

Maryland Association of School Personnel Administrators



2006 Winter Seminar

January 27, 2006

***Minority Teacher Recruitment and
Retention in Maryland***

Final Report



Maryland Association of School Personnel Administrators
www.maspamd.org

2005 – 2006 MASPA Officers

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The MASPA Mission

The Maryland Association of School Personnel Administrators, the state organization for school personnel practitioners, presents a unified voice on personnel issues for Maryland public school systems and provides leadership in promoting effective human resource practices through professional activities and broad based networking.

Background

Minority teacher recruitment and retention continues to present challenges nationwide. A quick review of the Internet reveals a multitude of reference materials and studies on this important issue. Many colleges and universities, other state departments of education, and the National Education Agency (NEA) have conducted research into the underlying causes behind the shortage of minority educators.

In Maryland, which is a teacher import state, the challenges in this area are even more pronounced. Minority teachers continue to be defined as being in critical shortage on the *Maryland Teacher Staffing Report* produced annually by the Maryland State Department of Education.

Each year, local school systems compete for a limited pool of qualified candidates. School systems broaden their scope of recruitment by traveling further, targeting initiatives, creating local incentives, and utilizing technology and media in the recruitment process all aimed at increasing the pool of qualified minority teaching candidates.

School systems also strive to retain minority teachers. National statistics indicate a large percentage of teachers leave the profession within the first five years. In addition, promotion and retirement rates affect overall minority teacher staffing ratios.

Lastly, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and other teacher accountability measures have had an affect on minority teacher recruitment and retention. In the past, school systems have employed minority teachers through career changer avenues and alternative programs. There are many more restrictive factors involved with these programs in light of NCLB and other accountability measures. The NEA, among others, has indicated that teacher licensure tests disproportionately exclude minority candidates.

In Maryland, there is frequent attention paid to the minority student achievement gap, as is appropriate. The focus should always be on student achievement. However, it is less frequent that attention is given at a statewide level to minority teacher recruitment and retention. MASPAs views the two issues as being dependent so that success in closing the achievement is directly linked to success in minority recruitment and retention.

Overview of Winter Seminar

With a dedication to initiating a meaningful statewide conversation on minority teacher recruitment and retention in Maryland, MASPAs sponsored a Winter Seminar on the topic on January 27, 2006. The Seminar was designed to not only explore the underlying issues behind the challenges we face, but to brainstorm potential solutions that we might adopt as a state. Representatives from various stakeholder groups throughout public education in Maryland were invited to attend and participate including the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Institutes of Higher Education, local Superintendents of Schools, the Maryland State

Teachers' Association, Maryland Boards of Education, and the Maryland Associations of Elementary and Secondary School Principals.

The Winter Seminar began with informational presentations from two featured speakers. Ms. Carlesa Finney is the current President of the Maryland Caucus of Black School Board Members and a former multi-term member of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education. Mr. Quentin Lawson is the Executive Director of the National Alliance of Black School Educators, which has established local chapters in many Maryland local school systems.

After the featured speakers concluded their presentations, which provided background and direction to the overall discussion, the floor was open to all seminar attendees to participate and share ideas and thoughts. Attendees were able to interact with the featured speakers and each other. A lively moderated discussion ensued for a full two hours in which many ideas and topics, from individuals representing various aspect of Maryland public education, were shared and discussed openly.

Featured Presentations

Ms. Carlesa Finney presented a review of the history of African-American involvement in the teaching profession. In the years of segregation and immediately afterward, African-Americans were limited to a few professions that included teaching. Today many more options are open to African-American college graduates.

Additionally, Ms. Finney stressed that there are not enough rewards built into the system to make it a viable profession for African-Americans. Society does not encourage students to become teachers as we do with other professions. Comparatively low salaries, student discipline problems, lack of financial support, and licensure concerns contribute to limit the number of African-Americans who pursue a career in teaching. Of those who do, fewer than 50% pass the required certification examinations.

Ms. Finney pointed out that minority teacher recruitment has long been marginalized to certain areas. This pattern needs to be changed as African-American teachers are needed in all subjects. The minority achievement gap still exists and black male students, in particular, continue to be left behind. Unless major change is processed, the trend will continue. Teaching must be promoted as a profession. Mentors must be provided for new and struggling teachers. Incumbent teachers who have survived and thrived in the profession should be used to promote teaching and assist new teachers.

Ms. Finney proposed a list of initiatives that should be employed to invoke positive change:

- Expand minority teacher incentive programs;
- Utilize instructional support staff to allow teachers time to focus on classroom management and other issues;
- Coordinate new minority recruits with incumbent leaders and increase the mentor ratio;
- Provide funding and support for future teachers' clubs in our schools;
- Establish loan reimbursement programs for teachers in shortage areas and high needs schools;

- Expand alternative certification routes including summer and weekend programs;
- Establish master teacher positions to reward growth and leadership in the profession;
- Develop resources with local governments to promote certain regions for minority candidate recruitment;
- Focus recruitment initiatives with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU);
- Increase the geographic scope of minority recruitment initiatives;
- Provide incentive packages for new teachers through business sponsorship and support;
- Offer financial incentives for teachers in low performing schools; and
- Coordinate with MSDE to develop strong state-wide programs that utilize the talents of minority leaders.

Mr. Quentin Lawson provided an overview of the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE). NABSE exists for the sole purpose of increasing the motivation and academic achievement of African-American and other under achieving students. There are seven local NABSE chapters already established in Maryland public school systems.

Mr. Lawson highlighted a number of concerns held by NABSE. There is a disparity of African-American students identified as special education. Strategies need to be developed so that special education is no longer considered a “dumping ground” for minorities and other at-risk children. The disproportionate rate at which minority students enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses is alarming. While there is parity between the percentage of total white students and those taking AP classes, only 6% of total African-American students participate in AP courses.

NABSE is focused on professional development and working with colleges, students, and school systems. Mr. Lawson proposed partnerships between NABSE, Maryland colleges, and local school systems. NABSE is working with Maryland HBCU’s to allow their graduates to post resumes and portfolios on a NABSE database. Mr. Lawson invited Maryland school systems to work together to develop a way in which Maryland school systems can have access to the database. Additionally, Mr. Lawson proposed that Maryland schools systems work with NABSE to develop strategies to increase the number of minority students who seek to take AP courses.

Open Discussion

Following the featured presenters, the floor was open to discussion from seminar attendees. Participates were able to share ideas and to interact with the presenters and each other. Representatives from various stakeholder groups throughout Maryland public education were in attendance. The following individuals addressed issues or offered suggestions as noted:

Nathaniel Alston – Representative of the Horizons Group: Expressed that better connections needed to be made between local school systems and private sector businesses. Examples were provided from other states such as California where many attractive incentives were created for teachers through partnerships with businesses. Believed that if school systems learn how to reach out to businesses they will find a receptive community.

Bryan Ashby – Supervisor of Career Technology and Education for Wicomico County Public Schools: Proposed exploring a proposal to offer teacher education as a program within the local school systems CTE curriculum. Currently, we endorse any number of careers and professions for our students through the CTE program, but not the teaching profession itself.

Patrice Brown – Instructional Facilitator for Harford County Public Schools and President-Elect of the Harford County Alliance of Black School Educators: Related her own personal experiences being recruited as a minority teacher from South Carolina. Among other things, what attracted her most to Maryland and Harford County was “believable recruitment.” She was impressed by the “personal touch” Harford County offered her as a new teacher recruit. Ms. Brown stressed “honest recruitment” if the local school system hopes to retain minority teachers.

Lorraine Cornish – Director of the Baltimore Teachers’ Union Development Center: Explained recruitment and retention strategies that the BTU is presently working on. There is a “Power to Teach” program in conjunction with BCCC and Coppin State College that encourages paraeducators to pursue a degree in education. BTU has an established partnership with the City School System to provide tutoring for new teachers who need assistance to pass the Praxis tests. A test center is open three days each week for two hours.

Bob Davis – Executive Director of Human Resources for Cecil County Public Schools: Highlighted two ways in which Cecil County works with the local teachers’ association on recruitment and retention. A guardian program provides connections for new minority teachers in Cecil County. Each new minority teacher receives a non-instructional “mentor” to help them acclimate to Cecil County. Teachers also try and identify high school students interested in teaching and mentor them in selecting a college and pursuing teaching as a career.

Oscar Davis – Director of Employee Relations for Anne Arundel County Public Schools: Expressed the challenges that local systems face at traditional teacher recruitment fairs where there are many school systems vying for the same limited pool of candidates. Reiterated that African-American candidates today have many career choices besides teaching. It is difficult for career changes to make the transition to teaching due to imposed barriers. We must make improvements in this area.

Jim Dryden – Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals: Noted the career choices available today to minority graduates. Teaching is not as attractive to graduates as other choices. We need to put ourselves in their shoes to promote our profession and develop new incentives and rewards for new teachers.

William Ekey – Secondary Principal in Harford County Public Schools and President-Elect of the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals: Was moved by the personal testimony of many of the speakers. Recognizes that if we each work within the isolation of our own individual roles within the education community then we maintain the same limited sphere

of influence. We must work to make those connections within our school systems and within the broader public education community. MASSP recognizes professional development as an area ripe for growth.

Jeff Grafton – Supervisor of Human Resources for Kent County Public Schools: Noted his struggles in a small school system like Kent County where there is a limited minority community, and sought suggestions from the larger group. One suggestion was that Kent take advantage of its smaller size by getting the entire community of teachers, administration, government officials, and businesses together in one place to discuss and share ideas. This is an advantage that larger places do not have.

John Hairston – Personnel Specialist for Charles County Public Schools: Stressed the need to recognize that quality teachers are a commodity and we need to approach recruitment and retention with that mindset. We have to change our thinking and our culture like we do in other aspects of life. Charles County invests a lot of time and resources into Future Educators Clubs and are reaping the benefits. Nothing is more rewarding than when you are able to hire your former students as new teachers.

John Jones, Jr. – President of the Harford County Educators Association: Sought advice and examples of how other local associations had worked to support recruitment and retention. Led to many examples offered by representatives from Cecil County, the BTU, and MSTA.

Stephanie Moses – Director of Human Resources for Wicomico County Public Schools: Compared teaching to other professions such as medical and legal. She noted that unfortunately it is rare that so many various representatives from throughout public education assemble to discuss important topics. Ms. Moses emphasized the importance of continuing such discussions and developing a vehicle to implement ideas in practice.

Jonathan O’Neal – Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources for Harford County Public Schools and MASPA President: Discussed the need to institutionalize teacher recruitment and retention within our own school systems. Shared how he realized that the annual recruitment and retention report in Harford County can no longer be viewed as a Human Resources report. Teacher recruitment must be part of a larger system initiative of new teacher induction that includes not only Human Resources, but also school administrators and instructional leaders.

Tony Spencer – Member of the Maryland Caucus of Black School Board Members and the Anne Arundel County Board of Education: Has been very concerned with this topic since he became a board member. He encouraged ongoing, tough discussions on the issue. We need to bridge the gap on this topic and expand the conversation beyond just members of public education to the broader community, particularly the African-American community.

Sue Ann Tabler – Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals: Emphasized that we need to constantly project a positive attitude about our profession. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies when we dwell on the negative. Grow your own programs are important. We need to reinvigorate future teachers clubs.

Louise Tanney – Maryland State Department of Education: Highlighted that statistics for minority teachers in Maryland have changed little in the past twenty years. To have success we

will need to approach the situation from many different ways. Discussed efforts MSDE was undertaking to expand Resident Teacher Certification options and to encourage career changers to enter the teaching profession.

Kirk Thompson – Director of Human Resources for Howard County Public Schools: Discussed recruitment successes in Howard County based on targeted efforts. He reiterated that as recruiter we must be honest and believable. Mr. Thompson encouraged any kind of state-wide partnership through which we could promote and sell both Maryland and the teaching profession. We are reliant on out-of-state recruits for our children and our future. We should work together to do all we can to promote public education in Maryland and attract candidates here.

Michelle Washington – Uniserv Director for the Maryland State Teachers Association: Shared her own personal experiences as a new minority teacher in South Carolina. There were various incentive programs available to teachers including salary incentives and loan reimbursements. The associations in South Carolina had programs where retired educators mentored young teachers. She reiterated that honest recruitment is important to candidates as is a vehicle to help new minority teachers make connections and acclimate into a new area.

Recommendations and Next Steps

MASPA believes that our 2006 Winter Seminar on *Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Maryland* can only be the beginning of an ongoing state-wide discussion on this important issue. As such, we offer no formal conclusion to this report. Instead, in summary, we only note certain themes that emerged at the Winter Seminar and offer a plea that this conversation continues in various formats and venues.

We are very pleased that so many representatives from various stakeholder groups joined us at the Winter Seminar to share ideas and engage in meaningful discussion. While Human Resources officials may serve as the leaders in their respective school systems, we recognize that this topic is not just a Human Resources issue. It is an issue of state-wide importance for any individual or group that has a vested interest in public education in Maryland.

During the featured presentations and open discussion at the Winter Seminar, many specific ideas and thoughts emerged as possible initiatives to address our challenges in the area of minority teacher recruitment and retention. They range across a broad spectrum that includes: loan forgiveness, salary incentives, grow your own programs and future teacher clubs, mentoring, alternative certification options, and business sponsored incentives. Each of these ideas, while valuable in its own right, is but a small piece of the broader puzzle that must be assembled before we have the full picture necessary to effectively recruit and retain minority teachers in Maryland.

MASPA notes that, regardless of where any single idea or initiative proposed during the Winter Seminar is focused, they all share a common theme. Whether within a local school system, between two or more professional organizations, guided by the Maryland State Department of Education, focused on colleges or universities, or appealing to the business or broader

community for support, all proposed initiatives involve a dedicated and focused partnership in order to be successful.

MASPA understands that convening stakeholders in a format such as the Winter Seminar is but a minor step toward making these initiatives a reality that is part of a more focused, state-wide program. In order to realize the more important goal of bringing state-wide focus and leadership to facing the challenges of minority teacher recruitment and retention in Maryland, we propose the following three state-wide initiatives:

1. MASPA will produce a report on the best-practices for recruiting minority teachers. The report will include research on current practices being used throughout Maryland local school systems as well as national trends;
2. As part of broader strategic initiative to establish an annual Maryland Teacher Recruitment Consortium, MASPA will ensure that a specific focus is given to minority recruitment through targeting minority candidates and seeking partnerships with interested organizations;
3. MASPA requests that the Maryland State Department of Education convene a work group to study the challenges of minority teacher recruitment and retention in Maryland. The work group should request testimony from all interested stakeholders and seek to establish sustainable, state-wide initiatives that have the support of the Department, State Board of Education, General Assembly, and Maryland business community.