

[MCCPTA_Board] January minutes *REVIEW FOR TESTIMONY*
Tracie Potts BODsecretary@mccpta.org [MCCPTA_Board]

Jan 9 at 7:56 AM

Hi everyone,

Attached are minutes from our January 3 board meeting. If you're testifying this week or next on the Operating Budget, I highly suggest reviewing the notes from MCPS CFO Nicky Diamond's Q&A. I've copied them below for convenience.

Tracie Potts, BOD Secretary

MCPS Chief Financial Officer Nicola Diamond provided an update and answered questions on the Superintendent's Recommended FY19 Operating Budget. Here's a summary of her key points:

- The budget isn't just about numbers, it outlines a plan for the school district focused on students, classrooms and schools.
- MCPS will likely be asked to seek \$9 million *more* savings due to the county's massive and unexpected revenue shortfall.
- The Superintendent is committed to NO classroom cuts.
- Data shows great progress among students.
- This is a *system* budget, not a school budget. Allocations for individual schools will be made after it's approved. Effective feedback/testimony should focus on priorities: what's in the budget that you like? What's missing?
- The first ES enrollment dip in 8 years will result in classroom teachers reassigned to MS/HS, where enrollment is growing.
- The "Budget in Brief" provides simplified bullet points on reductions. See the full budget for more detail.
- \$442,000 is recommended to support two new psychologist positions.
- The budget converts Assistant School Administrators (ASAs) at three schools to Assistant Principals (APs), with a 9% pay increase. ASAs are 11-month employees who can only observe teachers. APs are 12-month employees who can evaluate teachers. Individual ASAs must re-apply to become Aps and may need additional certification.
- Curriculum/AEI cuts reflect MCPS purchasing resources to enhance its curriculum instead of using classroom teachers to develop them. Most districts purchase curriculum. MCPS writes its own but will supplement with existing resources. Teachers would still develop their own lesson plans to teach that curriculum.
- Direct reports for schools will change. Supervisors will be replaced with teams including various expertise (special ed, etc.) to support entire school communities, not just the principal.

Re central office reductions: "We want you to trust us on that. We are NOT going to create gaps in services."

Amanda Graver [MCCPTA_Board]

Jan 9 at 8:43 PM

The AEI Director position is absolutely essential for the continued expansion and response to the Metis Choice Study, as well as ensuring consistency across the county on local school acceleration and enrichment. The new structure that reverts back to the old geographic organization does not support consistency across the county. The AEI Director also creates and disseminates the county-wide messaging on the expectations of implementation of accelerated and enriched content for local schools, as well as oversees PD and proper use of resources (like William & Mary, Junior Great Books, Lucy Calkins, compacted math etc. at the elementary level). The AEI team has also been a part of the group that has been trying to create more differentiation for the “one-size-fits-all” middle school courses - especially English. They also oversee ALL the AP and IB courses at the high school level, as well as the IB middle school programs.

That is just a snippet of all this group does. There are no “efficiencies” to be had by cutting this staff.

-Amanda

On Jan 9, 2018, at 12:12 PM, 'Cynthia Simonson'
Cluster Coordinators (especially those currently writing testimony) –

Related to the notes Tracie sent, there are a few items I want to make sure are on your radar as we enter this hearing season...

1) I know we have shared messages regarding concerns with the elimination of Special Education and AEI positions within central office. While I believe MCPS is sincere in the stance (as reflected in Tracie’s notes) that these positions do not affect the classrooms directly, those of us that have worked to ensure some of these services are available in the local schools can attest – these positions DEFINITELY affect the classrooms directly. Several of us will be providing testimony to this point. (And, if you are unsure about why we need to keep these positions, please feel free to reach out to me or Jeanne or Lang directly!)

2) There is a “brewing issue” that I want to make sure doesn’t take some of our clusters by surprise. Specifically, parents are raising concerns about how MCPS is making decisions that affect student articulation patterns – generally related to programming decisions. Parent engagement is a value MCPS expresses as a priority but, some communities are getting frustrated the recent pattern is “decisions are made, then we meet with the community to see what concerns they have about it.” Here are the two most recent instances that I know about and want to just give you a heads up as we may expect some noise during the hearings...

a. Rolling Terrace was advised on December 4th they will be losing the immersion program and a dual language will be replacing it. There are numerous issues with this plan and Rolling Terrace PTA has been keeping the cluster coordinators and MCCPTA apprised. Lisa Siegel is providing testimony today at the BOE meeting and details are included here for those interested. [https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/AUUJVG4F03EB/\\$file/Lisa%20Seigel.pdf](https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/AUUJVG4F03EB/$file/Lisa%20Seigel.pdf) It may seem this down county concern is far removed from your clusters concerns, but I remember something our Walter Johnson friends said in CIP testimony last year “if you don’t think construction that overcrowds your schools are a problem ... your cluster is probably next.” With that, I encourage our fellow clusters to see how the RT community is being engaged (or not engaged) in these decisions and think about how this would play out were this occurring in your communities. #RTnotalone!

b. In other news, the parents of the Roberto Clemente magnet students were sent a letter, dated January 5th, distributed yesterday on January 8th, announcing the Humanities magnet will be moving for rising 6th graders next year to MLK – bring any questions you have to a 6pm meeting on January 10th. While most would agree, moving a program from an overcrowded middle school to an undersubscribed one makes a lot of sense, it does create questions about staffing, equipment, supports for the rising 7th and 8th graders that will be remaining at Clemente vs. the start up of the magnet at MLK. Again, it will likely get some attention at the upcoming hearing and wanted to make sure our Cluster Coordinators are aware this is going on.

3) And, finally, THERE IS ONE OTHER ITEM that likely hasn’t made most radars but, I would ask our clusters to consider including in your testimony – even if only in the written version as I know there are many priorities for the precious 5 minute orals... there is a strategic priority listed related to launching a Recovery Education Program. This may be new for some but, MOCO was one of the first counties (in 1979) to create a very small high school specifically for teens recovering from drug and alcohol abuse and trying to live “clean.” This school was closed several years ago – as MCPS combined this program with other alternative programs in 2002 as a means of “efficiency” – resulting in the purpose being lost and participation dwindling. Now we find ourselves in the midst of a national opiate crisis and recovery education is being prioritized again. The funding for this program is being pulled directly from a state fund (in other words, if we launch, it is funded through a special fund; if we don’t launch, we aren’t eligible for the funds). **There is one NUANCE we want to be sure is included – that this is open to “at risk” teens – not just those that have been diagnosed with a “substance use disorder.”** If I’m understanding the advocates correctly, if we require the diagnosis, even if the child is “using” and the child is willing to go into this program to get out of the environs where they are accessing the drugs, the child wouldn’t be eligible to access the program until the family/child goes through the unthinkable! If you want more information on Recovery Programs or the former Phoenix school, please see this testimony provided to BOE in August -

- [https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/AQRKND510D6D/\\$file/Patty%20Winters.pdf](https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/AQRKND510D6D/$file/Patty%20Winters.pdf) Below is what the Magruder Cluster is including:

· We are grateful for the Superintendent's strategic priority to launch a **recovery education program**. The Magruder community has experienced its share of opiate overdoses over the years and fully supports this plan. With this plan, we urge the Board to make enrollment available for any teen *at risk* for opiate abuse. We are grateful these students' needs will once again be served and our county is giving these teens their best chance at recovery.

Cynthia Simonson
MCCPTA VP of Educational Issues &
Magruder Cluster Coordinator

Jeanne Taylor [MCCPTA_Board]

Jan 9 at 8:47 PM

In regard to classroom impacts, please read below, particularly #5 and the italics underneath.

Direct impacts may also be felt if students with complex needs are not being well-served. Special Education Cluster Supervisors often intervene when there are issues and make sure that students are receiving FAPE (a free and appropriate public education.)

~ ~ ~

Subject: Email to Nikki re Proposed Operating Budget/Special Education Cluster Supervisor Positions

FYI. I already sent you numbers 1-5 last week but everything under that is new, starting with the italicized words.

Tracie, you asked me about the complex SPED cases, see the blue text email.

RACU is the Resolution and Compliance Unit which monitors and supports the provision of procedural safeguards under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004).

"RACU seeks to engage parties with cooperative problem solving of disputes regarding the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for a student with a disability or suspected of having a disability under IDEA."

To reiterate what I said previously, the cluster supervisors bring a broad, county-wide perspective and IDEA expertise to the table. They are a valuable resource at IEP meetings where there are complex student and sometimes family issues.

They often act as troubleshooters.

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeanne Taylor
To: Nicola_Diamond
Cc: Jack_Smith; reiley; Kevin_E_Lowndes
Sent: Thu, Jan 4, 2018 12:13 am
Subject: Proposed Operating Budget/Special Education Cluster Supervisor Positions

Dear Nikki,

It was so nice to see you again at the MCCPTA Board of Directors meeting tonight.

Over the winter break I met with Associate Superintendent Kevin Lowndes to discuss the proposal to eliminate the six Special Education Cluster Supervisor positions.

Here is a recap of the concerns I shared afterward, via email:

- 1) The Instructional Specialists who serve the largest population of special education students (LAD and homeschool model) will be reporting to Directors who do not have special education expertise.
- 2) In turn, those Directors will report to Associate Superintendents who do not have special education expertise/are not focused on students with disabilities.
- 3) Under the new configuration, Instructional Specialists will lose the autonomy they currently have as they will no longer report to the Department of Special Education.
- 4) Along with number 3, Special Education Resource Teachers will no longer have a point of contact outside of the Office of School Support and Improvement for students with complex issues.
- 5) There will be a large gap left by the Supervisors that the Instructional Specialists cannot fill. In addition to their current responsibilities, the Instructional Specialists would have to assume 16 new job duties, as per the attached job description.

This last concern does not just involve quantity, it is also a matter of scope. For example, the Cluster Supervisors are required to complete courses in Observing and Analyzing Teaching. This is not a job requirement for the Instructional Specialists. Ultimately, the loss of this particular skill does not translate into better services in the classroom for special education students.

In addition to all of the above, below is input I received from one of the current Supervisors, for whom I have a great deal of respect, as both a parent and an educator:

Sent: Tuesday, January 2, 2018 1:08 PM

To: Taylor, Jeanne M

Subject: Re: [MCCPTA_Board] Proposed budget/SPED Cluster Supervisors

Thank you, Jeanne. There seems to be a general lack of understanding between the differences in the supervisor's position and the instructional specialist's position. I am very concerned about the gap left in forming relationships with families, especially those who have chosen to hire attorneys. Parents seek attorney support when they feel uncomfortable with IEP processes and services. Bridging the gap between the school and the family in the presence of an outside attorney is delicate "dance".

It is the supervisor who prevents these cases from going to due process hearing when there are disagreements. We are able to resolve many issues without the involvement of RACU or to guide parents into a non-adversarial mediation.

This perspective merits its own discussion but it is getting late for me and I know your plate is full.

In conclusion, in my former life, BC (before children!), I was responsible for a \$1.6 million departmental budget. While that number seems like small potatoes compared to the MCPS operating budget, the fundamentals are the same. I understand the constraints but I am confident there are alternative solutions which would not necessitate that an entire class of Special Education Administrators, under the Office of Special Education, be eliminated.

I would really appreciate your insights.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Taylor,

MCCPTA Special Education Committee Chair