

Approved by the Charlotte-
Mecklenburg Board of Education
May 12, 2009
Regular Board Meeting



Charlotte, North Carolina

April 28, 2009

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

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education held a Regular Board Meeting on April 28, 2009. The meeting began at 5:31 p.m. and was held in Room CH-14 of the Government Center.

Present: Molly Griffin, Chairperson, District 5;
Kaye McGarry, Vice-Chairperson, Member At-Large;
Joe I. White, Jr., Member At-Large;
Trent Merchant, Member At-Large;
Kimberly Mitchell-Walker (District 2);
Tom Tate (District 4); and
Ken Gjertsen (District 6)

Absent: Larry Gauvreau (District 1) and
James Ross (District 3)

Also present at the request of the Board were Dr. Peter Gorman, Superintendent; André Mayes, Acting General Counsel/Deputy General Counsel; Hugh Hattabaugh, Chief Operating Officer; Tyler Ream, Chief of Staff; Maurice Ambler, Chief Human Resources Officer; and Nancy Daughtridge, Clerk to the Board.

Upon motion by Mr. Merchant, seconded by Mr. Tate, the Board voted unanimously of those present for approval to go into Closed Session for the following purposes:

1. To consider a personnel matter.

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

The Board held a Closed Session meeting from 5:31 p.m. to 5:36 p.m.

Chairperson Griffin reconvened the Regular Board Meeting at 6:00 p.m. in the Meeting Chamber of the Government Center. CMS-TV Channel 3 televised the meeting.

Present: Molly Griffin, Chairperson, District 5;
Kaye McGarry, Vice-Chairperson, Member At-Large;
Joe I. White, Jr., Member At-Large;
Trent Merchant, Member At-Large;
Larry Gauvreau (District 1);
Kimberly Mitchell-Walker (District 2);
James Ross (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; André Mayes, Acting General Counsel/Deputy General Counsel; Members of Executive and Senior Staffs; Judy Whittington, Manager of Board Services; and Nancy Daughtridge, Clerk to the Board.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Griffin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Chairperson Griffin welcomed everyone to the Board's second meeting of the month which is being held in the Meeting Chamber.

A. Adoption of Agenda

Ms. McGarry moved, seconded by Mr. Merchant, that the Board adopt the agenda as presented, and the Board voted 9-0 in support of the motion.

B. Public Hearing on proposed 2009-2010 Board of Education Budget

Chairperson Griffin called the Public Hearing open.

Cindy Corwin, president of the North Carolina Association of Teacher Assistants for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, represented the teacher assistants. She asked the Board to review their budget requests that had been provided to the Board earlier. She discussed the value teacher assistants add in the classroom and to the students in helping them succeed in life. She urged the Board to not cut teacher assistant positions from the budget.

Pam Grundy, parent at Shamrock Gardens Elementary School, represented many parents. She urged the Board to keep their eyes on what is important – the education of all children. The budget cannot put off the education of our most vulnerable children and must focus on relationships and trust. She urged the Board to provide funding for staff in family services because they build those relationships and keep schools together. Small classes, high expectations, and dedicated relationship building have contributed to the success of Shamrock Gardens Elementary School.

Mary McCray, president of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Association of Educators (CMAE), said they understand the budget restraints and economic situation. She urged the Board to reserve the supplement, which 10-month employees utilize as income for June and July in the absence of a salary, and to allow employees to have the option of having their pay put into twelve installments.

Ms. Griffin called the Public Hearing closed.

II. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Construction.

1. Recommend approval of construction contract for road improvements for the new Ridge Road middle school.

- B. Recommend approval of candidate filing fee for November 2009 election of Board of Education district members.

The recommended filing fee for the November 2009 election is \$60.00.

- C. Recommend approval of appointment of administrative personnel.

Appointments:

- *Harrison Peters named principal at Ardrey Kell High School. Mr. Peters has a Masters of Educational Leadership from Nova Southwestern University and a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from University of West Florida. Mr. Peters previously served as principal at Robinswood Middle School with Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Florida.*
- *Angel Oliphant named principal at Lake Wylie Elementary School. Ms. Oliphant previously served as assistant principal at Sterling Elementary School.*

- D. Recommend approval for naming of new Ridge Road middle school.

Recommended name is Ridge Road Middle School.

- E. Recommend approval for naming of new Salome Church Road elementary school.

Recommended name is Stoney Creek Elementary School.

- F. Recommend approval for naming of new Belmeade Road middle school.

Recommended name is Whitewater Middle School.

- G. Recommend approval for naming of new Hamilton-Smith Road elementary school.

Recommended name is River Gate Elementary School.

- H. Recommend approval for naming of new Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road elementary school.

Recommended name is River Oaks Academy.

- I. Recommend approval for naming of new Berewick elementary school.

Recommended name is Berewick Elementary School.

- J. Recommend approval of the Superintendent's recommendation to dismiss Michael R. Tye who is a teacher with career status under state law.

Chairperson Griffin said she has had a request to pull Consent Item H. and she asked the Board for a motion to approve the remaining Consent Items.

Ms. McGarry moved, seconded by Mr. Tate, that the Board adopt Consent Items A. through J. excluding H, and the Board voted 9-0 in support of the motion.

Mr. Merchant discussed Consent Item H. This is the naming of a new elementary school in the Mt. Holly-Huntersville area. Frequently the Board has been criticized for not running the school system more like a business. He believes a business like approach is creating and maintaining a brand and CMS does a good job of that most of the time. The school followed the process for naming a school and the process involved the students, parents, and the community. He does not believe the process protected the CMS brand and he is specifically concerned about the name "Academy." He approved a school named Academy last year and he wished he had not. He believes this is a concerted effort to put distance between the new

schools and the CMS brand and the district as a whole. He will not support the recommended name.

Mr. Tate moved, seconded by Ms. McGarry, that the Board approve Consent Item H. (Recommend approval for naming of new Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road elementary school as River Oaks Academy), and the Board voted 8-1 in support of the motion. Chairperson Griffin, Ms. McGarry, Mr. White, Mr. Gauvreau, Ms. Kimberly-Walker, Mr. Ross, Mr. Tate, and Mr. Gjertsen voted in support of the motion. Mr. Merchant voted against the motion.

Chairperson Griffin welcomed the six new schools to CMS and congratulated the principals as follows:

- Ridge Road Middle School with Jametta Martin-Tanner as principal.
- Stoney Creek Elementary School with Gina Smith as principal.
- Whitewater Middle School with Stephanie Wade as principal.
- River Gate Elementary School with Acquanette Edmond as principal.
- River Oaks Academy with Marilyn Tate-Osborne as principal.
- Berewick Elementary School with Cheryl Turner as principal.

III. ACTION ITEMS

A. Recommend approval of amendment to Policy IKF, Graduation Requirements

Chairperson Griffin called upon Tom Tate, Chairperson of the Policy Committee, to present the recommendation. Mr. Tate said the amendments come from the Policy Committee without dissent. The amendment will put CMS on track with the state's timetable regarding the graduation project. It will also show that the graduation project will, at this point, be a local requirement until it becomes a state requirement. The way the policy is written the policy will not have to be amended again unless the state should make subsequent changes. Mr. Tate said Board Policy BG, Board of Education Policy Process, provides the Board the authority to act without the usual requirements of First Reading and Public Hearings because the action is in response to a State Board of Education (SBE) policy change. The Board must act today to ensure juniors know what to expect for next year and the Superintendent has time to determine which courses may qualify for the Senior Exit Project. Additional information regarding the proposed amendment includes in May 2005, the SBE adopted a graduation project requirement as part of its statewide high school exit standards. This requirement was to be effective with the graduating class of 2010 (students first entering 9th grade in 2006). The Board incorporated this requirement into Policy IKF in December 2005 and CMS began implementing this requirement with current juniors in high school, making it a two-year project to be done throughout the 11th and 12th grades. On April 2, 2009, the SBE approved a one-year delay of the state Graduation Project Requirement, making it effective with the graduating class of 2011 (students first entering 9th grade in 2007). Therefore, Policy IKF needs to be amended to delay by at least one year the effective date that students must complete the North Carolina Graduation Project in order to graduate from high school. In addition, the policy amendments reflect that CMS will continue to implement the CMS Graduation Project as a local graduation requirement, similar to the Senior Exit Project, which was a requirement for earlier classes.

Mr. Tate moved that the Board adopt the proposed amendments to Policy IKF, Graduation Requirements, a second was not required because it came through the Policy Committee, and the Board voted 9-0 in support of the motion.

B. Recommend approval of amendment to Exhibit IKF-E, CMS/NC Course of Study Graduation Requirements, Class of 2013

Chairperson Griffin called upon Tom Tate, Chairperson of the Policy Committee, to present the recommendation. Mr. Tate said proposed amendments to Exhibit IKF-E, CMS/NC Course of Study Graduation Requirements, Class of 2013, are before the Board from the Policy Committee without objection. The purpose of the amendment is to align CMS with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) procedures. On December 9, 2008, the Board approved amendments to Policy IKF, Graduation Requirements, adding the Future Ready Core Course of Study approved by the State Board of Education. Exhibit IKF-E was also amended at that time. The Future Ready Core includes more difficult math requirements for graduation than those previously approved. Students who are not able to complete these math requirements may be allowed instead to complete the "Alternate Math Sequence." Information from DPI staff indicated that the Alternate Math Sequence option was available only upon "parent request and principal approval." This language was thus incorporated into the Course of Study Exhibit. In February 2009, CMS learned that DPI was no longer requiring parent request in order to schedule students into the Alternate Math Sequence. Therefore, the proposed amendment would delete the words "parent request and" from the exhibit. CMS staff is developing detailed procedures for how students would be identified as appropriate for the Alternate Math Sequence rather than the Future Ready Core math requirements. Because of the need to notify 8th grade students and their parents of the Future Ready Core and Alternate Math Sequence requirements in the next four weeks, this exhibit amendment is necessary for the efficient operation of the district. Therefore, according to Policy BG, Board of Education Policy Process, it is appropriate to waive the requirements for First Reading and Public Hearing and submit the exhibit amendment directly to the Board for action.

Mr. Tate moved that the Board adopt the proposed amendments to Exhibit IKF-E, CMS/NC Course of Study Graduation Requirements, Class of 2013, and the Board voted 9-0 in support of the motion.

Mr. Gjertsen left the Regular Board meeting at 6:20 p.m.

IV. REPORT/INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Report on Strategic Plan Charter: Achievement Zone

Chairperson Griffin called upon Dr. Gorman to introduce the report. Dr. Gorman said this is a report update on the Strategic Plan Charter for the Achievement Zone. He called upon Curtis Carroll, Area Superintendent for the Achievement Zone, and Shelton Jefferies, Executive Director for the Achievement Zone, to present the information. Mr. Carroll recognized staff members of the Achievement Zone (AZ) who were attending the meeting. He said when the Achievement Zone Program began in January 2007 it was all about the lists. There were schools on a list from Judge Manning for under performing high schools regarding the *Leandro* litigation, several middle and elementary schools were on a list for corrective action due to *No Child Left Behind* Legislation, and several schools were on multiple lists. The AZ

originated as a result of federal and state sanctions. Mr. Carroll said he was proud to provide the Board an optimistic report on the progression of the AZ for the past two years. Mr. Carroll reviewed the history, purpose, challenges, and accomplishments of the AZ. The AZ is part of the *Strategic Plan 2010* under high academic achievement goals. The Program began with ten schools and Midwood was added in June 2007. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools partnered with Parthenon Group to create a business plan for the AZ. Staff utilized data to identify schools that had a variety of significant challenges and then selected ten challenged schools to be a part of the AZ. The schools and pertinent information are as follows:

- Schools:
 - Two Elementary Schools:
 - Billingsville Elementary School.
 - Shamrock Gardens Elementary School.
 - Four Middle Schools:
 - Bishop Spaugh Community Academy.
 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School.
 - Sedgefield Middle School.
 - Wilson Middle School.
 - Four High Schools:
 - Garinger Traditional High School.
 - Waddell High School.
 - West Charlotte High School.
 - West Mecklenburg High School.
 - Midwood High School was added in June of 2007.
- Purpose:
 - To provide more intensive support and intervention to a select group of highly challenged schools.
 1. Additional learning community and school level staffing.
 2. Highly focused and data-driven approach.
- Main Points:
 - Received \$2.7 million in funding from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
 - Partnered with Parthenon Group to create a business plan.
 - Utilized data to identify schools that had a variety of significant challenges.
 - Selected eleven challenged schools to be a part of AZ.
 - Strategies to improve academic outcomes have included:
 - Focus on data-driven decision making.
 - Focus on quality staff.
 - Focus on school safety.
 - Focus on literacy.
 - Focus on public perception/partnerships.
 - Growth in EOG/EOC scores at most AZ schools over past three years has outpaced district growth.
- Challenges include:
 - A. Performance Gap:
 1. In 2005-2006, there was nearly a 25% difference in AZ versus non-AZ students in performance (EOG and EOCs at Grade Level).
 - B. Student Challenges:
 1. Limited English Proficiency Students.

2. Exceptional Children.
3. Free and Reduced Lunch.
4. Unexcused Absence Rates.
5. Suspension Rates.

C. Teacher Challenges:

1. AZ schools had more teachers with limited experience.
2. AZ students were 50% more likely to have a novice teacher as compared to non-AZ students.
3. AZ schools had teacher turnover rates above the district average.
 - a) Of the 84 district-wide teacher vacancies in 2007-2008, 27 were at AZ High Schools.
4. AZ schools had 9.7 teacher absences per year compared to the district average of 5.2 per year.

Lessons learned include challenged schools need strong leadership; adequate, equitable, and reliable funding; collective efficacy; strategic planning; and strong partnerships. The efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive impact on student performance. Mr. Carroll highlighted great things happening in individual classrooms. Mr. Carroll invited the Board members to visit the schools in the Achievement Zone to see the positive results and successes.

Board members were invited to ask questions and make comments.

- Mr. Tate thanked Mr. Carroll, staff, and the students, for their good work and the difference they have been making in the schools. Mr. Tate asked clarifying questions regarding the improvements in attendance in the Achievement Zone. Mr. Carroll reviewed information regarding tracking student and teacher attendance, and the efforts to improve attendance for both. Mr. Carroll said consistently it has been proven that engaging students in the classroom will improve student attendance. Dr. Gorman said at the end of the year as part of the wrap-up report, the Board will be provided yearly comparative data (comparing this year to the previous year) and that will include attendance.
- Mr. Merchant thanked Mr. Carroll for his report and his constant enthusiasm which is also reflected by his team of staff. Mr. Merchant expressed concern regarding the End of Grade reading scores. CMS has focused on literacy, raising the bar and closing the gap. The results in reading are raising the bar but not closing the gap. He reviewed the reading results and the actions that have been taken noting that this also involved principal turnover. He expressed concern that the gap has gotten worse over the period for several schools. He asked why did that happen and what are we doing? Dr. Gorman said part of the why is when reviewing the results from the previous years there was a disproportionate number of students who were classified in certain *No Child Left Behind* categories who previously passed the test but when the test was re-normed they did not pass the test. A number of the students who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program have less access in some cases to literacy and that is one of the reason Mr. Carroll has implemented extra measures such as the extra reading block, extra math block, and narrowing the curriculum. In addition, a number of the students who were passing the test were barely passing and when the test was re-normed they did not pass. This has also occurred across the district as well as the state. Mr. Merchant said one of the pillars of strategies is a focus on staff development. He said CMS would now have the capability to show improvement

year after year as well as indicate if a student is actually learning and teachers are teaching. Those improvement measures will indicate the pace at which a student is advancing on grade level. Dr. Gorman said, yes, CMS would have the ability to track growth improvement as well as the incremental increases on grade level. Mr. Merchant looks forward to seeing that level of data because that will be the measure to show if the Achievement Zone works. Dr. Gorman said that data would be shown for all the CMS schools next year. He said when the Board adopted the change in goals for the Superintendent in November the commitment was to convert to that accountability.

- Ms. McGarry expressed concern regarding the teacher absences and she encouraged the Board to be more stringent with the number of absences a teacher is allowed to take. Students can't learn if teachers are not at school teaching. She asked out of the 180 days, how many days are the teachers in the Achievement Zone absent? Dr. Gorman said there were a disproportionate number of long-term leaves that teachers in the Achievement Zone took when compared to other districts. The number of teachers on long-term medical leave increased with the reconstitution of the schools in the Achievement Zone (staff was in the process of evaluating teachers to be leaving the school). The absences have reduced because many of those teachers are no longer teaching with CMS, many principals are monitoring teacher absences, and absences do lead to improvement plans and other corrective measures. Principals are being smarter in the methods they manage their schools and time for professional development. Ms. McGarry would like the number of absences in the school year for the Achievement Zone. Dr. Gorman said this information would be provided with the reports at the end of the year. Ms. McGarry discussed the importance of working harder to get quality teachers in the classroom because research indicates that is number one in student achievement. Mr. Carroll said that is the responsibility of the principals and that is also being handled by the teachers putting pressure on other teachers because they are working in collaborative teams. Teachers must pull their weight because when teachers are in schools students can learn. Ms. McGarry asked how many Teach For America teachers are in the Achievement Zone? She does not pay much attention to the credentials of teachers, experience of teachers, or a teacher being a novice teacher because what is most important to her is whether a teacher is getting results and that should be the focus. Dr. Gorman said he would provide the number of Teach For America teachers at a later time. Ms. McGarry believes Teach For America teachers are getting results even though they are classified as being a "novice" teacher. Dr. Gorman said disproportionately the Teach For America teachers are located in the Achievement Zone compared to other areas because they must teach in Focus Schools. For example, there are nine Teach For America teachers at Wilson Middle School.

B. Report on Strategic Plan Charter: Midwood High School

Chairperson Griffin called upon Dr. Gorman to introduce the report. Dr. Gorman said this is the report on the Strategic Plan Charter for Midwood High School. He called upon Curtis Carroll, Area Superintendent for the Achievement Zone; Sheila Ijames, principal at Midwood High School; and Shelton Jefferies, Executive Director for the Achievement Zone, to present the report. Ms. Ijames said there are great things happening at Midwood High School, the 9th Grade Transition Program, and she is pleased to update the Board on those successes. She has worked with CMS for 25 years in a number of capacities. She said the opportunity to help students who have not been too successful in the past to meet their academic needs was a calling for her. She is passionate about and dedicated to the students at Midwood High

School. Midwood is a 9th Grade Transition Program for students who have not been successful academically in middle school. Many of them have multiple retentions and have aged out of the middle school sitting. They are not ready emotionally, socially, or academically to enter a comprehensive high school. The students have challenges but we believe the students can succeed. There are misconceptions about Midwood and the school has taken measures to change those beliefs. Ms. Ijames reviewed the history of the school, the students attending the school, and the results as follows:

- The Midwood High School Program was implemented in 2007-2008.
- Created to serve 200-300 students who are promoted to 9th grade without meeting the 8th grade Gateway.
- Purpose of the Program: The goal is to return students to their high schools during the next academic year on track to graduate.
- 2007-2008 Strengths included:
 - 18% pass rate on English I End of Course (ECO) (95 students tested).
 - Two students passed the Algebra I EOC (12 students tested).
 - Ten students passed the NC Computer Skills Test.
 - Midwood students scored significantly better on the English I EOC than they would have at most other schools.
 - Midwood students were significantly more likely to be promoted to the next grade than if they had attended other schools.
- 2007-2008 Challenges included:
 - Transitioning students from middle schools to Midwood.
 - A number of students referred to the program were those who have been identified with discipline issues.
 - Student attendance was an ongoing concern.
- Strategies are being employed to address these the challenges:
 - Wrap-Around Services.
 - Behavior Intervention Program (help students make better choices).
 - Improving Communications
 - Professional Learning Communities.
- Lessons Learned:
 - Increase enrollment.
 - Continuous improvement on attendance and behavior concerns.
 - Enhance academic offerings to students.
 - Improving transitions to home high schools.

Ms. Ijames said Midwood High School is a new school. The school is designed to meet the needs of the students and to building relationships with students that will help them be successful. The program provides additional time and support for students. Staff offers Saturday School for students and this is time in which they are not compensated. Midwood is almost two years and we want to continue with open communication with the elementary schools and the four high schools. We want to tell our stories. Ms. James commended a middle school female student who came to Midwood with a 1.2 GPA, who had been suspended ten times, and who had missed over thirty days. Staff met with the student and she said she wanted to change. Staff helped her to change. She was elected student body president and she is now an honor role student making all As. She strives to go to college and

she will. We strive to have our students to be able to compete with the students at all other high schools and to have the same opportunities. Our motto is "Destination Excellence." We want them to have the confidence to make it beyond a Midwood High School. We want the best for our students because they deserve the very best. Ms. Ijames recognized the Midwood staff members who were attending the meeting and invited Board members to visit Midwood High School and to see the successes of the school.

Ms. Griffin commended Ms. James on her presentation and enthusiasm. She invited Board members to ask questions and make comments.

- Mr. Ross asked are there Vocational Programs or hands-on training planned for Midwood? Ms. Ijames said that is a possibility but currently we are focusing on the academics because the students are significantly behind and we are trying to get them on track. We do promote vocations and other programs such as job shadowing so when they leave Midwood in the afternoon they can continue to be successful.
- Mr. Merchant thanked Ms. Ijames for her passion. He asked how many students are enrolled this year? Ms. Ijames said there were 192 students enrolled but a few students have been dropped because they are of age and have opted out. Mr. Merchant asked how many students attend on the voluntary Saturday? Ms. Ijames said between twenty to forty students. Mr. Merchant asked what is the basis of the information regarding Midwood students scored significantly better on English I EOC than they would have at other schools? Dr. Gorman called upon Andy Baxter, who is with the research and evaluation team working with CMS through the Harvard Institute, to respond. Mr. Baxter said this is based upon statistical analysis comparing like students (students with like prior absences, incidents, etc.) at other schools and the progression analysis predicted what their scores would have been had they attended other schools and the results indicated the scores were significantly better. Mr. Merchant asked what is significantly better? Mr. Baxter said this could be complicated but a fifth of a standard deviation would be considered in education literature to be a monumental improvement for one year. Mr. Merchant asked if Midwood students are being tracked to see how they are doing one, two, and three years later? Mr. Baxter said, yes. Dr. Gorman said there are no results at this point but the students have been tagged with individual identifiers. Mr. Merchant said if we have this great anecdotal and statistical evidence, do we need a Midwood for 5th grade? Dr. Gorman said this has been reviewed and it was in the initial budget discussions but it did not get out of the initial budget discussion. Mr. Merchant expressed concern that some of these students are academically on a 3rd or 4th grade level making them four or five years behind. Mr. Merchant said he appreciates the budget restrictions and the Board must ensure we are utilizing our dollars efficiently. He said this type of program may be worthy of those dollars.
- Mr. Tate said the program currently has 169 students but it was designed to have 200 to 300 students. Mr. Tate asked if we are making this progress with 169 students, why does the program not have the number of students anticipated and if the program had that number of students would we need more staff to provide the necessary wraparound services and smaller class sizes to continue to see the progress? Dr. Gorman said many of the students that fit into this program have opted out and have chosen to drop out rather than choose this type of intensive support. These students are challenged. This school makes you feel good and when staff can meet with the students most often they do not drop out. Midwood provides quality teaching. Mr. Carroll said in the beginning many

students said they would not go to Midwood High School but when they got there they loved it. Public perception has been a challenge but that is changing and the number of students should increase. Mr. Tate has visited the school and he is impressed with the staff, the students, and the progress the school has made. He hopes more students will want to attend Midwood. Ms. Ijames said the word is getting out and the students will come.

- Mr. Griffin said this program is limited to the students from the four high schools in the Achievement Zone, she asked are there plans to open this program to other schools? Mr. Carroll said, yes. Dr. Gorman said staff has completed a preliminary model and are reviewing what schools would be added as well as transportation and other implications.
- Ms. McGarry said some of the students attend the Saturday school using public transportation and that should be considered as a method for transporting students from other schools.

C. Report/Work Session on proposed 2009-2010 Board of Education Budget

Chairperson Griffin called upon Dr. Gorman to introduce the report. Dr. Gorman said the Board has held several Work Sessions to discuss the proposed 2009-2010 Board of Education Budget. Staff presented the proposed budget recommendations at the last Board meeting and there have been no changes to that recommendation. As an update, effective today Governor Perdue signed Executive Order Number 11 in which all state employees shall participate in a flexible furlough program. All teachers and state employees' compensation will be reduced by an annualized amount equivalent to .5% over the remainder of the fiscal year. Full-time employees will be credited with ten hours of flexible time off. Non full-time employees will receive a pro-rated portion of flexible time off. There are a number of other items that go along with this directive and staff is in the process of gathering information to better understand the intent and impact this will have on our employees. Staff is talking with other schools districts and he has spoken with Harry Jones, County Finance Manager, to better understand the impact of the directive. Employees are paid in several ways and this will be complicated. The furlough is on the calendar year but the salary reduction is on fiscal year. Dr. Gorman said he would keep the Board and employees updated as information becomes available.

Dr. Gorman said this Work Session is an opportunity for the Board to ask clarifying questions, provide direction, and make additional recommendations. He hopes this meeting will provide some Board direction to staff. Staff is committed to coming before the Board at the May 12th Regular Board meeting with the final budget recommendation for a Board vote. Dr. Gorman said in the meantime, he may need to call the Board Chairperson and ask the Board to meet prior to that meeting because Board action may be necessary as a result of Governor Perdue signing Executive Order #11. New information is arriving daily and payroll action may be required.

Mr. White said there are many conversations taking place regarding the directive of Governor Perdue. Mr. White asked Dr. Gorman to provide an example of how much money this may involve and a timeframe for when the money would be deducted from the pay checks? Dr. Gorman said he would share an example of what we might be talking about with the information we have at the moment. Dr. Gorman said a .5% of a \$40,000.00 salary is \$200.00. At this point, the timing is not clear and what falls under Executive Order Number 11 and he

would address that information at a later time.

Board members were invited to ask clarifying questions and make comments.

- Mr. Tate said he does not have any questions regarding the proposed budget but he would like to make some comments. Mr. Tate said this is not a matter of him being strongly in favor of the proposed budget but for finding a way to get to the best budget available based upon the economic conditions and the uncertainties related to the federal stimulus money. As of now, he will vote to support the Superintendent's proposed budget but not because it represents what he believes CMS needs to make every student achieve. He expressed concern that CMS cannot get enough support from the state, county and federal government to provide what is necessary. He believes staff and the Board have worked hard to develop the best budget available for these economic times and he is grateful it is presented in such a manner. The proposed budget includes a \$351 million from the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). That is not what we really need but it is best case scenario of what we may be able to receive. That funding could be reduced and that would result in moving to the Tier 4 reductions which has been presented. At that point, that would be an additional ten percent reduction. Mr. Tate said this budget does not what he thinks would provide the best education available anywhere which is our Vision statement and it will not maximize academic achievement by every student in every school which is our Mission statement. The budget will approximate the best we can do given the circumstances. Mr. Tate said he has asked what CMS could save if there were no superintendent, no associate or assistant superintendents, no area superintendents, no executive staff, and none of their assistants (secretaries). Eliminating those staff members would save approximately \$5.1 million plus benefits. That would not be enough to make up the differences that are necessary and would result in the CMS operations being less efficient. Mr. Tate believes those staff reductions would have a negative impact on the success of CMS and would not be a legitimate method of saving dollars. He is concerned that some of the changes will have an exaggerated impact on our focus in Title I schools. The collaborative effort with Education Resource Strategies (ERS) has indicated that CMS must creatively address increasing academic achievement for the district, students, and individual schools. He would wish the reductions could be more customized and follow the focus school rubric which recognizes that each school gets the funding it needs for its particular situation rather than following a formula that treats all schools alike. He is particularly concerned that the reorganization and funding reductions will eliminate in-school support staff (such as psychologists, social workers, familiar advocates, and student services specialist) and that will dramatically hurt Focus schools. While, every school needs staff that will build/develop consistent relationships, the Focus schools are the schools that need them the most. Focus schools are also the schools that benefit the most from smaller class size and smaller class size does make a big difference in student achievement. The only option for him is to go forward but it is with grave concerns because the best we can do is not good enough. Mr. Tate said we will have to make the best of what we have and go forward working as hard and as smart as we can to do everything possible for the students in CMS.
- Ms. McGarry said unless there are significant changes she will not carte blanche support the proposed budget and her reasons are different from some of the other Board members. She has previously voiced her concerns regarding the budget and there are not five people

on the Board who will support her suggestions. She expressed concern that CMS did not respond to the Board of County Commissioners request to reduce the budget by ten percent and the proposed budget does not reflect that request. The Board has not directed the Superintendent to work harder on being more efficient and to reorganize departments within the administration versus within the classroom. She has three example of why she will not support the budget. The data from ERS said the small reductions in class size can actually work against teaching quality efforts. Statistics indicate that a quality teacher in the classroom is number one for increasing student achievement and that is more impacting than class size. She believes putting a quality teacher in the classroom should be more important than having a 1:17 teacher-student ratio in the Focus schools. She encouraged the Board to support a 1:20 teacher-student ratio with a quality teacher. She said in considering the criteria for eliminating teachers in the classroom, results in the classroom should be number one. Results in the classroom should be more important than teacher experience and credentials. She said the Human Resources Department is the crux of recruiting quality teachers and strategically placing teachers in the schools. She said the budget book provides information on the efficiencies of departments. She expressed concerns regarding the Human Resources Department. She said there are 101 positions in the Human Resources Department and that is a department that was reorganized to save \$500,000. She said when reviewing a comparison of years in the budget book there is only a \$200,000 reduction. That department includes four executive directors, six directors, and eighteen managers with a salary range of \$84,000 to \$104,000. She believes there are too many managers for the number of employees in that department. She is not sure that staff has worked hard enough to reorganize and be more efficient in some of these departments. She does not believe CMS has done enough. The areas that should be a priority for the classroom are teachers, teacher assistants, media specialist, media assistants, security, and leadership (principals and assistant principals). She expressed concern that these areas are being cut.

- Mr. White said he has the same concerns as Mr. Tate. Staff has done a great job in developing the budget. He has talked with Board members from school districts throughout the country and CMS is ahead of the curve in taking action to address the economic concerns. He commended staff for doing an excellent job on providing a transparent budget that has no surprises. Dr. Gorman has provided budgetary information on a continuous basis and that includes the proposed budget as starting point budget as well as what will happen should that funding not be available. The next steps will be to add Tiers 1, 2, 3, and 4. Mr. White congratulated the Superintendent and the Board for doing a great job and providing the public transparency.
- Mr. Gauvreau said CMS has always been transparent and that is a distraction from the real issues with this budget which is the spending of the school district. He has always challenged the spending and the results of those resources. He will not support the budget recommendation. He was surprised that with the huge economic concerns in this country, the proposed spending plan only reduces the CMS budget by approximately 1% but the spin going around the county by CMS and the media is otherwise. CMS has created that outcry. In fact, the budget has a total from 2008-2009 of \$1.164 billion and this year's budget is \$1.152 billion. This is a cut of \$12 million or 1%. This is not a huge cut and is not enough. He encouraged the Board to develop and adopt a much leaner budget with the spending underneath and far more targeted toward generating results for the school district. He expressed concern that CMS spends approximately \$220 million each year on

transportation, English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs, Pre-K Programs, and Exceptional Children (EC) Programs, and those are the areas that must be targeted to get results. The spending in the ESL Programs has increased almost three times the costs since 2006-2007. He has encouraged the Board and the superintendents to reduce the spending for years. Mr. Gauvreau said millions could be saved by reducing the number of buses. The Pre-K Program is not educating students and not teaching them how to read. By our own statistics, one half of the students by the time they reach the third grade are not reading well. The ESL Programs are not generating results and are filled with bureaucratic fat that must be trimmed back. The EC Programs are filled with governmental requirements that are hard to understand and some of those programs must be reduced. He said the previous budgets were bloated and this budget only trims a little off the edge. He would have expected a better proposal showing more savings and he will not support the budget as presented.

- Ms. Griffin said the base budget that has been presented does not include the four additional Tiers which would grow the budget to the additional ten percent of reductions for the County. The facts that Mr. Gauvreau stated do not include those additional reductions and that will significantly change that percentage. The proposed budget is consistent with what the County has asked CMS to do. Ms. Griffin said her top priority is to do what is possible to protect the high poverty schools and the schools with our most fragile students. To the extent that we can, this budget attempts to address those concerns. Her second priority is to provide our schools with as much flexibility in cuts as possible. It is important to principals to be able to allow principals to choose what is most important to their environment. For some schools the loss of a campus security associate is a critical loss, the loss of a social worker is a critical loss for other schools, and for many schools the loss in the Media Services Department is a critical loss. We know we will receive some help from the surplus in our high poverty schools under Title I and for our Exceptional Children under IDEA but we do know the amount of that funding. She does not believe we have much choice given the current financial situation but to go forward with the cuts as outlined. She hopes the budget will provide as much flexibility as possible to allow schools the opportunity to reflect the needs of each individual school. She will support the proposed budget even though it includes items that are painful. She is especially concerned regarding the cuts to the assistant principal positions. The assistant principals, particularly at the high school level, are already seriously overworked and she is not sure how they will be able to handle the added responsibilities and this will have an impact on the schools. Chairperson Griffin will support the proposed budget.
- Mr. Ross is still reviewing the budget. He agreed with some of the comments by Mr. Tate and Mr. Gauvreau. He has been visiting schools in District 3. In one EC classroom there were two adults and five children, and the adults were working very hard to maintain the classroom. He could not imagine that class with one adult. This puts a lot of pressure on those staff members. These students will become young adults living in our community and we must educate them to be productive citizens. We have an opportunity to teach them now and if we do not we will have to support them as adults. Mr. Ross expressed concern that CMS does not have any money, the state does not have any money, and the county does not have any money. It is disheartening to visit these schools to see the difficulties that staff must face and with additional reductions it will be tough. He is not sure what can be done differently with the budget. He would encourage that principals be provided flexibility to allow them to select the staff that are most important to their school.

He has thoroughly reviewed the budget for bloat, fat, or something that could be changed but he could not find items to eliminate. He expressed concern that schools are currently struggling to be successful and the potential of additional reductions is discouraging.

- Mr. Gauvreau expressed concern that Board members discussed drastic cuts in law enforcement but in reality that is not the case. Last year, the School Law Enforcement budget was \$4.5 million and this year it is \$8.1 million. Dr. Gorman said this year that budget item includes campus security and there have been additional reductions in the campus security budget. That information was given to the Board at a previous Budget Work Session. Mr. Gauvreau said his point is at a budget of \$1.16 billion, this is a management issue and not a spending issue. There is bloat in the budget and it has been added to each year. He said the budget should be streamlined. He encouraged the Board to reduce the number of buses currently at 1,250 buses, reduce the Pre-K Programs at a cost of \$30 million per year, and to make at least a 5% cut to the ESL and EC Programs. He expressed concern that CMS is adding programs. CMS should start with a zero based budget and that would help reduce the bloat. He believes CMS not only has too many managers but too many employees in some of the sub-satellite offices and the school houses. He encouraged the Board to direct the Superintendent to not support this budget because it will be tossed back from the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and that makes us look like a bunch of dopes.
- Mr. Merchant expressed concern that Board members have a tendency to repeat themselves over and over. He believes staff has had good approach to the budget. He likes the course that we are on. He has heard that there is some concern from the BOCC that we are trying to make them look like the bad guys regarding cuts. He will pledge to not do that but the situation is so fluid that it makes good sense to structure the budget in this manner. The BOCC asked for a proposal and this is what we propose. The budget includes scenarios for reductions up to ten percent. He was surprised that Governor Perdue (who was heavily supported by teachers and other state employees in her election) announced a .5% salary reduction on the same day that a NCAE affiliate asked the Board to help 10-month employees (teachers) with a cash flow issue (seeking support to be paid on a twelve month basis). Mr. Merchant expects the budget approval process with the BOCC will be difficult and it will not be a clean approval as in the past years. The Board can talk at the philosophically level of how things should be but that is not the hand that we were dealt. Staff has developed a pragmatic approach budget that he will fully support. Regarding transportation, the Board asked staff to look at options for transportation and staff provided scenarios to increase walk zones around school and to bus stops at the elementary level with incremental increases at the middle school level and high school level. The results showed that we could save money but because of the Byzantine manner in which the state funds transportation (based on an efficiency rating) it would result in CMS having to ask the county for additional funds. He would not support asking the county for more money to save the state more money. He would prefer getting state funding over county because that would help the Board to be more responsible to the stakeholders (taxpayers) in Mecklenburg County. He would not support philosophical reasons to reduce buses and increase walk zones so that people in other counties can save money while people locally have to pay more. This was discussed at previous Work Sessions and should not be addressed at this late stage in the budget process. He will support the Superintendent's budget approach and the work of staff. He will be pleasantly surprised if we do not have to add additional Tiers to the budget.

- Mr. Gauvreau discussed his concerns regarding the number of buses and transportation costs. Wake County has a bigger school district with more students and fewer buses. CMS has this problem because the Board insists on increasing the Magnet Programs rather than reducing them and that is also an increase budget item. He encouraged the Board to reduce the costs in transportation and ESL, Bright Beginnings, and EC Programs. Mr. Gauvreau expressed concern regarding the massive funding going into areas that are not getting educational results.
- Ms. McGarry said the Seattle Washington school system uses public transportation and that has been successful. That has been a suggestion in Mecklenburg County. This could be good method especially for the high schools and some of our bus drivers could be used as monitors. This would be a good merger because some of those buses are half empty. There have been inquiries to CMS regarding outsourcing transportation. Another school district uses a central kitchen for their food services and that has saved money. She said we are in a tough economic budget times and we must review some of the areas that we said in the past would not save money. She does not believe the Board has worked hard enough to direct the Superintendent to do a thorough review of every nook and cranny. Removing ineffective teachers should have happened long ago and not just because the budget is reduced. CMS should never have tolerated that from day one. The number one priority of CMS should be educating students K-12 and that cannot be done without a quality teacher. Ms. McGarry encouraged the Board and staff to go further because no changes have been made in the last couple of months.

Chairperson Griffin said there has not been a strong consensus around this Board but everyone has expressed their concerns and support. Chairperson Griffin said Dr. Gorman and staff have looked deep for budget cuts and every department, every school, and every office has found cuts and they have been made in this budget. There have been \$5 million in reductions to the Transportation Department by using consolidated stops and other innovative ideas. This has been a painful process. She knows how hard staff has worked and she appreciates that hard work. The budget cuts have been hard and it will be even harder if more cuts are required.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. White moved, seconded by Mr. Merchant, that the Board adjourn the Regular Board meeting, and by consensus, the Board agreed to adjourn the meeting.

The Regular School Board Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Molly B. Griffin, Chairperson

Nancy Daughtridge, Clerk to the Board