

Appendix R

Assessing Schools for Modernization

In 1992, the Board of Education adopted a modernization policy that makes a strong statement for the need to update aging facilities through modernization in order to provide equitable learning environments across the county. Modernizations not only upgrade building systems, such as heating and air conditioning, plumbing, etc., it also bring aging facilities up to the same educational program standards as new schools. Modernizations also provide an opportunity to upgrade facilities to current building codes and regulations such as providing a facility that is accessible for persons with disabilities, abating hazardous materials, providing Fire Safety Code Upgrades, and improving Indoor Air Quality.

A detailed objective assessment process ranks schools in priority order for modernization. Facilities are evaluated based on physical condition and educational program capability. The physical condition assessment, called Facilities Assessment with Criteria and Testing (FACT), was developed by the MCPS Division of Construction with review and advice from facilities and planning staff members, experts from other area jurisdictions, and the Maryland State Department of Education School Construction Department. A team of trained technicians evaluates each school in need of modernization. Weighted scores are applied to the assessment for various aspects of the building, and based on the physical condition of the building, a final score is calculated, with a maximum of 1,000 points.

The Educational Program Assessment ranks each school based on how well the facility meets the educational space requirements of the current instructional program. This assessment process was developed in conjunction with MCPS instructional staff, planning and facilities staff, school principals, and Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations (MCCPTA) representatives. The Educational Program Assessment pays particular attention to comparing the amount of existing space within each building to the amount of space that would be provided by a modernization or a new school.

Other aspects of educational programs that are reviewed as part of the formal assessment relate to safety, security, energy conservation, and comfort.

The Educational Program Assessment also has a maximum score of 1,000 points. When both assessments are combined, a maximum of 2,000 points is possible. Both assessment components were reviewed and approved by the Board of Education. This process is widely recognized by school officials and community leaders as an objective and impartial tool for prioritizing modernizations.

In FY 1993, the modernization assessment process was performed on 37 elementary and secondary schools in the current and future modernization program. The ranking was established and adopted as the priority for modernizations by the Board of Education and has been adhered to since that time. Of the original 37 schools that were assessed, seven remain to be completed on the schedule. The original 37 schools were placed on the list primarily based on the age of the facility.

In FY 1996, the Board of Education asked for funds to assess all remaining schools for modernization. The County Council appropriated enough funds to assess an additional 35 schools. The schools chosen for assessment in FY 1996 were schools that were built before 1970 that were never modernized, or schools that were renovated before 1977. These schools were added to the end of the first list of schools assessed for modernization.

In FY 2000, the seven remaining high schools that were not assessed in FY 1992 and FY 1996 were assessed and added to the modernization schedule. The schools were placed in ranked order after the schools assessed in FY 1996. There remains a list of 41 schools built or renovated before 1985 that have not been assessed, and have not been added to the modernization schedule. The list includes: 29 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, and 1 high school.

