

Approved by the Charlotte-
Mecklenburg Board of Education
December 11, 2007
Regular Board Meeting



Charlotte, North Carolina

November 27, 2007

**REGULAR MEETING
of the
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education held a Regular Board Meeting on November 27, 2007. The meeting began at 5:25 p.m. and was held in Room 267 of the Government Center.

Present: Joe I. White, Jr., Chairperson, Member At-Large;
Molly Griffin, Vice-Chairperson, (District 5);
Kaye McGarry, Member At-Large;
Trent Merchant, Member At-Large;
Larry Gauvreau (District 1);
Vilma D. Leake (District 2);
George Dunlap (District 3);
Tom Tate (District 4); and
Ken Gjertsen (District 6)

Absent: There were no absences

Also present at the request of the Board were Dr. Peter Gorman, Superintendent; Regina H. Bartholomew, General Counsel; Maurice Green, Chief Operating Officer; Carole Love, Manager of Board Services; and Nancy Daughtridge, Clerk to the Board.

Upon motion by Mr. Dunlap, seconded by Ms. Griffin, the Board voted unanimously of those present for approval to go into Closed Session for the following purpose:

- **To consult with the Board's attorneys on matters covered by the attorney-client privilege including but not limited to the litigation involving (a) *Travis Collum vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, et al.*, No. 07WS22762.**

The motion was made pursuant to Section 143-318.11(a)(3) of the North Carolina General Statutes.

Chairperson White reconvened the Regular Board Meeting at 6:00 p.m. in Room 267 of the Government Center. CMS TV Channel 3 televised the meeting.

Present: Joe White, Chairperson, Member At-Large;
Molly Griffin, Vice-Chairperson, (District 5);
Kaye McGarry, Member At-Large;
Trent Merchant, Member At-Large;
Larry Gauvreau (District 1);

Vilma D. Leake (District 2);
George Dunlap (District 3);
Tom Tate (District 4); and
Ken Gjertsen (District 6)

Absent: There were no absences

Also present at the request of the Board were Dr. Peter Gorman, Superintendent; Regina H. Bartholomew, General Counsel; Carole Love, Manager of Board Services; Members of Executive and Senior Staffs; and Nancy Daughtridge, Clerk to the Board.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson White called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Chairperson White welcomed everyone to the Board's second meeting of the month which will be held in a Work Session format.

A. Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Griffin moved, seconded by Ms. Leake, that the Board approve the adoption of the agenda, and a discussion followed.

Chairperson White asked the Board to approve amending the agenda by deleting Consent Item II.A. (Recommend approval of appointment of administrative personnel). He said the Superintendent did not have any personnel recommendations to make at this time.

Ms. Griffin moved, seconded by Ms. Leake, that the Board approve deleting Consent Item II.A., and the Board voted 9-0 in support of the motion.

Mr. Dunlap moved, seconded by Ms. Leake, that the Board approve moving Action Items III.A. (Recommend approval of Achievement Zone (AZ) Project) and III.B. (Recommend approval of Performance Management in CMS) to the Consent Agenda, and the Board voted 9-0 in support of the motion.

Ms. Leake moved, seconded Ms. Griffin, that the Board approve adopting the agenda as amended, and the Board voted 9-0 in support of the motion.

II. CONSENT ITEMS

A. *Item deleted.*

B. Recommend approval of Achievement Zone (AZ) Project.

C. Recommend approval of Performance Management in CMS.

Ms. Griffin moved, seconded by Ms. Leake, that the Board approve Consent Items II.B. and II.C., and a discussion followed.

Mr. Gauvreau pulled Consent Item B.

Mr. Dunlap moved, seconded by Ms. Leake, that the Board approve Consent Item II.C., and the Board voted 9-0 in support of the motion.

Mr. Gauvreau discussed the reasons he would not support the request for the grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the Achievement Zone Project. The project hires more people into the school district after pouring millions into a handful of schools. The grant does not include substance. Mr. Gauvreau was underwhelmed by the data driven instruction and the project management purpose. He also expressed concern that the grant asks the county for additional funding and pays the Foundation for the Carolinas a management fee of \$30,000. Mr. Gauvreau encouraged the Board to not support the grant because he believes the grant has strings attached to it and it should not request additional funding from the county

Ms. Leake moved, seconded by Ms. Griffin, that the Board approve Consent Item II.B., and a discussion followed. Ms. Leake commended the staff of the Achievement Zone and Dr. Gorman for pursuing grants that help provide for the needs of students. She encouraged the community to support CMS in doing what is necessary to provide a quality education and enhance the student growth of every student in the district. This grant should be viewed in a positive perspective because it helps the students who need it the most. She encouraged CMS to seek all academic grants available because they will assist CMS in helping students to become product citizens in the community. Ms. Leake believes CMS has qualified personnel who can monitor the grant but understands the management fee is a requirement of the grant. Chairperson White asked Dr. Gorman to address the management fee to the Foundation for the Carolinas. Dr. Gorman said a requirement of the grant is that there be a third party to administer the grant and the Gates Foundation has had discussions with the Foundation for the Carolinas to be that partner. The Gates Foundation will pay the \$30,000 management fee directly to the Foundation for the Carolinas.

The Board voted 7-2 to approve Consent Item II.C. Chairperson White, Ms. Griffin, Ms. McGarry, Mr. Merchant, Ms. Leake, Mr. Dunlap, and Mr. Tate voted in support of the motion. Mr. Gauvreau and Mr. Gjertsen voted against the motion.

III. ACTION ITEMS

A. Recommend approval of Achievement Zone (AZ) Project

This item was moved to the Consent Agenda (II.B.).

B. Recommend approval of Performance Management in CMS

This item was moved to the Consent Agenda (II.C.).

IV. REPORTS/INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Management Oversight Report on Transportation

Chairperson White called upon Dr. Gorman to introduce the report. Dr. Gorman said this will be a discussion on the Management Oversight for Transportation. He called upon Maurice Green, Chief Operating Officer, to introduce the report. Mr. Green introduced Guy Chamberlain, Associate Superintendent for Auxiliary Services, and Carol Stamper, Executive Director of Transportation, to present the report. Mr. Green said the report is lengthy and addresses many issues of which the Board needs to be aware. Mr. Green thanked Ms. Stamper

and her team for the great work in transporting our students throughout the county on a daily basis. Ms. Stamper said she hopes the report will provide the Board new information on how the Transportation Department operates; an assessment of the operations; key performance indicators; and recommendations for transportation improvements. Ms. Stamper provided Board members with a business and organizational profile of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Student Transportation Operations. The transportation operational environment includes local, state, and federal governing rules and regulations. These authorities, combined with the department's standard operating procedures and practices, establish the foundation and framework for the scope and level of services, staffing, funding, and work methods within the department. CMS provides service to 115,000 students, buses make approximately 40,000 stops each morning and afternoon, and CMS buses drive an average of 128,000 miles per day. An outline of the report is as follows:

- Operating Environment.
 - Alignment with the Superintendent's Strategic Plan 2010.
 - Transportation Mission Statement.
 - To support the educational process for all transportation eligible Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' students by providing safe, timely, and courteous services daily.
 - Local, State, and Federal Rules and Regulations.
- Organization, Staffing, and Business Functions.
 - Organization and Staffing.
 - Department employs 1,450 staff members.
 - 89% of staff are bus drivers.
 - 2% are supervisors/managerial staff.
 - Major Business Functions.
 - Transportation Service Operations.
 - Routing and Scheduling.
 - Safety and Training.
 - Maintenance.
 - Central Office and Fiscal Accountability.
 - Outsourced Business Functions.
- Funding, Budgets, Capital and Investments.
 - Funding Sources and Expenditures.
 - Budget.
 - Capital Improvement.
 - Clear Air Quality Funding and Initiatives.
 - Professional Development.
 - Technology.
- Department Profile.
 - Overview.
 - Ranked 9th of nation's top 100 school bus fleets.
 - Largest pupil transportation system in North Carolina.
 - Approximately 1,400 school buses and 95 activity buses.
 - History.
 - Scope and Definition of Services.
- Efficiency and Effectiveness.

- Building the Product.
- Service Delivery.
- Department Assessment.
 - Research Overview.
 - Key Performance Indicators.
 - Financial Goals.
 - Operational Goals.
 - Safety.
 - Customer Satisfaction.
 - Staffing.
- Challenges and Business Improvement Plan.
 - Department Challenges.
 - Routing and Scheduling.
 - ✓ Liberal transportation eligibility requirements.
 - ✓ Large transportation zones for non-traditional settings.
 - ✓ Lack or delay of information regarding district decisions or initiatives.
 - ✓ Board approved decisions such as grandfathered transportation.
 - ✓ Taxi service, bus stops often within a range less than .2 miles.
 - ✓ Daily changes to current bus schedules.
 - ✓ Inaccurate student addresses.
 - ✓ Multiple buses within same neighborhoods.
 - ✓ Insufficient information during spring and summer transportation registration.
 - ✓ Balancing operational efficiency and effective service delivery and customer service.
 - Bus Drivers.
 - ✓ Difficulty hiring quality permanent full time drivers.
 - ✓ Extensive requirements to become a certified CDL licensed bus driver.
 - ✓ State defined nine month position and split work day.
 - ✓ Driver absenteeism.
 - ✓ Minimal time for employer/employee contact.
 - ✓ Excess ration of drivers to supervisors. Average current ratio is 1:85 compared to research for other school district at 1:40.
 - Maintenance.
 - ✓ Excessive ratio of buses to technician; current ratio is 1:36.
 - ✓ Per *School Bus Fleet* survey, the national average of bus to technician ratio is 1:19.
 - ✓ Inadequate work environment and parts storage.
 - ✓ Funding and time for technical training on highly computerized buses.
 - ✓ On call/on duty hours.
 - ✓ Lack of turn key staging facilities at Northpointe and Downs Road.
 - All staff.
 - ✓ Hard to fill positions.
 - ✓ Extended working hours for proper coverage.
 - ✓ On call/on duty 24/7.
 - ✓ Excessive work loads and stressful schedules.
 - ✓ Non-competitive hiring rates for certain positions.
 - ✓ No employee performance merit pay.

- ✓ Lack of approved district wide attendance policy or program.
 - ✓ Limited time and funding for proper professional development
- Business Improvement Plan Recommendations and Strategies.
 - Transportation Cost and Service Delivery.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Simplify and improve enforcement of transportation eligibility criteria for students.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Adjust bus stop parameters to decrease number of bus stops and frequency of stops.
 - ✓ Common Stop Project Objectives.
 - Bus Routes and Schedules.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Improve timeliness of bus arrivals at bus stops and schools.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Maximize capacity and use of buses; increase average number of students per bus route.
 - Transportation Operations Management and Customer Service.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Improve staff and process accountability and effectiveness.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Improve customer service and customer satisfaction.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Enhance process and technology to support safe transportation.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Enhance proper student behavior and conduct on buses.
 - Transportation Organization and Staffing.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Decentralize and expand operations management.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Expand staff for support of technology and district growth and planning.
 - Fleet Maintenance Operations and Facilities.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Improve overall operating condition of the bus fleet.
 - ✓ Recommendation: Improve working conditions and maintenance facilities.

The report analyzed the costs for outsourcing transportation versus the district continuing to provide transportation. The estimate determined that outsourcing would cost CMS an additional \$18.3 million over a ten-year period.

Chairperson White thanked Ms. Stamper for an excellent report. He hopes the public better understands the difficulties the Transportation Department faces on a daily basis. He commended the transportation staff for utilizing crisis management at its best. Chairperson White said this could be a gigantic discussion item as the questions and comments could easily flow from operational to philosophical comments on buses and the utilization of buses, and it could be difficult to separate the two. The Board has agreed to ask the questions that they are most concerned about operationally and they will be answered in a Work Session format at a later time. After that, the Board members will be allowed five minutes each to expound on their philosophical thoughts regarding transportation and those questions will be answered at the Board Retreat scheduled in January.

Operational questions and comments from the Board members were as follows:

- Chairperson White said to truly impact this area the Board will have to make some tough decisions.
 - What are the current out of boundary and grandfathered stops/pickups that the Board would have to eliminate or change to make an impact on the transportation

efficiency and ability to reduce stops?

- Ms. Griffin thanked staff for the detailed report which answered many of her questions.
 - What impact will the recent compensation increase have on the overall transportation budget as much of the transportation budget is salary? Ms. Stamper said she does not have that information at this time and the Human Resources Department will be providing that information through the Finance Department soon.
 - CMS has the same distance requirement for elementary, middle, and high schools. What impact would different distances have on transportation at the elementary, middle, and high school levels? She would not support elementary students walking too far to a stop but would support high school students walking further. This could result in significant savings by implementing it at the different levels or by increasing the no transportation area.
 - The report included many good recommendations that would save money and other recommendations that may require additional funding.
 - Provide the cost savings for the recommendations.
 - Provide the additional funding required for the other recommendations.

- Mr. Dunlap said the per year cost to transport a special needs student is \$7,500, the cost for a regular student is \$703, and the special needs service has been outsourced. He said outsourcing is great for the person who gets the business but outsourcing can be more competitive if it is outsourced inside.
 - Explore saving opportunities for CMS transporting special needs students or outsourcing to the degree of creating smaller operations within our transportation system.
 - 95% of the students are assigned buses but only 65% use buses. What would be the impact if all 95% of students used buses?
 - Students who violate student rights and behavior guidelines make a conscious decision to do so. Assigning students to alternative sites places a tremendous cost burden on transportation. The Board should consider, as a part of the punishment, that students provide their own transportation.
 - The Transportation Department currently is fully staffed with bus drivers but will continue to hire bus drivers. Provide additional information on this because hiring people you don't need creates a financial impact on the budget.
 - Regarding Hidden Valley, there are 526 stops for 1,256 students and this is one of the largest communities in the district. To reduce transportation costs in this area, consider building another school in Hidden Valley to accommodate the students in this area as has been done in other communities.

- Ms. McGarry said the value of the services that the Transportation Department provides to the families is tremendous. She expressed concern that CMS is the largest transportation system in North Carolina when CMS is supposed to be an educational institution.
 - What percent of the \$65 million Transportation budget is outsourced? Ms. Stamper said last year, the outsourcing for the fleet maintenance and repair was approximately \$500,000 to \$600,000 and contracted services for special needs students and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act students were over \$3

- million. Ms. McGarry asked what are other options, considerations, or recommendations for outsourcing, i.e., the recommendations in the Citizens' Task Force and the McKinsey Report?
- What is the average afternoon ride (morning ride is twenty-two minutes)? Ms. Stamper said the Urban Institute did not study the afternoon ride but she could have them provide that information.
 - The report included excellent recommendations. Why haven't some of those recommendations been implemented because some do not require a policy change? She encouraged Dr. Gorman to review and consider for implementation the recommendations that do not require a policy change.
 - The law requires a 1.5 mile walk zone and CMS could save transportation costs if that were changed. She would not recommend a change if it required crossing a major highway because any changes would have to be sensitive to the needs of families and safety concerns. The Board should consider cost-saving changes that are feasible and reasonable, and this should include the costs associated with picking up students throughout the county to attend magnet schools.
 - The two hundred monitors were to be installed in the fall. Why was there a delay? Ms. Stamper said the bidding and demonstration process have just been completed and the installations will begin soon.
 - What is the reason for inaccurate student addresses? Ms. Stamper said the addresses are not updated in the student data base and parents provided incorrect information.
- Mr. Tate thanked staff for the massive report and their good work.
 - What is the change in the number of students being transported at the beginning of the year compared to the end of the year? Ms. Stamper said there is about a twenty percent variance. Staff struggles with knowing who is riding on the bus daily and eventually CMS will be able to capture and track students electronically through the Global Positioning Systems or through student identification cards so we will know exactly who is on which bus. Currently, the driver updates that piece of information on a daily or as frequently as they can basis.
 - Regarding the average time compared to the state and other counties, what is the shortest and longest bus run in distance and time? Ms. Stamper will provide that information at a later time.
 - For the budgeting process, please recommend to the Board the specific needs of the Transportation Department.
 - Provide the policies that the Transportation Department believes should be updated or newly written.
 - Mr. Gjertsen commended staff on a great management oversight report. He liked that the report provided information on what the Board can do to help with the challenges of the department and that it started with the context of the legal requirements of the Board policies that frame the responsibilities of the Transportation Department.
 - How is the state efficiency rating calculated?
 - What is the median of the average time and distance for the actual bus riding experience for students?
 - On average, there are 72 students per bus and 4.6 runs per bus which averages 15.7 students per bus run. Ms. Stamper said she had not calculated this average.
 - Provide the cost savings for the challenges and ideas recommended.

- Provide the costs for the recommendations that need to be made.
 - List the recommendations that have been implemented and the recommendations that were proposed.
- Mr. Merchant commended staff on the management oversight presentation. A key to the report were the potential strategies for improvement and the clear indication of what the Board can do to help push operational improvement.
 - Local funding provides 24% of the Transportation budget which equates to about \$14.5 million. If CMS generated savings in the Transportation Department, would it be possible to keep those savings out of the local allotment and receive the same funding from the state? Ms. Stamper said probably not. Staff would have to study that recommendation because the local eligible expenditures are also within the funding formula.
 - How long does a stop take? Suzanne Harkey, Routing and Scheduling Specialist, stated on average approximately thirty seconds for under five students and it could range from one to two minutes depending on the number of students. The computer calculates the stop based upon the number of students assigned to each stop. Mr. Merchant said we assume that more stops equal more stops on the run and the route. What is the time savings for having three stops picking up two or three students compared to one stop picking up seven students?
 - Are the guidelines for walking distance to a bus stop the same for all age groups? Ms. Stamper said yes, the standard operating procedure is 2/10 of a mile from the student's home to the bus stop for all grade levels. Mr. Merchant believes the five-year old students should not have to walk too far but the sixteen-year old students should walk further.
 - The difficulty of attracting and retaining qualified bus drivers is because of the split workday as this is not an efficient way to earn a living. Are there options for bus drivers to park the bus and work at one of the schools as a teacher aide, cafeteria worker, or custodian as that would provide a better job and employment opportunity which might help get better people? Dr. Gorman said this is possible but you must consider when they switch shifts that would be a different pay grade and there is an increase in costs of having them on the clock for more hours. Mr. Merchant would like opportunities for getting additional teacher assistants in the elementary schools. Ms. Stamper said previously the district has had combination jobs for bus drivers. Over the years, the time required to transport students has increased and on average all drivers are full-time drivers working a seven to eight hour day driving buses, and any additional combination of duties, most likely, would result in overtime.
 - Mr. Merchant likes the strategies that have been presented and he encouraged that some be implemented. Provide details on what they would look like. Mr. Merchant said this is a management issue. The strategy should be implemented if the problem has been analyzed and there is appropriate data available to support the strategy. Mr. Merchant said it is time for CMS to move beyond measuring and analyzing to implementing and executing. He encouraged Ms. Stamper to be a leader and push the people above her to do the things that she believes need implementing.
 - Ms. Leake commended staff for a quality report and the Transportation Department for their hard work in transporting students.

- Prioritize the strategies in the order to be implemented and provide a cost analysis of each.
- Ms. Leake expressed concern about the salaries for bus drivers; drivers working a split shift; the cost of gas for traveling to and from work two times each day; and those employees trying to provide for a family. She would like working options for those employees because that would help CMS to maintain qualified transportation staff.
- What is in place that addresses the dress code for the transportation technicians? She would like that process to be professionalized. Previously, bus drivers wore shirts and ties, and that was stopped.
- Regarding behavior on the buses, what can be done to guarantee safety for the students from other students on the bus? How can a safe environment on the bus for the drivers and the students on the buses be created?
- Are there monitors on the buses? How many buses have a bus monitor? What is the salary for bus monitors? Ms. Leake expressed concern that many of the free-and-reduced lunch children are the children of our bus drivers and bus monitors, and they are in that category because of the low salaries. How can we increase the salary for bus monitors? What region or zone are the bus monitors located in?
- Are high school students on the same bus with middle and elementary students? Ms. Stamper said a bus only includes the age group of the school the bus serves. Ms. Leake said this helps to track students and provide a safe environment.
- Regarding growth and its impact of ridership, what would be the cost impact of the increase of ridership in ten years if we maintain the same level of strategies that we have today (not the new strategies)?
- What is the procedure for supporting zones with a new activity buses? We must ensure that each region is provided the kind of buses necessary to impact that zone. What would be the cost to provide new buses for each region?

Dr. Gorman thanked the Board for the great feedback. He said Goal Six, Item Seven of the Strategic Plan 2010, discusses accessing business operations. Staff began in the spring to access Transportation, Child Nutrition, Inventory Management, Warehouse and Distribution, Graphic Production, Facility Maintenance and Operations, and Human Resources to evaluate and determine their effectiveness and efficiency, how they can be improved, and develop a business improvement plan for each area. This is the first of those groups. The Transportation Report fit much better in the Management Oversight format than the curricular topics. This report was a blending together the first assessment project, the great work of the Transportation team, and the refinement of the Management Oversight process. As the other areas are reviewed, they will be presented in a similar format. Dr. Gorman thanked the Board for providing specific operational feedback. He said staff will be responding to the Board and sharing additional information.

Chairperson White invited Board members to ask additional operational questions.

- Chairperson White:
 - What is the average daily absentee rate for bus drivers? Ms. Stamper said it averages forty to fifty each day. Chairperson White said that is the reason staff is hiring extra bus drivers. We must have more drivers than are assigned to buses and

he believes this is a justifiable cost.

- What does the Transportation Department need in terms of policies?
 - What are the top four priorities the Transportation Department would like for the Board to act on immediately that would have a major impact on the ability for the Transportation Department to operate?
- Ms. McGarry said the implementation of some of the strategies is past due and she is eager to see them implemented.
 - Mr. Gjertsen:
 - Is CMS bigger than CATS? Ms. Stamper said, yes.
 - Regarding the split schedule, does CMS offer opportunities for personal and professional development during that time frame? Ms. Stamper said yes, staff tries to schedule a variety of meetings during that timeframe that include safety meetings; small group discussions; and school administrators meeting with the drivers that serve their schools. Mr. Gjertsen suggested that CMS partner with CPCC to offer classes that could also utilize that timeframe.
 - Mr. Merchant:
 - Are there high school bus routes that correspond to CATs routes? Ms. Stamper said she was not sure but she would guess that the schedules that would require a student to be picked up at a location close to their home would not be in place on the CATs route. The report included Federal Transit Authority laws and reasons that they cannot be solely supporters of school bus operations. Staff could request schedules from CATs for the high schools in their area. Ms. Stamper said CMS offers CATs discount passes for students who attend Derita Alternative School.
 - Ms. Leake asked several questions regarding the new compensation rate for bus drivers.
 - What is the new salary for bus drivers and when will the new rate begin? Ms. Stamper said it would begin immediately and the new beginning market salary is \$11.25 per hour versus \$10.99 last year.
 - What is the salary for bus drivers in position for five or ten years? Mr. Green said the new compensation program includes two increases paid for bus drivers below the new market rate. These bus drivers will receive a twenty-five cent increase in January and then receive the state increase in July. Then, next January they will have the opportunity, based on performance, to receive again a twenty-five cent increase. Once they reach the new market rate they will only receive the increases that the state provides.
 - How will the new rate impact the salary for bus drivers and bus monitors who have been employed five years, ten years, twenty years, and thirty years?
 - Are bus drivers required to be a high school graduate? Ms. Stamper said at this time a high school diploma is not required.
 - What are the requirements to be a bus driver? Ms. Stamper said there are requirements from the Department of Motor Vehicles in terms of their driver's license as well as other qualifications for pre-employment from CMS.

Ms. Leake encouraged CMS to help provide assistance to bus drivers to receive a high school education.

- Mr. Dunlap:
 - What are the processes in place for dealing with complaints and grievances from bus drivers? Mr. Dunlap expressed concern that bus drivers have been told they cannot use the restroom on school campuses; there is not a clear understanding of the promotional processes and how others get promoted (people with college degrees are not being promoted while people without college degrees are being promoted); the whistle blower idea where monitors notice behaviors of bus drivers that they consider to be improper, detrimental, or wreckless driving but are afraid to complain; and previously the bus drivers did not have their grievances addressed and tried to start or join a union.

Philosophical questions and comments from the Board members were as follows:

- Ms. Griffin said her primary goal is to keep students safe and raise student achievement. A second goal is simplifying the transportation system and saving money where possible. She suggested the following considerations:
 - Evaluate methods to safely reduce transportation and use that money to improve student achievement.
 - Evaluate the magnet programs to include the location, the validity of the themes, and the number of schools.
 - Evaluate the continuation of the lottery process for non-magnet schools. Available seats can be filled at schools that have them through the transfer process. Should transportation be offered to students who choice into a non-magnet school?
 - Evaluate consolidated bus stops and the difference for high school, middle school, and elementary school.
 - Dr. Gorman should make operational changes that make sense and do not require changes to Board policy or a directive from the Board.
 - Evaluate methods to simplify the process of grandfathering to include not offering transportation and/or utilizing consolidated bus stops.

Ms. Griffin said the transportation system is complex and it has been impacted by the No Child Left Behind Legislation which added to the transportation of students. She believes the assignment plan could be simplified in a way that would also lessen the complexity of the Transportation Department. She said it is easy for the Board to make the decision to grandfather students but quite often the impact the decision will have on the transportation department is not considered. She said as the Board discusses raising student achievement they should also consider how assignment and transportation fits into that important goal.

- Mr. Gauvreau expressed concerns regarding the following:
 - There are too many buses in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The fleet includes several hundred that are not necessary and are a result of the remnants of a failed desegregation program that has yet to be unwound because of the Choice Plan. This is clearly tied to school Board policy and that must be fixed. Dr. Gorman must pursue this because CMS is wasting tens of millions of dollars every year.
 - CMS should cut the number of buses. A major failure is many parents believe at the end of the long bus ride there is some special program in the school. The long bus ride is unnecessarily costing the taxpayers millions of dollars.

- The magnet program is bloated.
 - The Choice Plan is still in existence.
 - Mr. Gauvreau does not fault the Transportation Department for the mess. He faults this Board in not directing Superintendents to change it. The district can be improved by the removal of buses. He believes the discussions on salaries, Global Positioning System (GPS), and hiring enough people could be eliminated or minimized by reducing the unnecessary need for this bus fleet. This is common sense and the Board should approve eliminating hundreds of buses.
 - The Board must declare they want to save money and improve the bureaucracy that has been created through Board policy and student assignment.
 - Dr. Gorman must implement operational efficiency in the transportation system.
- Mr. Dunlap said the issue about transportation is about access. Many people in the community do not believe their children will receive a high quality education at the school next to their home. CMS has provided parents an opportunity to send their children to a school where they thought their child could get a high quality education. Mr. Dunlap said if he could be assured that every school provided the same quality of education, he would support sending all students to the school next door. Until that can happen, he believes parents should have the right to ask to have their children attend the school where they believe they can get a high quality education. This is about access. He expressed concern that the children who least can afford it would be assigned to the schools where there is less an opportunity for a high quality education than those students with the means to do so. He said this is not about taking away bus rides. It is about taking away opportunities for students. He can support younger students having access to a bus a block away and middle or high school students walking more blocks than elementary students but he will not support denying parents the access for their child to attend a school that provides a quality education. Mr. Dunlap make the following recommendations:
- Evaluate the locations of magnet schools. Originally, magnet schools were located in African-American communities and most of the students in those areas had to be bused to other schools. Later, CMS redistributed the magnet schools. Now, there are four magnet schools in the Elizabeth area and some of those students in that area are being denied access to schools close to home. There are several magnet schools in the west area and those students are now having longer bus rides.
- Ms. McGarry expressed concern that the time the Board spends on transportation is diluting the effectiveness of what needs to go into the classroom. The Board's focus should be on the classroom. If there were results in the classroom, there would not be a question regarding neighborhood schools and a need for long bus rides. She suggested the following:
- Put the money in the classroom.
 - Decrease the number of buses and be more efficient with the buses remaining.
 - Explore outsourcing more thoroughly. She expressed concern that CMS is only outsourcing \$3.5 million out of \$65 million budget.
 - Evaluate magnet options and determine if some magnet schools should return to being neighborhood schools.
 - Reevaluate .5 mile versus 1.5 mile bus transportation. Determine what will be

feasible, reasonable, and sensitive to the needs of families.

- Review transportation related polices and regulations.

Ms. McGarry believes the following recommendations should be implemented:

- Bell schedule, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to reduce the overall student ridership times.
- Common stops, neighborhoods having fewer stops, and cluster stops.

She said these items could be implemented immediately because they are managerial decisions and do not need Board approval

- Mr. Tate agreed with Mr. Dunlap. He said many our students do not have the ability to get to school easily and safely without bus transportation. He encouraged the Board to stay focused on getting the students to school so that they can get the education that is being provided. He appreciates the fact that CMS provides transportation for students at a lesser distance than other school districts. He would support increasing the distance for middle and high school students. He said the Board must take responsibility for an assignment plan which allows for the amount of busing that we have and an assignment plan that ends up costing us more per student at certain schools just because of demographics and difficulties that are faced. Mr. Tate was impressed that the study and report indicated that outsourcing the major components of transportation would be more expensive than keeping it in-house. He encouraged the Board to not push outsourcing transportation. It is important that the Board ensures that all students can get to school because they cannot learn if they do not get to school. This is why it is important that CMS continue to provide the quality of a transportation system that is being provided at this point.
- Mr. Gjertsen said transportation is about getting the students to school but the major issues are not transportation related. The issues are as follows:
 - Where we build schools and the size of schools. Must build smaller schools that are closer to where the students live. This would result in fewer buses.
 - Student Assignment Plan. The current Student Assignment Plan is not working. It was created to be a Choice Plan and there are not many choices because the schools in his district and throughout the county are over capacity.
 - The Board should reopen student assignment.
 - Magnet programs. Provide information in considering the reevaluation and distribution of magnet programs.
 - Provide an analysis of performance of the magnet programs against the achievement and diversity goals, and benchmarks.
- Mr. Merchant made the following recommendations:
 - Bus stops. A potential problem area is CMS transports many students who live close to the school and a solution may be to expand the walk zone. The problem is not the stops where several students are picked up but “spaghetti” runs, and those should be reduced.
 - Magnet programs/schools. Perhaps, the fewer the better. CMS must simplify the programs and focus on the areas that CMS does really well.
 - Evaluate which programs are the most effective at providing the sound basic education required by the North Carolina constitution, and then locate those programs strategically in different areas of the county so that more students have

the opportunity to participate in those types of magnet programs in a way that is more efficient for CMS in providing that service.

- Board should focus and make decisions based on the core business of providing a sound basic education.

Mr. Merchant expressed concern that CMS is focused on customers but should be focused on clients. Clients indicate a long-term partnership whereas a customer indicates a retail, transactional relationship in which we always defer to the customer and the whim of the customer, and that results in losing site of strategy. He said he does not want to hear about customers in the educational or transportation services provided by CMS. He said parents, families, and students must step up to the plate and that is why they should be referred to as clients because they are our partners.

- Ms. Leake said she is focused on *Brown vs. Board of Education* as it relates to a diversified school district. She believes if we do not adhere to where we were, we will go back to where we should not go which is segregated schools. CMS must provide a quality education for every child in the district and enforce placing quality teachers where they are needed the most will help provide a quality education. She encouraged Dr. Gorman to hire the best teachers and principals available. She also does not like using the term customer to refer to our parents. She said this is our community and it is more diverse today than it has ever been. She expressed concern that changes in transportation could result in CMS moving backward rather than moving forward, and it would penalize the students who need it the most. She wants all the students in the district to have an opportunity to be competitive. This must be a diversified process. Ms. Leake made the following comments regarding pupil assignment and transportation:
 - Everyone cannot walk to a school.
 - Must build a school downtown.
 - Build quality schools.
 - Do not cut back on the size because that will result where we were with *Brown vs. Board of Education*.
 - Do the right thing for the community.
 - Think beyond today and focus on the future of the community.

Ms. Leake challenged the Board to include diversity in the process and to provide transportation because that will help provide a quality education for every student.

- Chairperson White commended Carol Stamper and the staff of the Transportation Department for the excellent job that they perform. He made the following points:
 - No student achievement will occur until students arrive at school. Transportation is a necessary evil if you do not like it. It is a necessary good if you believe CMS is doing the right thing.
 - Be careful of simple answers to a complex issue. The majority of the students picked up in a walk zone are picked up on a bus that has empty seats that is going through the neighborhood anyway, and that makes it difficult to tell a parent no. Enforcing the walk zone will not save much money or time. He would support this being reviewed.
 - CMS has implemented decentralization. The Board should consider pushing the

decision-making level of getting students to school safely and on time closer to the transportation specialist of each learning community who know what they can do with their buses.

- Transportation is a huge issue in this community. If the Board wants Dr. Gorman to make decisions on transportation, the Board must support and back those decisions. He would like to be provided a list of those recommendations.

Dr. Gorman thanked the fourteen hundred employees of the Transportation Department who work hard everyday. He commended Mr. Green and Mr. Chamberlain for their support of Ms. Stamper, and Ms. Stamper for her direct leadership of the department and the entire team.

ADJOURNMENT

By consensus, the Board agreed to adjourn the Regular Board meeting.

The Regular School Board Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Chairperson, Joe. I. White, Jr.

Clerk to the Board, Nancy Daughtridge