

**Educational Area Advisory Councils for Baltimore County
Board Policy 1230 Review
Workgroup Report—May 25, 2005**

Council Structure—Review of Board Policy 1230

Charge. The Board asked the Advisory Council to review the board policy that establishes and governs the area advisory councils. The Advisory Council requested an opportunity to review the policy over the summer and report its findings to the Board in September.

Meeting. The first workgroup meeting was held May 25th at the ESS Building. All council members were informed and invited to attend the workgroup to review and revise Board Policy 1230. The following advisory council members attended: Steve Crum, Ron Zimmerman, Sandy Skordalos, Bob Berkshire, Karen Yarn, Michael Franklin and Vicki Schultz-Unger.

Purpose/Scope. We began our task by reviewing the Policy from the beginning. The workgroup did not see need for revision of either the purpose or scope of the policy. One suggestion was made to change the name of the council from the area “educational” council to the area “education” council. No position was taken on that change.

Organization. The focus of the discussion was on the Second Section, “Organization” as that addresses most directly the structure of the councils. In considering a possible restructuring of the Council in light of the two proposals submitted, we determined that the issue boiled down to two fundamental questions that we must answer individually and then collectively to determine what the organizational structure of the Councils should be:

- 1) To what organization is an advisory council member appointed?
- 2) What is the scope of the appointed member’s obligation as an advisory council member?

The two proposals present fundamentally different answers to these two questions.

- 1) Under the first proposal, members would be appointed to the Educational Advisory Council of Baltimore County as representatives from one of the five areas. Members would be responsible to attend monthly meetings of the Advisory Council and area reps. would be responsible to arrange at minimum three Area Input Forums—one on operating budget in October, one on capital budget in April and one in November or December with local elected officials and other area forums could be arranged as needed.
- 2) Under the second proposal, members would be appointed to one of the five area councils. Area members would be invited but not required to attend meetings with all area council members. Instead, each area council would select three representatives to serve on a countywide advisory council. There would be four area council meetings and four countywide council meetings at minimum per year.

Issues raised regarding the two proposals:

- With proposal one, would area/community input and issues be adequately represented?
- With proposal one, would communities feel they have access to the Council and their representatives?
- With proposal two, would area council members be informed adequately of systemwide issues and concerns and updates in the law?
- With proposal two, what would be the function of this countywide advisory council and how would it function in relation to the area councils?
- With proposal two, how would area councils coordinate their efforts to function as effective advocates?
- With either proposal one or proposal two under a countywide advisory council, how would the council incorporate or engage other stakeholder advisory groups to coordinate efforts

Effectiveness Issues

The workgroup believes that regardless of any organizational changes, a number of steps should be taken to improve the effectiveness of the Council. Discussed moves to create a more coordinated, informed and better functioning organization were discussed, including attempts to. Some of the problems with the Advisory Council system are shared by all volunteer organizations that often compete for the same pool of dedicated volunteers. Other issues identified were:

- Continuing and increasing communication and coordination of efforts among Council members
- Balance local concerns with the issues affecting all children
- Disengaged members/removal of nonparticipating members
- Improve record keeping and reporting functions
- Need for more support from the Board in the form of a budget and identified staff resources
- Need better training on organizational issues and orientation
- Establish one fixed time for new appointments such as May to allow better integration of new members
- Better recruitment for greater diversity
- Better marketing
- Meaningful work that addresses and allows input regarding issues before the Board

Next workgroup meeting set for Wednesday, June 22 at 7pm. The Coordinator will send out a summary or report of the workgroup meeting and invite any council members to participate in subsequent meetings. The workgroup will communicate to the Council via email throughout the summer and will present its recommendations to the entire council at its September meeting for approval of a final report to the Board. The Coordinator will present the Councils' report at the 2nd Board of Ed. Meeting in Sept.

Respectfully submitted,
Vicki Schultz-Unger, Coordinator