

Monroe County Community School Corporation  
**BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES**  
**Work Session – July 21, 2009**

**MEMORANDA**

The Board of School Trustees of the Monroe County Community School Corporation met in work session at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 21, 2009, at Bloomington High School South, which is located at 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:** J.T. Coopman, Superintendent; Donna Zink, Secretary to the Superintendent; and Deb Woodward, Senior Applications Technician with the Information Services Department.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and the following topics were discussed.

1. **Robert's Rules of Order** – Of specific concern to Board members was how action items are presented for Board approval. Board members agreed that the current method used, i.e. Board President asks for a motion and then the matter is presented to the Board for discussion prior to a vote. **Consensus:** Board members prefer the procedure previously in place – that is the Superintendent or appropriate administrator will present the action item, the Board President will entertain a motion to approve, Board members and then the public will be invited to discuss the matter and then Board members will vote on the motion.
2. **Board Protocols** – Dr. Butler shared with the Board a handout entitled “MCCSC School Board Protocols” from the Trustees’ Retreat held on March 10, 2009. Board members also received a copy of Bylaw 0123 – Philosophy of the Board and “Consent Agenda” from The Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Board members discussed at length protocols for discussing items included on the agenda as well as Board member visits to buildings. Dr. Coopman confirmed that employees feel compelled to please Board members and visits to buildings can be intimidating – not because of the individual but because of the role of the Board member. He said people take literally what Board members say whereas directives by individuals are just inquiries. He suggested that if Board members want to speak with specific employees it would be appropriate to notify the Superintendent before meeting with the employee. Dr. Coopman said social relationships are not the focus. During ensuing discussion regarding timeliness of notification – sometimes a Board member may be driving by a school and decide to stop by – Dr. Coopman suggested that Board members just let him know that they have stopped in.

Dr. Butler mentioned that Board members should not surprise either Dr. Coopman or someone presenting at Board meetings with questions or comments but these should go to Dr. Coopman before the meeting to give him an opportunity to gather a meaningful response. Board members discussed the importance of being prepared prior to Board meetings and spent some time talking about invitations they receive to share information about Board activities with the public, including and perhaps specifically with the media.

**Consensus:** Board members agreed that questions and/or comments about agenda items should go to Dr. Coopman before the meeting to give him an opportunity to gather a meaningful response. However, that does not preclude questions or comments that are thought of during a presentation. If necessary, Dr. Coopman will get back to the Board with a response the next day. It was also agreed that presenters will be encouraged to be as detailed as possible (in Board agenda and in person) in an effort to answer questions that might have been asked. It was further agreed that media conversations are important but if with individual Board members any opinions shared should be clearly identified as that of the individual – not the Board, unless the Board has agreed on an opinion/topic.

3. **Board Agenda Format** – Board members referred to information shared at a recent meeting of the Indiana School Boards Association when those present discussed: (1) Board meetings are not public meetings ... they are meetings held in public. (2) The meeting agenda – the focus and the format. (3) Preparation for Board meetings. (4) Staying focused.

Board members discussed the different formats of their meetings – consent agenda, superintendent’s report, school showcase, etc. – and how best to handle these various agenda items. For example, there should be no need to discuss consent agenda items and, if that is the case, what should be included with the consent agenda. The importance of recognizing donors was mentioned. Also noted was the fact that Board members often want to discuss various contracts that are included with the consent agenda. A question was raised regarding how to best handle corrections to minutes when they are included with the consent agenda. Board members also discussed what should be the focus of a meeting – student achievement and financial oversight were mentioned - and what should be included in a school or program presentation.

**Preliminary Consensus:** It is important for the public to hear about contracts and where money is spent. If money is spent on staff development, it is important for staff to report back what they have learned and how they will apply it. Perhaps the Board should give schools a suggested structure and time limit for presentations. Board meetings are business meetings foremost and work sessions can be a valuable place for discussion. Drafts of minutes of previous meetings could be sent to the Board prior to inclusion on the agenda in order to receive corrections prior to the meeting. If corrections are suggested revised minutes would be shared. Donations, ECA expenditures, field trips and contracts could be removed from the consent agenda. Dr. Coopman will await Board member feedback prior to implementing these changes.

**Follow-up From Retreat Held March 10, 2009:** Dr. Coopman shared working notes from the MCCSC Board of School Trustees’ Retreat (a copy is attached to and made a part of the agenda for this meeting) at which he, Dr. (Tim) Hyland, and Dr. (Ron) Barnes, consultant, worked with the Board and came up with a draft of protocols and directions. He noted the plan was that at some point Board members would provide him with the process of what they want in order to develop a strategic plan. He offered to bring in someone to facilitate the discussion, create a living document and establish benchmarks to evaluate if we are achieving what we should.

4. **Future Work Sessions:** Board members agreed to meet in work session at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 4. They also agreed to meet with Vi Simpson in a work session to be held at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 18, in the Large Group Room at BHS South.
5. **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

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Jeannine Butler, President

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Valerie Merriam, Vice President

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Victoria I. Streiff, Secretary

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John Hamilton, Assistant Secretary

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Jim Muehling, Member

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Lois Sabo-Skelton, Member

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Susan P. Wanzer, Member