

APPROVED
17-1981

Rockville, Maryland
March 2, 1981

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Monday, March 2, 1981, at 8:10 p. m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Carol F. Wallace, President in the
Chair

Mr. Joseph R. Barse
Mr. Blair G. Ewing
Dr. Marian L. Greenblatt
Mrs. Suzanne K. Peyser
Mrs. Elizabeth W. Spencer
Miss Traci Williams
Mrs. Eleanor D. Zappone

Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Edward Andrews, Superintendent of
Schools
Dr. Harry Pitt, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Robert S. Shaffner, Executive
Assistant

Re: Legislation

Mr. Thomas S. Fess, ombudsman/staff assistant, reported that the constitutional law committee would be meeting on Wednesday, March 4, on HB 1526 which had to do with hearing examiners. He asked that the Board consider taking a position to oppose this bill. Mrs. Wallace called for a straw vote of the Board, and she reported that it was unanimous to oppose the bill. Mr. Ewing asked that this matter be scheduled for a formal vote of the Board.

Re: Announcements

Mrs. Wallace reported that the county executive had held a press conference and had indicated that he would recommend a budget not to exceed \$333 million for the Board of Education. Mrs. Spencer reminded the Board that some of the County Council members would be touring Gaithersburg Elementary School on March 4. Mrs. Wallace explained that she would be unable to join the Council members because her son was in traction in the hospital, and Mrs. Spencer agreed to represent the Board.

Re: Draft Policy Statement on
Long-range Educational Facilities
Planning

Mrs. Wallace stated that Mr. Barse had a new draft and Dr. Greenblatt had an edited version of her draft. Mr. Barse said that if their goal was to achieve higher educational quality they needed a step to do this. He indicated that should a change be judged to

be adverse to educational quality, it should be noted. His second point was on grade organization. In this he tried to set forth a vision of the future, allow for a certain flexibility, and move gradually toward this. His third point was on grouping schools into clusters.

Mrs. Spencer said that they also applied the term "cluster" to groups of schools they had established such as the Rosemary Hills Cluster and the New Hampshire Cluster. She felt it would be better if an alternate word were used here. Mr. Barse explained that he was suggesting a shift in the definition of cluster. Mrs. Spencer thought he was speaking to an expansion of the current view of a cluster to its upper level. She asked whether it would mean cross transfers and magnet schools. Mr. Barse indicated that it could. He noted that the Rosemary Hills schools were in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase feeder pattern; however, there were three elementary schools in the B-CC pattern not in the Rosemary Hills Cluster. In a sense this would be an expansion geographically and vertically. This would suggest an organizational definition of schools and would not preclude a relationship between two clusters.

Mr. Barse stated that the next section on assignment of students to the next higher school took a stab at the 25 percent assignment rule. The last sentence under this section attempted to set forth a rule that where boundaries have to be adjusted that, in general, the boundaries would be that of the junior high school. Mrs. Spencer suggested that they needed a sentence here that other boundaries might have to be changed for other reasons.

Mr. Barse explained that the next section had to do with quality integrated education. He said that this included a cross reference to the QIE policy statement. It also provided for a need to make an overall appraisal of the QIE situation before putting the final stamp on the plan. Mr. Ewing asked what the statement on QIE did to the existing clusters, and Mr. Barse replied that he did not think that these statements did anything to the existing clusters. He said that the arrangements setting up the clusters would be subject to review and in the case of Rosemary Hills it could be redefined and expanded. Mr. Ewing hoped that they would not attempt to address the issue of whether or not those clusters were desirable, regarding their objectives educationally, as a subset of this policy. He felt that they needed to be addressed separately and independently. Mr. Barse explained that there was nothing in setting forth the principles that would force them to readdress the issues under the QIE policy. Mrs. Spencer called attention to the wording "part of the evaluation of the final Master Plan shall consist of an overall appraisal of QIE opportunities being offered." She suggested that it should be each five-year segment of the plan, and Mr. Barse agreed that the wording could be improved.

The superintendent commented that he did not know whether this definition of cluster superceded the definition of the Rosemary Hills Cluster. Mr. Barse felt that his definition was consistent

with the definition in the QIE policy. He explained that his definition was a new element and a refinement. If this language were to be adopted, they would have to readjust to make the previous policies consistent.

Mr. Barse said that his section 6 on standards could be called "criteria." He understood that as the situation now existed the schools in the county when subjected to the screening standard of the five items would go into a group for further study if they met any one of the items. When he asked how many schools would then be identified for further study, the response was that a large majority would be identified for further study. On the other hand, if they made their screening standards tighter to identify a smaller number of schools the problem might be worse. For that reason, he was arguing for a single set of standards in Section 6. Mrs. Wallace assumed that Mr. Barse would have specific changes in the remainder of the policy if he had Section 6 in mind. Mr. Barse thought that Sections 2 and 3 should be combined. It seemed to Mrs. Wallace that the one section he would do away with would be on page 5 of the draft policy, line 92. She thought Mr. Barse was saying he would not have a problem with the five items as long as they were applied equally to every school. Mr. Barse replied that basically that was it, but it was not that simple. He was not all that comfortable with the relatively restricted list of criteria. He would like to get back to the MCCPTA list of criteria and the other big question of whether the assessment of any school against the standards would be done mechanically or judgmentally.

Mr. Ewing said he would like to go back to Mr. Barse's second point about grade organization. He pointed out that they had schools which were K-3, 4-6, K-5, and 6-8, all of which fell outside the statement as to what was desirable. He said that Mr. Barse had indicated there would be some exceptions which suggested to him that part of the process would be that every school that varied from the preferred pattern would be studied. Mr. Barse replied that this was the intent, but it did not address when the study would take place.

Mr. Ewing pointed out that the Board had designated these arrangements specifically which was quite different from looking at a school because of an enrollment drop. Mr. Barse commented that it was one thing to have a preliminary hearing and another thing to have a grand jury trial. He said that the examination of the variant schools would take place based upon an examination of the criteria for their establishment. He said that to suggest that they would not be evaluated was to suggest they had a pattern fixed in concrete for all time. He felt that the purpose of planning was to evaluate what they had done to date.

Mr. Ewing asked whether it would be consistent to propose that they evaluate K6 and 9-12 in the five-year plan. Mr. Barse agreed and said that he would have no problem in putting that in. He thought that in the second five year cycle they should take a relook at K-6, 7-8, and 9-12.

It seemed to Mrs. Spencer that they were talking about a companion pair of policies. One would be on educational issues and one on facilities issues. She said that it would be her intent to break them apart and cross-reference them. The superintendent commented that this did not say why he was here this evening. He felt that three words were left out -- "at reasonable cost." He pointed out that they were here all the time to maintain quality and had not penalized students going to these very small schools. They had put one principal in schools which had only 125 kids; but because they had done this, it had cost them a small fortune. He pointed out that they had put 50 additional teachers in the small high schools when they took out the seven-period day. He felt there should be a reference to reasonable costs, and Mr. Barse agreed that the superintendent had identified a gap. He noted that the first point called for an educational quality impact statement and they could just as well call for a fiscal impact statement. He said they could have a second point on reasonable costs with budgetary impact to the effect that any proposed change to the master plan should be accompanied by the fiscal impact or budget changes.

Mrs. Spencer asked how they would measure educational quality in terms of a building. She wondered whether it would be the staff, the principal, the children, the program, etc. Mr. Barse replied that fundamentally she was talking about the people process that went on in that building, but some things done to the building might have an important impact. If they closed the building, the people would be shifted which might have a significant impact on educational quality in the consolidated facility. Mrs. Zappone asked how they would measure educational quality. Mr. Barse said that, for example, two schools would be up for consolidation. One might have a superior program and the other a poor program; then that distinction between programs might have some bearing on which school should be the receiving school. The superintendent commented that he tended to go along with the thrust behind Mrs. Zappone's question because in a new consolidated school they would still not have the same program. Mr. Barse felt that this should be appraised on a case-by-case basis. Dr. Pitt remarked that where they had a superior program there was no guarantee what they were doing there could stay. It might not be economically feasible down the road, and they might have to hurt two programs.

One of the things that disturbed Mr. Ewing was that the superintendent and MCCPTA recommended they use only those data which could be more readily quantified. He felt that it was a delusion that they could make decisions only on hard data. He felt that no one could do this who was in the public arena, and he didn't know whether they had the right language in the superintendent's version or Mr. Barse's version. He said that one of the reasons he felt the Board should record the reasons for their decisions was to permit them to record the nonquantifiable reasons.

Mr. Barse stated that he would intend to bring back the question of

education quality as one of the criteria. Dr. Greenblatt commented that she had read the statement about sustaining high quality educational programs at reasonable costs as something different. She felt that the whole purpose of the policy was not to rate the quality of schools but rather to say how much money was in the pot, how were they going to be able to deploy staff, and how would they prioritize some of their other expenditures. She did not read educational quality to mean measuring each school's achievement but rather overall quality. Mr. Barse said that if she was saying they were going to make change to improve educational quality his response would be how what she proposed to change was really going to do that. Dr. Greenblatt replied that if they had schools below 350, they would not receive certain services. Mr. Barse felt that they had to show that each proposed change would do what they had claimed.

Mrs. Wallace pointed out that at present they were assigning staff on a per pupil basis. However, in a small school they might be getting more because they would have a principal for fewer pupils. She said they they could also judge the quality of schools by transfers in and out which was the public perception of the schools. They did have something that they could quantify in terms of what they called quality. She asked whether they had more questions on Mr. Barse's draft.

Mrs. Zappone asked whether Mr. Barse would consider other wording for educational quality, and Mr. Barse said that he would. He said there should be some kind of statement regarding the impact on educational quality from the proposed change. He felt that as one of the criteria there ought to be a point on cost and a point on quality. Mrs. Wallace asked that the staff rewrite the papers to have them ready for Board consideration on March 5.

Mr. Ewing thought they would be better off to talk about process rather than trying to come to grips with purpose. Mrs. Wallace felt that they had to have agreement on educational equity and grade organization. She said that the staff needed to know whether the Board preferred a general or more more rigid statement. The superintendent stated that the 7-8 issue would be the least difficult one to work with because they had the Board views on this subject. Mrs. Wallace said that she was hearing four votes for the more flexible wording. She inquired about Dr. Greenblatt's 85 percent utilization. Mrs. Peyser remarked that since the Board had rejected 85 percent she would suggest "all schools should be as fully utilized as possible." Dr. Greenblatt felt that the issue was whether they wanted to be more specific here or later on. She thought they might want to say "reduce small capacity schools." She recommended that they define everything in terms of state-rated capacity.

The superintendent provided the Board with a memorandum on capacity ratings. He explained that the state was really saying 85 percent of 90 percent which was similar to the operating capacity but did not give them credit for joint occupancy. It seemed to Dr.

Greenblatt that they were better off sticking to the one closest to the number of rooms used consistently. Mrs. Spencer remarked that even that changed from year to year. The superintendent explained that the state rating included special education and the operating rating included what was in the school right now. Mrs. Wallace asked why they used 30 in Grades 1 through 6, and the superintendent replied that this was what the state used. Mrs. Wallace pointed out that they had Board policies which impacted on this, and the Board had indicated a leaning toward maximum class size which did not come out to 30. At the elementary level, the capacity would depend on the class size limits the Board has that are operational.

Mrs. Zappone remarked that the initial question was whether they should leave the 85 percent utilization. She wondered why they did not state "state-rated capacities." The superintendent said that all of the people had supported 70 percent and 90 percent as being under and over. Mr. Barse said he was more interested in the question of what they did when the school came in at 68 percent or 92 percent. Mrs. Wallace pointed out that they had two ways of going, either they did not mention percentage of utilization purpose stage or they had a broader statement. The superintendent indicated that Mr. Barse had put as a thrust keeping the buildings as highly used as possible. Mrs. Spencer pointed out that a school could be jointly occupied and the school program would not fit the guidelines.

The superintendent said they had to know whether there was support for Mr. Barse's standards. Mrs. Wallace felt that they should get to a single set of standards and asked whether anyone had a reaction to the single set of specific standards. Mrs. Spencer asked why the staff have two sets, and the superintendent explained that they had a screening set to have a list of schools for a closer look. He said that Mr. Barse was talking about a specific recommendation on each school. The staff's feeling was that perhaps to the extent they could eliminate some schools they ought to be able to do that early on in the process. Dr. Lois Martin, associate superintendent, explained that when they went into the solution process they would be looking at adjacent planning areas; however, there were parts of the county where there would not be schools needing change. Mrs. Wallace thought that probably every school in the county would be involved in one way or another. She wondered what would be the problem in having a single set.

Mrs. Spencer called attention to the draft policy on lines 67 and 135 which differed in their ways of stating enrollment. Dr. Pitt explained that there were criteria to show whether a school had a problem, and then they had to look at some things to solve that problem. Mrs. Spencer wondered whether they should express this in terms of a desired enrollment and give it a range. Mr. Ewing was not sure they needed two sets of criteria, but there was a need to be able to answer the question that had been asked in the past which was how did they identify this school or schools for study for closure. Dr. Pitt replied that they had given the Board some

criteria to tell them that. Then they would say if the school was to close, these are the factors which were related to the criteria they used originally. Mr. Barse explained that he was saying there was a double standard for exempting schools. It was stated in lines 92-93 and 108-111 and related to 135. It seemed to him that whatever decision they made, even a decision for no change, it should be on the same set of standards. He also felt that the criteria should be weighted in the same way; however, in the staff paper the weighting was different in the second set. Dr. Pitt asked if the problem would be solved in the five criteria were applied equally. Mr. Barse agreed that this would solve the problem about the double standard.

Mr. Ewing did not think there was a double standard and felt that what was intended was very clear. It was his view that what they needed most desperately was to look at the entire universe of schools in the county. They would apply some screening device, but whether the five items were the right ones was another question. No school would be exempt, and then they would look at what was left as part of the problem or part of the solution.

Mrs. Wallace suggested that the Board turn to process and Dr. Greenblatt's draft. Dr. Greenblatt said they had to be bold and take this as an opportunity to set up which would be the remaining buildings. She said they had to analyze the total county enrollment and total state-rated capacity to establish the number of schools needed to operate at at least 85 percent of capacity, to reduce the number of small-capacity buildings, and to distribute staff so that each school could receive the same student/teacher ratios regardless of size of school. She said that the result would be an estimate of the number of buildings they needed. Mrs. Spencer suggested "staff should estimate the numbers and location of schools at each level that would be needed for a 15-year period." Dr. Greenblatt said they had to consider should they be building into this more per pupil because of the size of the building and not because of the program. Mrs. Spencer commented that aside from the existing structure on a given site, they had to consider whether this was a site they should retain. She suggested that in some place they had to make it clear that sites as well as facilities should be considered.

Mr. Ewing remarked that he did not see how they could get the number of schools based on present enrollment because they had to look at the projections as a basic piece of information. He said that once they had done the analyses of enrollment trends and forecasts they had to show that these data fed the decision about the estimates of numbers of schools in the various parts of the county. Mrs. Wallace said that she liked the idea of looking at the total county enrollment, and she thought they had to establish the numbers of classrooms. She indicated that somehow they had to break the growth area from the downcounty area. She pointed out that for the most part the downcounty schools were built smaller. Mr. Barse stated that the number of schools needed was a product of the process and was not the process. He would disagree with Dr.

Greenblatt's proposal. He felt that the language in the staff draft on lines 64-66 was closer to what they should be doing. He said they should develop what the standards were and then apply these standards to each school that they were studying to somehow bring that together to reach a judgment as to whether the school lives or dies.

Dr. Greenblatt said that they had been taking the micro approach by taking the schools one by one. She was suggesting the macro approach by starting with the county and moving to the high schools. They should look at the high school area given the populations and the buildings. She said that this was an opportunity to say what their real needs were and what they wanted for the future in a high school feeder area. Mrs. Wallace remarked that they could determine the number of classrooms they needed. Once they had determined that at each level, they could look at it in terms of the schools and the capacities of those schools. Mr. Ewing thought that Dr. Greenblatt's proposal might produce some interesting information. He said that they probably could get along with a couple of fewer high schools although he was not proposing that. He said that that fact alone should cause them to shy away from moving from the county to the high school as the next step in the analysis because it might be that they would want to close some high schools. He felt that it was much more sensible to go about it the way the superintendent had suggested. Mrs. Wallace thought they needed to know the classrooms they needed and go from the top down.

Mrs. Spencer remarked that she had another problem with the process of the top down which would cause the greatest disruption by starting with the high schools. She wondered whether they were going to have to end up dealing with more elementary school closures. Mr. Barse indicated that he had developed some language which he would provide to the Board. He asked that the Board be provided with copies of the O'Connor criteria, and Mrs. Spencer requested copies of the report of the committee on the comprehensive plan.

Re: Adjournment

The president adjourned the meeting at 11 p. m.

President

Secretary

EA: ml