



functions. The first was a solution, and the second was as a vehicle for further discussion and ultimate proposals. He said it would be a mistake to make the assumption that the decision had been made, because it had not been. He believed in the proposal, but he thought it was not the only one that could work. He wished that agreement had happened after the many hours the task force had put in.

The superintendent explained that last summer the Maryland State Board of Education rendered a decision on the appeals of Rollingwood and North Chevy Chase. It was a five to four decision affirming the action of the local Board on an interim basis but retaining jurisdiction while the local Board studied alternative long-range solutions. The date for the report to the state had been extended to March 2. The superintendent explained they were seeking sound educational programs with stability, a solution acceptable to all communities concerned, a solution meeting racial balance concerns, and a plan that was fair and equitable to all communities. He indicated his concern about the placement of the former Lynnbrook students in his recommendation. He said his proposal was based on two early childhood centers at Rosemary Hills and Somerset with the other schools being 2-6 schools. He believed the recommendation to be educationally sound and hoped it would provide stability. However, the task force could not agree on any particular proposal.

In regard to the former Lynnbrook students, the superintendent said he sent back the first version of the plan and asked that these students be included in the Bethesda feeder plan. However, this put Bethesda over 100 percent utilization and did not reduce the racial imbalance.

Mr. David Belkin, Bethesda (Lynnbrook), stated that five members of the task force had supported a statement although their position was not necessarily that of their PTAs. He explained that all of them sought to achieve racial balance on their schools in a way which was educationally sound, stable, fair, and acceptable to all communities. They were shocked at the idea that the best way to do this was by way of the wholesale movement of children in their cluster, and they felt that the superintendent's proposal resulted in no appreciable benefits. They rejected the final recommendation, and they would present a more detailed reaction at a later date. He pointed out that under the superintendent's recommendation a total of 70 Rosemary Hills kindergarten and first grade children would be able to attend their neighborhood school while 735 children from Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Larchmont, Lynnbrook, North Chevy Chase, Rollingwood, and Westbrook would be assigned to a primary school outside of their neighborhood. He said that 1,788 children would be put into a cross-county forced busing plan. The members who signed the statement rejected grade-level reorganization and agreed that all schools in the cluster needed to have a stake in the success of whatever program was placed in the Rosemary Hills building. They were interested in the Extension Center for Early Learning (EXCEL) plan which called

for Rosemary Hills as a Head Start for three-year-olds, a prekindergarten for four-year olds, and as the only kindergarten in the cluster. He said that under this plan all Rosemary Hills children would be eligible to attend their neighborhood school for at least two years and all other cluster children would attend Rosemary Hills for part of their elementary school education.

Mr. Belkin said that the superintendent's proposal was nothing other than a clusterwide grade-level reorganization in which their cluster was split into two sections, residents east of Wisconsin to Rosemary Hills and residents west bused merely for the sake of symmetry. He asked that the Board either develop the EXCEL plan or make modifications to insure the success of the current program at Rosemary Hills. He said they believed the superintendent's proposal was another step down the road to the destruction of public education. He said they were tired of repeating the same testimony time after time, only to have it ignored by the superintendent.

Mrs. Mary Lou McGee, Westbrook, explained she had chosen not to sign the statement although there were parts she agreed with. Westbrook had written a letter opposing the concept of grade reorganization. She said they had had only 24 hours to review the recommendation and although the plan removed children from Westbrook and placed them in danger of closing and while it was not their first choice, they could live with it if the intent was to continue Westbrook as a 2-6 school. However, if the intent was to give them only a year of grace they would join with the other communities in signing the letter.

Mrs. Mary Allen, Somerset, opposed the superintendent's final recommendation. She stated that her community was opposed to grade level reorganization. She further objected to the plan because it closed Somerset to 90 percent of the children in their community. Mr. Belkin commented that the schools west of Wisconsin did not have any say in the success of the program at Rosemary Hills. He felt they needed a clusterwide plan. Mrs. Maxine Pagliano, Rollingwood, felt that the center to the east of Wisconsin would lose children to the center west of Wisconsin, and Somerset would attract children from Chevy Chase and Lynnbrook who should be going to Rosemary Hills.

Mrs. Cathryn Wolf, Chevy Chase, reported that at her executive board meeting there was great negative reaction to the superintendent's recommendation. She felt they should go back to the status quo with modifications that would allow clusterwide participation. She thought the Board should consider the EXCEL program because it had great potential and all of them would have a stake in the success of the program at Rosemary Hills. She also commented that the program offered an opportunity for innovation at the Rosemary Hills site.

Mrs. Diane Novotny, Bethesda, stated that in the EXCEL program the communities were treated equally and schools were not pitted

against each other. In addition, the former Lynnbrook students remained at Bethesda.

Mr. Ewing asked the superintendent why he did not recommend the EXCEL program, and the superintendent replied that the EXCEL program had some possibilities and might be an alternative requested by the Board. He explained that he had to look at the needs of all the children and the plan was not equitable for the Rosemary Hills children.

Mr. Belkin stated that Lynnbrook had been consolidated with Bethesda in September, 1981 and had thought they would remain there. He felt that the consolidation was a success because of the welcome they had received and the tremendous efforts made by the community to make the consolidation a successful one. In fact, the superintendent had stated in a letter that the two schools were setting a fine example. Mr. Belkin stated that he expected the Board to live up to its end of the contract by keeping Lynnbrook at Bethesda.

Mr. Kenneth Kirk, Rosemary Hills, stated that he had several concerns about the EXCEL program. It was a voluntary program because school was not mandatory until students reached the age of seven. The program would depend on people who were concerned about sending their other children to Rosemary Hills. Rosemary Hills would not be a real school because it would only contain a kindergarten. He wondered whether Bethesda, Somerset, or Chevy Chase would accept such a plan in their school.

Mrs. Pagliano said that right now there was an objection in that Rosemary Hills students went to three schools, yet under the superintendent's plan they would go to four. With the EXCEL program the students would go to four schools. Mrs. Josie Kelly, North Chevy Chase, said that EXCEL would be competing with nursery schools which offered a program for five-year-olds. She was concerned about the curriculum because parents of pre-school children looked for different things in different programs. This might erode the majority adherence to the program. She was also concerned about the distances children would have to travel and about five-year-olds waiting for the bus.

Ms. Louise Rosenberg, Rock Creek Forest, explained that her school had tried to remain neutral. None of the plans affect them, and they were a 50 percent minority population school. She said her school had always supported Rosemary Hills and, if forced to choose, they would support the superintendent's plan which was not the first choice of Rosemary Hills. She said that while they did not object to EXCEL, they doubted people would put their children on a bus for only two years.

Dr. Cronin noted that the EXCEL program was substantially voluntary, and he wondered how they would avoid the closure of Rosemary Hills one or two years from now. Mrs. Pagliano replied that with such a large pool to draw from they could still stand to

lose a lot of children. It would be the only place in the cluster with a kindergarten program, and the cluster would have a stake in making it succeed.

In regard to the superintendent's plan, Mr. Belkin felt that families would buy homes to the west of Wisconsin. Under the EXCEL plan, it did not depend on where you lived because all students would be treated equally.

Mrs. Wolf said that the task force had reached consensus in opposition to grade level reorganization. She felt that the superintendent's plan was a massive grade level reorganization, involved moving children around, and did not necessarily create sound educational programs.

Mr. Ewing inquired about the preferences of the Rosemary Hills parents. Mr. Kirk replied that they did have some problems with the superintendent's proposal. They felt that the two successful programs should be established, the magnet at North Chevy Chase and the primary school at Rosemary Hills. They applauded the proposal to reopen North Chevy Chase. They had discussed the K-6 and 3-6 configurations, and there was agreement that the K-6 would be better for the program there. He said the fair way to reestablish the primary school was to have grade reorganization. Their initial position was an attempt to rework the superintendent's preliminary recommendation to make the numbers fit a little better. They had discussed the configurations including one with Rosemary Hills as a K-1, with all other schools 2-6. He felt that a K-1 configuration with two schools would be the least favorable of the configurations. He indicated that they would be having a general PTA meeting later in the week and could provide more precise information to the Board.

Mr. Al Britt, Rosemary Hills, remarked that if they were trying to come up with a compromise the EXCEL program only required the other schools to give up a half day of kindergarten in their neighborhood school. He said that the Rosemary Hills children were probably the most bused children in the county, but the parents were willing to work toward a solution. He felt that any solution had to be a two-way exchange, and he thought that a K-1 program would fragment Rosemary Hills because they would be participating in five schools in the cluster. He pointed out that even when Rosemary Hills was closed it was not that fragmented. He indicated that they had children in breakfast programs who would have to ride the buses before breakfast, and he wondered how the parents would get to these schools to participate in activities. He stated that the guidelines specified that one-way busing was not acceptable, but the plan called for one-way busing for Rosemary Hills for five years after the first grade. He felt there were alternatives that could be worked out. He did not see a concern for quality education but rather a look at the numbers of minority students at the end of the plan. Mr. Britt felt that they should look beyond the thresholds of numbers toward the idea of quality education.

Mrs. Pagliano stated that the task force had considered the concerns expressed by Mr. Britt. One of the first questions they asked about all plans was the effect it would have on Rosemary Hills. They had determined that racial balance across the cluster had to be as "balanced" as possible to allow for the movement of children. They had to look at whether the K-2 program was really the best education for Rosemary Hills because it had not been proven that it was. She felt there was no one way of best educating the Rosemary Hills children, and she felt that the present program was inappropriate for those children because of the high minority population and the nature of the program itself. She thought a primary school with a skills center was needed, but that it might or might not be at the Rosemary Hills site. She said that one of the problems faced by the task force was that they could not agree upon what they had to agree upon as far as ratios and the best programs for the various situations.

Mr. Ewing remarked that the Board was also in a quandary as to what all the parameters might be. He said that these had not been discussed recently; however, they did have some parameters expressed by the state Board of Education. He also noted that the Montgomery County Board was a newly constituted Board, and it would have been difficult for them to give the task force a set of parameters with which to work. He commented that they were all struggling for solution in which they did not yet know how to put values on all of the factors that had to go into the decision. He felt that the task force had a difficult job and had made some progress which gave the Board helpful suggestions.

Mrs. Peyser suggested that it would be helpful to hear from parents having children living in the Rosemary Hills community as to what their first and second choices would be. Dr. Cronin commented that it was the Board's mandate to educate children from kindergarten to twelfth grade. He wondered whether MCPS was geared to provide an education for three year-olds, and he was not sure why they would do this. Mrs. Novotny believed that children from disadvantaged backgrounds did benefit from early childhood education. She thought it would be worthwhile for a wealthy county to commit funds to a program if the program eased the racial imbalance. The superintendent indicated that he was concerned about the funding aspects of the proposals.

Mrs. Wolf believed that the financial investment was an investment for the future. However, the amount of money in the superintendent's final recommendation was a great deal larger than what the EXCEL program would cost, and the EXCEL program did not transport anywhere near 1,000 students. She felt that there was a lack of consensus among the Rosemary Hills representatives. Mr. Kirk explained that their preference was a K-2, 3-6 configuration.

Mr. Britt commented that Rosemary Hills had not had all their students in one school because part of Summit Hills went to Woodside. He said that with a K-2 and the current situation they would have mandatory participation in the program. However, a K-1 would not assure mandatory participation; and he

felt they had to look at the guidelines to assure that whatever they put in worked. Mrs. Kelly added that all schools would like to discuss the superintendent's recommendation with their membership. She said that those who had participated in the primary school and in the North Chevy Chase program felt strongly about both.

Mrs. Novotny indicated that some parents had objected to the smaller children being bused to Rosemary Hills and had suggested the possibility of a 5-6 school at Rosemary Hills. Mrs. Pagliano pointed out that a 5-6 would not fit into Rosemary Hills and would destroy the skills center program.

Mr. Belkin asked why the entire Lynnbrook population had to be moved out of a consolidated school. The superintendent replied that the capacity of Bethesda would not handle these students and there was an improvement in racial balance with their reassignment. Mr. Belkin felt that the overcrowding could be handled by using the old Bethesda library.

Mrs. Wolf felt that the introduction of the suggestion that the primary program at Rosemary Hills was an overwhelming success would not meet with the agreement of the parents at Chevy Chase. She noted that Chevy Chase at the moment was 40 percent minority and was indeed participating in the solution for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster.

Dr. Shoenberg stated that there was another group having a greater stake in the process, the children who had not yet started school. He wondered whether any effort had been made by the members of the task force to contact parents of preschoolers and, if not, whether that could be done in an informal way. Mrs. Kelly said that they were aware of the need to do that. He asked that the Board be provided with copies of all the options that had been considered by the task force. Mr. Ewing reported that Board members would be proposing alternatives on January 27. Dr. Shoenberg commented that he had been rather encouraged in the change in the tone of the meeting as the discussion progressed, and he hoped that when they next met they would start where they left off in tone and willingness to address the issues.

Mrs. Allen reported that she had polled her executive board and parents of preschoolers. They were opposed to grade reorganization because Somerset was a successful integrated K-6 school. Mrs. Pagliano said that Chevy Chase attempted to survey its membership and separate out the parents of pre-schoolers. It appeared they had a mandate for a K-6 school. Mrs. Novotny had also polled parents of preschoolers and there was support for the superintendent's plan or the EXCEL plan. However, there was objection to a plan that did not involve the whole cluster.

Mrs. Ann Rose explained that her function on the task force was to bring people together. They did find some common ground but not enough to reach agreement. She felt that this was a painful and

distressing process, and she hoped that the Board would bear with them as they tried to come up with an acceptable plan.

Re: Adjournment

The president adjourned the meeting at 10:40 p.m.

President

Secretary

EA:mlw