

or better and cost less than external programs. Dr. Fountain said that the cost figures provided by Dr. Jones had been verified by a consultant in California.

Ms. Judy Kenney, student placement supervisor, indicated that the Board should be aware of elements of their action plan that were in place now. These included improving their procedural review standards and increasing out of state and local visits. Another was to work with community providers to expand flexibility in working with students and to return students from out of state placements. For example, as of June 30, 1984, they had 93 students out of state. They had worked hard with nonpublic providers to offer services different from those offered in the public schools. They had also made an effort to bring the curriculum of the nonpublic providers closer to that of MCPS. Ms. Kenney reported that costs of residential programs were increasing at a rate of about 10 percent per year; however, this year they were projecting a 23 percent increase.

Dr. Shoenberg commented that the Jones study was dealing with a snapshot of the school system at a particular time. He thought it might be relevant for staff to discuss the differences since the report had been prepared. For example, the picture would look different this year from what it would have appeared to be five years ago. Ms. Kenney explained that this year they had served 117 students in residential programs at a cost of over \$2 million. Dr. Fountain added that each year the state sent out a recommended percentage increase in the costs of these placements, and MCPS had had serious problems coming close to those figures. Ms. Kenney suggested that they look at the students they were placing. These were the very handicapped students, and their programs were very expensive. There were few programs providing these specialized services. The costs were for tuition alone and did not include monitoring or transportation. There were about 750 students in nonpublic placements and about one third of these were preschool youngsters. The residential portion was about 14 percent of the school-aged population. She explained that the Level 5 costs had been relatively stable over the years and had about a 9 or 10 percent increase each year. In addition, the MCPS enrollment in these programs had been stable.

Dr. Shoenberg inquired about increases in costs beyond increases in the cost of living. Ms. Kenney replied that in some states there were stated groups called rate-setting commissions which established costs for individual programs. The commissions set a base rate of educational and residential services, and the IEP was the basis for placement. The school would offer their base rate plus charges for services required by the IEP. The school system would negotiate the cost to the extent it could. Included in increased costs were more use of computers and the trend to provide one on one services for the severely handicapped. The idea behind this was to provide intensive services over a short period of time so that you would not have to have a student in a restrictive placement for a long period of time. Montgomery County worked with the Maryland State

Department of Education and had implemented criteria for what their goals were, how they were going to get there, and how they would monitor these goals.

Dr. Fountain recalled that in 1975 when the law came into being, the state started monitoring these programs. Many programs had to bring their staffs into parity with the public schools and, consequently, to maintain quality staff they had to pay more. This resulted in tuition increases from 35 to 40 percent. It seemed to Dr. Shoenberg that they were playing salary catch-up and that many of the arguments for increasing costs could be related to the arguments for increasing hospital costs. He noted that in a series of questions on the advantages of private placements, the questions implied their own answers in many cases. Staff seemed to feel that the 10 percent cost differential was not worth arguing over, and he asked whether they had a sense of what percentage differential would be worth certain kinds of sacrifices. He wondered how much more they could reduce the 96 figure for residential placements. Dr. Fountain said that they thought the 10 percent figure was not too bad. They tried to establish programs on a continuum, and they believed the services they bought did not duplicate what they had in MCPS. They did not have a real good answer to the question of rising costs. Several years ago they had met with a group and said they would cooperate with that group as long as it was fiscally feasible; however, somewhere they might have to say "this is too much."

In regard to the grandfather clause, Ms. Kenney explained that they talked about that concept in terms of a five-year plan. For example, 41 of the students in residential placements were between 18 and 21, and their philosophy was to leave these students alone. They had set their targets on the seriously emotionally disturbed returning to the county when RICA opened. They did have a little grant for a person to work half-time on placements and targeting students to return. They had set goals with their second population which was the developmentally disabled. They had been working with community providers and now had a successful experience with two students living in a group home. She would see people working in the community to build quality support systems. She noted that there would always be students needing residential placements; however, their goal was to shorten that stay.

Dr. Shoenberg stated that he would like to know their rock bottom level of residential placements, how low they would be able to go and how long it would take to get them there. He asked whether there was any area with enough differential between the costs of MCPS and private placement for them to think about their own MCPS facility. He wanted to know what hold they could get over these extremely large costs and whether it would be worthwhile to put a staff member on this task. He said that the report was looking backward, and he did not get much from the report about where they were headed and what the budget implications were. He inquired about things they might do in the short run to save themselves in the long run. Dr. Fountain replied that the superintendent had asked him the same question, and he thought they had been putting

out fires. However, there were only 90 students in residential placements as compared with 250 a few years ago. He pointed out that many of the 41 students cited by Ms. Kenney would not be in placements now if they had been born today.

Mr. Ewing commented that the study was in a number of respects so seriously flawed that he wondered whether it should be used as a basis for decisions. He was not critical of the services provided in Montgomery County, and over the years he had been supportive and had voted for providing resources. He said that the study suggested it was a good thing to provide services close to home, in the least restrictive environment, and at the lowest possible costs. He had no quarrel with that; however, the study made certain assertions that he did not think had been supported effectively. For example, the evidence was not clear that the quality was better in the public schools and that MCPS programs were better at meeting the needs of students. It was not clear that costs were lower in the public school programs. He did not quarrel with the statement that the public schools could offer programs of high quality and could meet the needs; however, they needed to balance cost and quality together with other factors. He was bothered by their saying that a 10 percent cost increase was reasonable and a larger increase was unreasonable absent a solid methodology for examining costs. He did not think the study included all the real costs of the public schools or those of the private schools. For example, there were costs of developing programs, administrative overhead, evaluation of programs, and building operating costs. He asked whether the MCPS costs included all those factors. He noted that costs in the public schools in the last ten years had been affected by student and staff reductions; therefore, cost comparisons were difficult to make. He pointed out that as public schools had taken on the burden of developing and maintaining programs for the handicapped they had, in some cases, reduced the number of students sent outside the school system. This factor was not taken into account. He did not think the cost study was accurate which left them with no real basis in terms of costs of making decisions. He did not think the assertion that MCPS could offer programs more cheaply was sustained, and he was astonished that staff found no fault with the methodology used.

Mr. Ewing stated that he was dismayed by the study and by the sense that staff was relying on the cost analysis in the study as a basis for making decision. He was not uncomfortable with the issue of program quality and making formal contracts with formal program audits with private providers. He suggested that in many respects they needed that formal audit with their own programs as well. He was concerned that they might be using an extraordinarily unreliable instrument for making decisions. He realized the difficulties Dr. Jones faced in putting together the study, but he thought Dr. Jones went well beyond the study in asserting their conclusions. He was troubled about the analysis of cost factors and the little bit they had on the quality of the programs. He did not see an assessment of all the factors they should be looking for and how these factors should be balanced. It seemed to him that the study was not a good

tool for the Board, and he would much rather rely on the good judgment of MCPS staff.

Dr. Cody asked whether they were bringing students back from private placement before the report had been written and what was the basis for bringing the students back. Dr. Fountain replied that the state had expressed a concern about bringing students back. Ms. Kenney cautioned that when they looked at the report they tended to equate placement with costs. Placement depended on the needs of the children, and the costs were a secondary factor. They had to look at where quality programs could be provided for Montgomery County students. If there was a program in Florida, for example, the location of that program would make it difficult for parents and staff to visit the child. This was a guiding factor in decisions. They also looked at programs so as not to penalize a student who wanted to return to MCPS from an out-of-state program. Dr. Cody asked whether they had increased programs and services within the county. Ms. Kenney replied that both public and private programs were now providing different services.

Mr. Ewing asked whether staff thought the report was useful for decision making. Dr. Steve Frankel, director of the Department of Educational Accountability, remarked that the qualitative data was based on professional judgment; however, the hard data behind the cost model was very solid. All costs were included with the exception of start-up costs and renovations. The cost data was shared with a consultant who visited for a week, and the numbers did not change by an iota. Mr. Ewing commented that he did not see any evidence that they had factored in retirement costs for additional teachers, for example. He felt they could not make a decision on costs without comparisons. Dr. Joy Frechtling, director of the Division of Instructional Evaluation and Testing, commented that Dr. Jones had said there was not a clear cut distinction in services offered. However, Dr. Jones felt the matched pairs were matched on the basis of needs of students. Dr. Frankel added that they were not saying pull students back if the MCPS program was 10 percent cheaper. However, they were saying that consideration be given to local programs if all factors are equal.

Mr. Ewing remarked that in Montgomery County they had taken over services provided by some private programs and told the private programs to change what they had been doing because the public schools were going to offer the same thing. He thought they had to be clear about the history of what had been done in Montgomery County. He said that if they didn't have good comparisons of what it would cost them to get into the same business they did not have a basis for making those decisions.

Mrs. Praisner suggested that the Board have more discussions on this report when more Board members could be present. She said that whether they had the report or not, MCPS had over the years expanded its special education programs and must have had some criteria for those decisions. She asked the staff to explain what process they used to determine whether a program should be expanded and when the

Board was involved or was not involved in that decision. She asked what the staff saw as the direction they were going in, with or without this report. She wanted to know what needed to be done and what their options were. She thought they needed to look at long-range planning again and asked for a concept paper from the staff on special education needs. In regard to the placement of minority students, she was not satisfied with the response. She would feel more comfortable if staff told her they were reviewing these placements again. In addition, she would like more information on the Maryland State Department of Education LD project. Dr. Fountain suggested they needed to look at gate-keeping in the EMT. For example, in some areas the percentage of blacks was closer to the percentage of blacks in the total student population, but this would take study.

Dr. Shoenberg thought that the resolution of issues raised seemed to depend on monitoring which would involve someone looking at cases, one by one. He would like to see what kind of monitoring they needed to do and what it was going to take to do this monitoring. He felt that the report left them puzzled, and he would like to know the judgment of the staff. Mr. Ewing commented that they had been puzzled about this issue for years, but at least the current Board wanted to do something about it. Mrs. Praisner remarked that no one questioned the dedication of the staff and their sincere desire to provide appropriate, high quality programs for handicapped students. Dr. Cody commented that putting aside the question of costs, there were reasons for decisions that related to programs closer to home, mainstreaming, and the quality of the program. Dr. Fountain added they did have a built-in review process for all students in special education, and he thought they had come a long way in the past few years.

Re: Draft Plan to Implement
Recommendations from the Task
Force Report on the Future of
Schools and Programs for
Moderately, Severely, and
Profoundly Mentally Handicapped
Students

Mrs. Praisner pointed out that the Board had never discussed the original report and perhaps should take a few minutes to review the report. Dr. Thomas O'Toole, director of the Department of Special Education and Related Services, explained that the task force was made up of parents, community, staff, and other professionals. Among the recommendations of the task force were that students should be brought into the broader world and that MCPS should provide students with a transition from the school world from the work world. The second recommendation was that youngsters should be exposed to as many program options as feasible. The third was that in-service needs had increased as staff role changed. The last major recommendation was that coordination and cooperation was needed with other services in the community with the public schools taking the major role.

Mrs. Praisner remarked that the committee had done a thorough job in its recommendations and in the quality of the report. Dr. Cody emphasized that what was before the Board was a draft plan. Since the preparation of the draft, he had met with staff in an attempt to identify a whole series of recommendations and put them in priority order. He explained that they now needed to make some choices on the items to work on most aggressively. At some point they would be bringing a more formal document to the Board.

Mrs. Praisner noted that there was a reference in the draft to a survey of the literature and other school systems. She pointed out that the Board of Education belonged to the National Federation of Urban/Suburban School Districts. This organization could assist MCPS in contacting other "like" school systems.

Mr. Ewing remarked that the report and the response were both good. He said that the last recommendation on page 5 called for the community to take leadership and thought that MCPS should be more active in this goal. Dr. O'Toole agreed that the public schools did have to take more of a leadership role in getting community groups to participate.

Dr. Fountain said that they were optimistic that a proposal by Mrs. Margit Meissner would get federal funding. He said they were looking at places like Birmingham and Madison and changing the way they were doing business. This year they would have a total of 80 special students in the regular schools. He cited the Woodward High School program as one of the most successful of the programs. He hoped to begin developing a curriculum that would move these students from the four walls of the classroom into the classroom of the world. He agreed that staff did need to be retrained to teach these children. They expected to have these students on the job at ages 14 to 16 and into the world of work when the child reached 21. Mrs. Meissner thought they they were all pulling in the same direction, but it was a question of how well they could do this for how many children and how fast.

Mrs. Praisner said the report suggested that teacher/pupil ratios needed to be adjusted, but staff did not concur in that recommendation. Dr. O'Toole explained that adjustments would have to be made. For example, when a child was moved from a special school into a regular school they tended to have a higher staff/pupil ratio. Then, too, there was the subject of related services. When they had 135 students in one place in a special school they could get more mileage out of the specialists. Mrs. Praisner stated that in past years the county executive and County Council had been receptive to the special education budget. She wondered whether changes in the pupil/teacher ratio would make them more vulnerable to criticism and asked whether it was worth arguing for changes at the state level. Dr. O'Toole replied that the ratios had been discussed at the state, and the response at the state had been that the ratios were not absolute levels. Dr. Fountain added that staff had a letter explaining that the ratios were guidelines.

Mrs. Praisner noted that there was a recommendation for the Board to reaffirm its commitment to education for handicapped students. Another recommendation was for the school system to take a leadership role in working with the community. It seemed to her that there was a role for Board members in working with the community and other agencies in encouraging community involvement.

Dr. Shoenberg called attention to the need for more staff flexibility and asked what was keeping them from accomplishing this goal. Dr. O'Toole replied that this addressed related services and as a staff they needed to look at how they were doing, what they were trained to do, and what they might do differently. For example, they were using the national model on delivering speech services, and there might be a more flexible way of delivering these services. Dr. Fountain added that when they visited Madison they had asked about related services following the children. They could not duplicate services in the special schools, but in Madison the parents were willing to accept a little less hands-on service in trade for having their children in an integrated school setting.

Dr. Shoenberg inquired about the dollar implications of new technological devices. Dr. O'Toole reported that some of the more dramatic breakthroughs had occurred in speech pathology as well as in devices for the visually impaired. While they did not know what was coming down the pike, they wanted to continue evaluating the new equipment. Dr. Shoenberg commented that one of the things getting attention now was finding appropriate situations for children who were past school age. He wondered about the possibility of increasing the number of residential placements for students over 21. Dr. O'Toole replied that they did work very closely with other agencies of government. There were staff level meetings in which the various agencies were trying to come up with a total package to fill this need. Dr. Fountain thought that this was another area where Board members could get involved because when these students turned 21 there was no place for them to go.

Dr. Cody indicated that there were several priorities coming from the staff meetings on this report. He would provide copies of the priorities to the Board. He agreed that they had to come back with a plan for the priorities and specifics on how to implement this plan.

Re: Board of Education Involvement in
Special Education Appeals

Mrs. Praisner explained that in June 1980 the Board had adopted Continuum Education procedures and later adopted a resolution which should have appeared in the policy. This resolution directed the superintendent to bring to the Board for its review all cases where there would seem to be issues of great importance. On July 30, 1980, Dr. Fountain had sent a memorandum on how this Board resolution would be implemented. Mr. Ewing recalled that about four years ago the Board had discussed this issue and the fact that the

state law deliberately circumvented the Board. He said that what the Board needed were patterns so that they could understand issues and make intelligent policy decisions. They needed to know the cost implications of these decisions, and they needed to know whether these cases required policy changes. The Board left it with the superintendent to inform the Board; however, the resolution was never implemented.

Mrs. Praisner suggested that they give the resolution and Dr. Fountain's guidelines a try. The policy as printed would have to be modified and include the procedures. She said these could be tried and evaluated to see whether they were adequate. Mr. Ewing suggested that the superintendent also think about other ways of informing the Board on these key issues.

Re: Adjournment

The president adjourned the meeting at 10:50 p.m.

President

Secretary

WSC:mlw