



Board Meeting

January 22, 2001

David H. Galbreath, *President*
Eugene C. Chandler, *Vice President*
Thomas D. Hess
Robert S. Magee
Robert B. Thomas, Jr.
Terry R. Troy
Karen L. Wolf
Daniel E. Purcell,
Student Representative
Jacqueline C. Haas, *Superintendent*
Secretary/Treasurer

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

The regular business meeting of the Board of Education of Harford County was called to order on January 22, 2001, at 7:03 p.m. in the front gymnasium of Bel Air Middle School by Board President **David H. Galbreath**. Mr. Galbreath directed that a roll call of Board Members be taken which reflected all members present. Acting on the motion of Board Member **Terry R. Troy** and the second of Board Member **Karen L. Wolf**, the Board unanimously approved the agenda as presented. Mrs. Troy then led those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Galbreath reminded those present of the "very full agenda" and asked that all who were to take part in the meeting be aware of the situation.

RECOGNITION

HCPS EDUCATOR HALL OF FAME

The Harford County Board of Education has, since October 2000, been inducting two former Harford County Public School educators into the HCPS Educator Hall of Fame. Director of Public Information **Donald R. Morrison** told the Board that the two inductees for January, 2001 are siblings **Dr. Percy V. Williams** and **Gladys I. Williams**. Mr. Morrison said Dr. Williams gave over 60 years of his adult life to education, first as an elementary school teacher

in Havre de Grace, then as a supervisor, and principal, and as an Assistant State Superintendent of Schools in charge of programs for impoverished children. Dr. Williams also served ten years on the Board of Education of Harford County, twice being elected to one-year terms as president of that organization. Ms. Williams began her 40-year career as a teacher and guidance counselor, starting in the one-room Hosanna School in Darlington, then to Bush Chapel School near Aberdeen and the Bel Air Colored High School. She then joined her brother, who was principal at Central Consolidated School, as a teacher, specializing in educating "slow learners," in a predecessor to the Special Education Program. In 1963, Ms. Williams was one of ten African-American teachers chosen to teach in all-white schools as a forerunner of total integration. She served as a Special Education teacher at Deerfield Elementary/Edgewood Middle School, ending her career as a guidance counselor before retiring in 1983. Dr. Williams and Ms. Williams were presented with plaques, certificates, and laminated copies of the feature articles in the "Harford Schools" detailing their stories. Ms. Williams, speaking for herself and her brother, credited their parents with setting the tone for the lives of the two honorees and their eight brothers and sisters who lived to adulthood.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jennifer Robbins-Johnson of Bel Air spoke in support of Instructional Assistants being provided with substantial pay raises. Ms. Johnson said that IA's spend large amounts of time after the school day preparing lessons and that they deal with students of all types during the day.

Tera Bell of Abingdon, an IA at Bel Air Middle School, read a letter from **Shirley Mellon**, an IA at Edgewood Middle School. Ms. Bell and the letter from Ms. Mellon pointed out the valuable contributions of the instructional assistants and the need for increased salaries for IA's.

Jan Werner of Fallston, an IA at Aberdeen Middle School, said instructional assistants are "not just housewives," but are para-professionals, interpreters, mentors, role models, special needs instructors, and are part of the "best program the school system has."

Anita Akob of Abingdon, told Board members that they had received a letter detailing her comments, pointing out that, after 12 years, an IA earns just \$17,306. She also read a letter from **Vernon Mullen**, an IA at Aberdeen High School who has been in the school system for 32 years.

Lynnett Banfi of Canthey Court, an IA at John Archer School, said she loves her job but can't pay her bills. She said she has a four-year degree, and that the salary of instructional assistants is a "sad commentary" and that there needs to be a "social conscience" on behalf of instructional assistants.

Len Petry of Forest Hill, a teacher at Fallston Middle School and wrestling coach at Fallston High School for 22 years, told the Board that several Harford County Public School wrestlers were prohibited from taking part in a tournament during the previous weekend because transportation services had been cancelled at 5:00 a.m. by the HCPS Transportation Department. He said, the same weekend, the Aberdeen High School basketball team was allowed to take part in a tournament and the All County Chorus/Orchestra Concert at Havre de Grace High School was permitted to take place. He said the Board needs to address the inconsistency of the policy on inclement weather and student participation in after school events.

Dean Petty of Street, wrestling coach at North Harford High School, addressed the same issue, calling the transportation cancellation "premature," adding that the Harford teams were the only ones among 23 to take part who were not able to participate. He said that parents should have been given the right to transport their sons to the meet.

Andy Amasia of Fallston, said that wrestlers lost points necessary to qualify for regional wrestling tournaments and urged that the transportation rules impacting such situations be reviewed. He asked if there would be a way the school system could assist wrestlers with State athletic officials in having the young men qualify for regional seeding.

Ken Cook of Abingdon, said he was speaking for himself and his wife who could not be present due to illness. Mr. Cook, a member of the Bel Air High School PTSA, pointed out issues with the physical condition of the school, talking about the "accelerating downward spiral" of the building's condition. He urged that tests be done on mold/mildew, lead paint, yellow water in the drinking fountains, and the fiber content of exposed pipes at the school. Mr. Cook also urged that there be an intensive effort in repairs to steam pipes and other facilities, and that the school be placed on a "fast track" in being replaced, pointing out that school officials said it will be seven years before planning money is appropriated for that purpose.

Regis Reft of Abingdon said he was "outraged" by the information provided by Mr. Cook. He complained that Bel Air High School had been allowed to deteriorate to the level described in the report. He urged the Board to "loosen up funds" to repair schools in the Bel Air/Abingdon area, noting that state reports show the system funded 24th and last among state school systems. Mr. Reft added that Bel Air High should be "fast tracked" in having repairs done.

Robin Testerman of Darlington noted the proposed resolution on School Nurse Day pending before the Board. She said that school nurses in the HCPS system provided 11,674 does of medication, saw 103,000 students, accounted for 3,324 students with blood or asthmatic conditions, provided professional assistance in 58,000 emergencies the year before leading to 93 ambulance trips. She said

there were 8,940 chronically ill students in the system last year, 95 listed as medically fragile. Ms. Testerman added that nurses do vision/hearing and scoliosis testing.

Barbara Yost of Street said the salaries paid to instructional assistants in the system do not provide a reasonable living wage.

Joanne Cross of Remington Road, spoke on school health technicians salary.

Dennis Shiflett of Forest Hill said the school system needs to address the transportation system for interscholastic athletics, asserting that it does not have to be "an either-or" situation in the case of transportation during inclement weather. He said he is concerned that parents were left out of the decision while allowing that "we do live in a litigious society."

Carla Fromille of Fallston, a secretary at Youth's Benefit Elementary School, complained that the Board had made the decision to eliminate the Traditional Plan from employees' health benefits. She said that the immediate appeal of saving money through PPN/PPO/HMO plans should not outweigh the longterm benefits of the Traditional plan.

Wendy Weyant of Baldwin asked the Board to supply the \$1,100 needed to buy a floor scrubber at Youth's Benefit Elementary School, adding that the school's PTA does not have the funds for such a purchase.

OLD BUSINESS

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR GIFTED EDUCATION

Dr. Paul Tannenbaum, chair of the Board of Education of Harford County Citizen Advisory Committee for Gifted Education, and **Madeleine Synnott**, coordinator of differentiated services, presented the annual report of the committee to the Board. Dr. Tannenbaum told the Board that there are 3,263 elementary students receiving Gifted services. He said the committee has four recommendations for the Board: restore the position of supervisor of Gifted Education (upgrading it from the current coordinator level), fund an additional enrichment teacher position to provide full time enrichment teachers at Abingdon and Church Creek elementary schools, and upgrade the Dbulin and Norrisville positions from their current .4 to .5 levels; provide funding for professional development; and restore the 25 percent cut in gifted education materials of instruction.

PSAT/SAT RECOMMENDATIONS

Acting on the motion of Mrs. Wolf and the second of Mrs. Troy, the Board

voted unanimously to hold over recommendations on PSAT/SAT participation and achievement until the next Board meeting.

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ACTION ITEMS

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PRESENTATIONS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mrs. Haas invited Assistant Superintendent for Business Services **John Markowski** and **John "Jay" Staab** to help the Board understand the per-pupil expenditure formula published by the State Department of Education and Harford's reported ranking of 24th and last among the state's sub-divisions in per-pupil funding. Mrs. Haas pointed out that the per-pupil spending level for Harford County had declined from 18th in the 1999 report to 24th in the 2000 report. Mr. Staab reported the formula includes expenditures and grants, backing out equipment, food service, and capital outlay, divided by the equated average daily membership (enrollment); adding in the state's contribution to employee retirement accounts, divided by average daily attendance. Mr. Staab said that his office has been able to confirm that the level of expenditures reported by the Harford County Public School System (for the 1998-99 school year) was correct. He added that state officials have said they know there are errors in the

computation which may or may not impact the rankings of school systems in per pupil funding. Mr. Staab added that the school system had not been able to obtain clear answers from the state why the system had apparently declined from 18th to 24th in school per-pupil funding in one year. Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Board Member **Robert S. Magee**, the Board voted unanimously to have the Superintendent write a letter to State Superintendent **Nancy S. Grasmick**, asking that the figures be verified. Mr. Magee cautioned against anyone saying that the local school system ranks 24th out of 24 school systems in per-pupil funding until the figures have been verified. Mr. Markowski said that the figures reported were during the time the system was converting to the Lawson accounting program. He said that, even considering the \$4 to \$5 million the system had held back in spending during the spring of 1999, the school system would still rank 24th in per-pupil spending. He added that the school system would rank 12th in the level of per-pupil spending if a simple formula of dividing the level of local (County) funding is divided by the level of enrollment.

Mrs. Haas reported to the Board that there are issues impacting the school calendar. She said the system needs to be looking at ways not to intrude on classroom instruction time. She said the calendar must be looked at as a potential resource for student achievement. Mrs. Haas said the system needs to find ways to "open" the calendar to provide time for intervention programs leading to the high school assessments which will be pre-requisites for students receiving diplomas. She said the state has set the third week of May as the time for the high school assessments to be given. Mrs. Haas said the system needs to make sure it has provided all the time possible leading to that week for instruction. She said that all but two school systems – Wicomico and Worcester – began this school year prior to Labor Day. Mrs. Haas asked the Board to revisit its policy defining when the school in Harford County will begin. Director of Secondary Education **William Ekey** said it may become necessary for schools which now employ the four-period day to reconsider that schedule, based on requirements of the high school assessments. Mr. Thomas said he was "distressed" at the possibility that the hard work of his fellow Board members in establishing a policy for the start of the school year would be undone by the requirements of the high school assessments, potentially placing the school calendar into conflict with the Maryland State Fair. Mr. Galbreath directed that a letter be written to leaders in the farm community letting them know of the dilemma in which the school system finds itself regarding the start of the school year and high school assessments. Mr. Hess suggested that an upcoming work session be devoted to the issue. Mrs. Haas said another issue involving the calendar is the decision whether to go forward with gradual secondary entrance which was piloted this school year during which sixth graders and ninth graders at selected schools were the only ones attending on the first day of school. While the day was excused for others who did not attend school that day, the superintendent has said that the day would have to be made up if future gradual entry days are implemented. Mr. Magee asked that Mr. Ekey have a report for

the Board on the impact of the gradual entry this past year. It was also suggested that the gradual entry proposal be addressed at the same Board work session.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

NEW BUSINESS

Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mr. Magee, the Board voted 7 to 0 that the Board write a letter to the President of the Harford County Education Association stating its desire to participate in a workshop on Interest Based Bargaining. Mr. Hess moved and Mrs. Wolf seconded that the Board write a letter to the local newspaper stating its opinion on editorials the newspaper had published recently. The Board voted 6 to 1 (Mr. Galbreath dissenting) to write and send the letter. Mrs. Wolf said the school system should approach the State Board of Education about the issue of points local wrestlers may have forfeited toward regional seeding by virtue of not being able to compete in the recent weekend tournament and another tournament on a prior weekend with a similar scenario. Mrs. Haas said that the two activities which had been allowed to proceed had done so because sponsors of the events had approached her in advance about making an exception to the rule. She said that no one from the wrestling community had sought alternative approval. She added that she had been told by the Supervisor of High School Physical Education/Athletics that the missing of points would not impact a wrestler's ability to get into the regional tournament, only their seeding in the tournament.

REVIEW OF LEGISLATION

The Board of Education has made the commitment to review pending state legislation and take positions on those it feels that guidance should be provided to the Harford County Delegation to Annapolis.

HB 67 – Mr. Thomas moved and Mr. Hess seconded that the Board take no position on the proposal to repeal the state law involving portable communication devices and leave to locals a decision on the issue. The Board approved unanimously the proposal.

HB57 – The proposal would have Baltimore County pilot a program of wireless technology. Mr. Thomas moved that a letter be written to the Harford Delegation (including District 6) to make the Harford Public School System position that funding should not be isolated to one school district, while at the same time not opposing the proposal 100 percent. Mr. Hess seconded the motion which was passed 4 to 3 with Mr. Galbreath, Mrs. Wolf and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler dissenting.

HB 130/SB 24 – Mr. Thomas moved and Mr. Hess and Mrs. Wolf seconded that the Board oppose the measure which would require gun safety education be

included in the curriculum of each school system. The Board voted unanimously to support the position.

HB 29 – Mr. Thomas moved and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler seconded that the Board oppose the Charter School 2001 bill, taking a similar position it took to HB 526 last year which passed the House 119-16 before being defeated in the Senate. Mrs. Haas reminded the Board that the bill is being supported by the Maryland Association of Boards of Education and the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland because it would give the State Board ultimate control of charter schools. The Board voted 7 to 0 to support the motion.

HB 35 – Mr. Thomas moved and Mrs. Troy seconded that the Board monitor the proposal to set aside State Lottery money for education. The Board voted unanimously to support the motion.

SB 64 – Mrs. Haas said SB 64 is an extension of the Schools for Success grants where funds go only to reconstitution eligible schools and that we are not in that category. No action was taken on the bill.

SB 133 – SB 133 is a measure to require that school bus operators obtain a special commercial drivers license. Director of Transportation **Norman Seidel** said the measure is an adjustment of a bill passed last year to further restrict a bus driver's ability to use his commercial driver's license to obtain a job as a truck driver. No action was taken on the bill.

Appeal to Board of Public Works – Mrs. Haas reminded Board Members that the school system will appeal the \$1.562 million it is short in the proposed state appropriation for the Aberdeen High School replacement building project.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on the motion of Mrs. Troy and the second of Mr. Hess, the Board voted 6 to 0 (Lt. Col. Ret. Chandler had left) to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board of Education will be holding its regular business meetings at Bel Air Middle School for the quarter from January through March. The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, February 12, 2001 at Bel Air Middle, in the front gymnasium, beginning at 7:00 p.m. A schedule of all Board meetings, including work sessions, is available on the HCPS web site – www.co.ha.md.us/harford_schools.

MORE INFORMATION

The school system is attempting to prevent duplications and reduce production/ mailing costs of the printed versions of B-Line. Those who are able to access B-Line on line and who would like their copy of the printed version of the document discontinued should e-mail the Director of Public Information: Drmorrison.gs@hcps.k12.md.us; Or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

For more information on Board meetings or other matters affecting the Harford County Public Schools, contact the system's Director of Public Information, 410-588-5203; or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hous-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

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