this research: ISBA (Indiana School Boards Association), NSBA (National School Boards Association), ASCD (Association of School Curriculum and Development), NEA (National Education Association) Journals, CEEP (Center for Evaluation and Education Policy), Google, etc. She suggested that Board members could do what research they want and share with the Board. Dr. Sabo-Skelton said she often calls ISBA for information and they are helpful.

Mr. Muehling said there are some things that we must direct and for others we have direct hands-on people and they have accountability to us, but the key thing is to hire good people. He mentioned that things in terms of budget are most important.

Ms. Wanzer said she agrees about research and some things she suggested came as a result of research and she thinks it would be good to talk about that information and applying it to this school corporation in work sessions.

Ms. Merriam said when she read Dr. Bennett's (State Superintendent) plan and vision, she believes he has his own philosophy and she thinks it will be interesting to compare that with our philosophy.

Mr. Hamilton said he thinks Board dynamics are interesting on this; he thinks it is natural and good for Board members to pursue individual interests. He said if he has a particular interest in pay for performance and if he brings that to the Board, members would have no way to assess how balanced he is. He thinks Board members must pick what they care about and it is important as a Board to say to the staff this is a topic that is important and can you bring a balanced report to the Board. Dr. Butler said we have to be careful not to micro-manage; we are a policy-making board. She said the Board adopts vision and goals, evaluates outcomes and adopts policies but the Superintendent evaluates progress and decides how schools are doing. She added that it is the Superintendent's responsibility to develop plans and recommendations and to implement plans. She noted that the ISBA talks consistently about not micro-managing and she thinks we have to be careful where we are on that issue.

Mr. Hamilton said he agrees the Board does not want to micro-manage but he does not the topic of student achievement as micro-managing, i.e. how do we want to evaluate student achievement. He said he hears from ISBA that at every Board meeting we should be talking about student achievement and it does not seem to have more presence in our Board meetings. Ms. Merriam said we do have long discussions on progress – at work sessions as well. Ms. Wanzer added that we need to continue that but she has been concerned about not micro-managing. She does not want to do our administrators' jobs but does want to set goals and visions.

Dr. Hyland suggested that one of the most powerful tools is setting goals with the Superintendent. Dr. Butler agreed, adding that we are not there because Dr. Coopman is not here yet. She said there have been questions about when we will hear about goals and objectives from our retreat. Dr. Hyland said about three days after the retreat he met with Ron Barnes (retreat facilitator) and Dr. J.T. Coopman and worked through drafts. He said they were clustered and now they are in Dr. Coopman's lap.

3. **Stimulus Money**

Dr. Hyland said they met with an ISTA (Indiana State Teachers Association) representative and he met with Deb Prekert and Kathleen Hugo about the stimulus package and it is important for Dr. Coopman to sign off on it. He said they gave him a couple of proposals. He reported on a conference call with the State Superintendent and superintendents around the state; we do not know the amount of money we will receive.

Dr. Hugo confirmed that it (stimulus money) really is a moving target; the information is coming in bits and pieces. She said we have an idea of how much money we will receive but have not received confirmation so it could change. She said some of the money is based on formula and some is competitive. We have some new information and they (DOE – State Department of Education) stressed over and over about the extensive reporting procedures. She said there is a high degree of transparency, no co-mingling of funds and we must report back to the penny how the money is spent.

Dr. Hugo said the latest word is that funds will be available in April, costs are allowable retroactively to February and it is important the money is spent by 2011. She said for IDEA (special education) funds, all provisions that apply to special education funds apply. She added that this funding is to be supplemental for students with disabilities with few exceptions. We are allowed to spend up to 15% for RTI (Response To Intervention); we do not spend any directly on it now because of no money and the current IDEA grant is spend for salaries. We can share costs but have to report separately. She said another provision is we have to spend a certain amount of state and local funds, i.e. if we spent \$7

million in order to be eligible for supplementary funds, next year we would have to spend \$7.1 million. She explained how money can be spent and the tracking procedures.

Ms. Prenkert said Title I is very similar; she was told that we will not get program guidelines until May or June. She said explaining is a big issue because our district is in AYP – in year 3 (corrective action) you have more flexibility to use money in non-Title I schools. Ms. Merriam asked how many times this had to be approved. Dr. Hugo said they are getting a statement of assurance and other documents from DOE and they want us to submit a budget. She said once approved by DOE, it is approved. Dr. Hyland said parts of it, such as contracts, will be brought back for Board approval.

Mr. Muehling noted that the timeline includes two school years; he wondered if changing demographics would make a difference. Ms. Prenkert said we will get an allocation based on numbers at that time. In response to another question, Dr. Hugo further explained that the money does not follow the student but a portion will go to the Project School as a public school. Funding was previously allocated on a per child basis but it is no longer based on child count; the Project School and private schools will get funding.

Mr. Hamilton asked about the thought process regarding how to use the money. Dr. Hugo said they talked to DOE and they have guidelines to follow. She said the strictest interpretation is it is to be used for students with disabilities; we could use it all for one piece of equipment. She explained that they have received feedback from Dr. Coopman and they sat down with Dr. (Teresa) Grossi from the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community and Ms. Prenkert met with Title I principals and other schools about professional development. She said it is to be used for students with disabilities but could be used for teachers. She said they were focusing on staff development, technology, reading intervention, short-term summer training, etc. They think this summer they will provide some services in addition to summer school with very targeted instruction with staff development that would lead to RTI. A provision she has in mind is one community-based teacher; she hopes our current amount will grow over the next two years to support it. She noted that a school psychologist position was approved at the last meeting. She said they will include some para-educator training prior to school starting and during the year. Dr. Hugo reviewed the plan for expenditures.

The work session adjourned at 6:55 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