

conduct a portion of its meeting in closed session beginning on May 26, 1993, at 9 p.m. in Room 120 of the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, to discuss contract negotiations as permitted under Section 4-106, Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and State Government Article 10-501; and be it further

Resolved, That such portion of its meeting shall continue in closed session until the completion of business.

Re: LONG-RANGE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES
PLANNING - POLICY ANALYSIS

Dr. Rohr explained that this review of the long-range policy followed the Board's action on May 17 to adopt the Q.I.E. policy. The two policies were linked, and staff hoped to have a new long-range policy in place before the FY 1995 capital budget was considered.

Ms. Ann Briggs, director of the Department of Educational Facilities Planning and Capital Programming, introduced Mr. Bruce Crispell, demographic planner, who would be handling tonight's presentation. Ms. Briggs noted that the Board had last reviewed the long-range policy in 1986, and last May a review of the policy was begun by Board, community, and staff. On June 15, the Board would take tentative action on the policy, which would be distributed for public comment during the summer, with a public hearing scheduled for September 9 and final adoption on September 27. This evening they would look at six matrices regarding the policy which had been arranged to show elements of the existing policy and where changes were proposed. In re-examining the policy, she was struck by how long the policy had stood them in good stead and by how the policy tied together long-range planning issues to high quality educational programs.

Mr. Crispell reported that the first matrix was on Purpose which was supposed to set the basic goals of the policy. Staff was proposing to add the concept of the QIE policy and to clear up the language referred to educational programs. Mr. Ewing asked about the wording of the proposed changes, and Mr. Crispell replied that they did not have language prepared at this time. Ms. Briggs indicated that it would acknowledge the interrelationship of facilities policies to the other policies of the Board of Education. Mr. Ewing wondered what kinds of policies they would reference, and Ms. Briggs explained that they did not intend to be specific but rather to tie this policy into Board-adopted policies on educational programs. While Mr. Ewing did not object to this, he commented that it was hard to think they were not concerned with educational programs because this view permeated the entire long-range policy.

Mr. Crispell stated that the next matrix was on Issue and

provided background information. They would draft a short section on how enrollment and demographic changes necessitated facilities planning.

The third matrix was on Position, and Mr. Crispell said this would be a statement on desired standards, criteria and general processes to apply in facilities planning. They would continue the enrollment forecasts for six, 10, and 15 year periods and would add a revised on year forecast each spring.

*Mr. Sims joined the meeting at this point.

Mrs. Fanconi asked whether they would be able to use much of the wording in the current policy because she had been struck by how clearly that policy had been written. Ms. Briggs explained that they would be doing significant rewriting, but they would do their best to retain much of the current wording. Mr. Ewing noted that they would be reviewing identification of schools under the new QIE policy and not using the minority/majority figures differing from the countywide average. Mr. Crispell reported that they would be comparing enrollment against capacities and would also get this policy in synch with the new QIE policy. They would be employing the diversity profile and would show all data by the four major race and ethnic groups. The new long-range policy would refer to FARMS, ESOL, and mobility as well.

*Mr. Abrams joined the meeting at this point.

Mrs. Fanconi asked about reflecting special education Level 4 classes in the school profile, and Mr. Crispell said this would be included in the facility profile in addition to regular education, pre-kindergarten programs, joint occupancy, Head Start, etc. The demographic profile would include racial/ethnic composition, ESOL, FARMS, and school mobility. Mrs. Fanconi noted that as they moved more to inclusion this might change the utilization rates for the school, and Ms. Briggs agreed that this might happen and would be reflected in program capacity tables.

Mr. Crispell said that the next section was on community representation. Their first proposal was to continue with the cluster coordinators and PTA as the main representatives; however, they needed to establish a role for other community members and special interest groups as well as increasing the diversity of community representation. They needed to define when groups needed to be brought into the process. Their proposal was to continue with the PTA and parent groups, but they had thought about homeowners associations. One problem with homeowners groups was that their mission was to support other aspects of the community, not the schools, and also that these groups crossed school boundaries or did not exist in some parts of the county.

Mr. Sims asked whether they would consider adding students to the main group of those involved in facilities, and Mrs. Brenneman said she would like to expand the idea of community. The burden was now on the PTA, and the Board had talked about reaching out to the greater community including those without children in the schools. Ms. Briggs pointed out that some of these groups participated in the process now through letters and public hearings; however, they had to determine how and if less-than-full-time school users were going to be a part of the process.

It seemed to Mr. Ewing that there were several kinds of involvement in the policy. One had to do with who testified and that was pretty open. The second part was who sat on committees and set boundaries which was narrower, but as he read the policy it was not confined to PTA groups exclusively. The last part was who got notified about facility changes, and the school system did notify civic groups, municipalities, government agencies, etc. There were other groups including employees and advocacy organizations. He was not sure that advocacy groups such as special education received regular notices about facilities proposals. In addition, there were private sector businesses with a working relationship with the school system such as daycare providers. He would also suggest that students be added to the list. He was also concerned about the burden on the cluster coordinator when there were community controversies about facilities decisions.

Mrs. Fanconi recalled when the process was less proactive and school communities were not given advance notice of facilities proposals. At that time it was difficult for a community to get information, and it had been a very divisive situation. The situation had changed, and as a former cluster coordinator she would rather be involved in a productive exercise working with staff than to be in a reactive situation in a tight timeframe. She believed that boundary committees should be heavily weighted toward parents. She had seen situations where parents who no longer had children in the schools had wanted to be involved, but their knowledge about school situations was outdated. The ultimate decision had to be made with the people most affected although businesses and civic associations could give their point of view. She did agree that they had to reach out more to the special education communities involved in schools.

Mr. Abrams commented that he was in substantial agreement with Mrs. Brenneman's comments although he was sensitive to the issues raised by Mrs. Fanconi. In regard to the boundary committee, they might want to look to an early informational process where they were able to obtain community input early on but not shift the burden of responsibility on to the community. The biggest criticism he heard about the current process was that it was a abdication of an appropriate role for the system back in the

community. He had questions as to why cluster coordinators were given primacy as main community representatives. He thought their role should be a healing role to pull a cluster together after a decision, but there was often the view that coordinators were not impartial. He felt there was a strong need to bring in more diverse community representation, particularly future parents in the subset of non-PTA community because they would have to live with the decision. They needed a free flow of information back into the community as early as possible, and there should be a feeling that people were being heard. He would look for as broad a community representation without giving primacy to anyone on leadership.

As a former cluster coordinator, Mrs. Gordon stated that coordinators should remain one of the primary participants in the boundary change process because of the healing role mentioned by Mr. Abrams. If a person had not been involved throughout the entire process, it would be difficult to bring the community together. The role of the coordinator was to represent the interest of all schools in that cluster. She thought they needed to look towards additional community representation, and she suggested that when MCPS knew there would be boundary changes they should send information to the homeowners associations and civic groups rather than just the PTA. This did not mean they would be included on the boundary committee, but this should alert the community as to the process. She suggested that it would be a help to cluster coordinators to have access to information about the leaders outside of the school system in order for the coordinator to work with civic groups. She believed that parents, students, employee groups, or employees could be included in the process.

Mrs. Brenneman stated that she had heard that the present situation was better and that prior procedures were divisive; however, she had seen divisiveness with the Churchill, Wootton, Seneca Valley, and Sherwood clusters. They had outstanding cluster coordinators, but the burden was on the coordinators to notify parents. However, there was always someone who did not receive notification and directed their anger at the cluster coordinator. Being a cluster coordinator took a tremendous amount of time, and they might need to make some changes in that role and have staff assume more of the burden.

Dr. Vance recalled that when they had area offices the cluster coordinator and the area vice president worked in tandem with the area superintendent or his or her representative. At times the area offices resented the intrusion of the Planning Office because they did not know the community. He would support staff taking a leading role in this process, but they needed to restore staff to do this.

Mrs. Fanconi commented that one of her concerns was the use of their very limited staff. Ms. Briggs and her office could not do more. She thought that Mrs. Brenneman had a very good point on making some changes that would assist the cluster coordinators. They should look at developing some kind of official notification for every single cluster and standardize the process to notify everyone. Ms. Briggs said she was not as concerned about notifying the school community because they had a very elaborate and detailed way of doing that. However, they could improve the notification process for civic groups in a given area by being more specific in their mailing to these groups. Mrs. Fanconi thought it was the school community complaining about lack of notification. She said there might be other ways of notification. For example, when a zoning change was proposed a sign was erected. They might have a newspaper notice directing people where to call for information. The most important thing was for MCPS to take the responsibility for informing everyone with children in the affected schools.

It seemed to Mr. Ewing that staff competency in the area of planning had improved dramatically over the years. His first involvement went back 25 years with the first school closure when they did not have staff capability they had today. He pointed out that the process could moderate or exacerbate the divisiveness of change, but it could not eliminate it. If they had perfect information flowing to everyone all the time and ample staff to do everything well, it would still be divisive. He thought that the present policy had moderated some aspects of this and exacerbated some others. The principle was what they could do within their resources to moderate the things that irritated people without disrupting the whole policy in the process. Some people in the community still wanted to do the entire analysis, and other people said this was the system's job. He thought that they should ask people their views on this issue.

Mr. Abrams commented that one thing inherent in the political process when they were talking about perceptions of competency of data was the perception of that competency was clouded by the views of the political decision making at each level on the use of that information. It seemed to him they should look at how to generate within the process something that was sensitive to and overcompensated for those perceptions. They might want to think about evaluations of past decisions and the lessons learned and use that as a yardstick of quality of decision making. Dr. Vance commented that in regard to divisiveness for those living through the school closure period they had major divisiveness and some communities still harbored ill thoughts about the school system personnel.

Mr. Crispell stated that the next section had to do with what community representatives were involved in. The current policy

did not speak to site selection and facility design involvement although the community was involved. Staff thought that needed to be added to the policy. The next section was on enrollment standards. The most fundamental issue was the definition of enrollment in order to set standards to apply in determining the size of schools. They proposed to eliminate the term "regular enrollment" and use "enrollment." Enrollment would be everyone in the school with the exception of self-contained classes such as Intensity 5.

Mr. Crispell indicated that in the previous policy they had minimum or desired enrollment. They were proposing replacing those terms with a standard range within which they would plan schools. It would not mean that a school falling above or below was undesirable as implied by the current policy. At the elementary level it would be based on two to four classes per grade which would give them a range of 300 to 600. At the middle school level, it would be two to three teams per grade which give them a range of 600 to 1,100. For the high school, it would be 250 to 450 per grade, which gives them 1,000 to 1,800. Mr. Abrams asked how many schools would fall outside of those at each level. Ms. Briggs replied they probably had more schools outside the higher range. They had been building high schools with a core capacity for 2,000, middle schools for 1,200, and elementary schools for 800. Mr. Abrams asked about projections for existing high schools. For example, at Blair they were talking 2,600 to 3,000. Ms. Briggs replied that if they were looking long term they had schools that would far exceed that 1,600 to 1,800 range. As they had schools moving toward 2,100 or 2,200, they would not look in the direction of additions but at the potential for another facility at the high school level. At the elementary level they tried not to exceed 800.

Mr. Abrams stated that they heard the argument about the need to maintain a critical mass for a comprehensive high school. They were proposing counting in special programs, and he wondered what would be a critical mass to maintain programming for a comprehensive high school. Dr. Mary Helen Smith replied that in the case of ESOL centers they hoped students would learn English as quickly as possible to become integrated into the high school. They were looking at the notion that all students in the high school were part of that building and would contribute to the school population. The same thing was true with Intensity 1, 2, 3, and 4 special education students who were part of the school's population. Dr. Vance commented that it was difficult to develop a rule of thumb. In some high schools youngsters came out of the ESOL program and were eligible for honors and AP classes.

Mr. Abrams recalled that the Board had heard at Blair there was a need to maintain the community at a range of 2,600 to 3,000 to support that program. He was trying to relate that as well as the availability of AP classes in a school at the low range such

as Rockville High School. He wanted to know all of this fit together on changed definition for enrollment standards. Mrs. Gemberling replied that what they were attempting to do with a range was not to cite the exceptions. This did not mean that every school would be in that standard range. When a school did not, they handled those needs on a case by case basis to provide a comprehensive program. It was not necessarily a numbers issue but rather an examination of population needs. For example, Poolesville and Rockville received additional staff to maintain the program. Every high school had certain courses it had to offer every year, and they also had courses dependent upon enrollment. In some situations they could have 1,000 students and be running three or four AP courses a grade level, but they might have a school with 1,500 students and only one AP physics class. She assured the Board that this was a staffing issue and they would staff however necessary to make sure category one programs were offered. They had also used distance learning with Poolesville and Rockville.

Mrs. Fanconi thought that the high school numbers were too low. It seemed to her that the average size would be closer to 1,600 or 1,700 in a few years. She could not believe they weren't going to get high schools back up where they would be seeing graduating classes of 600 or 700. She did not understand using such a low number per grade at the high school. Mrs. Gemberling replied that staff had had the same discussion. They knew they would have schools of 2,000 to 2,200 and that they did not have the money to keep schools down to 1,600. Therefore, they would have to make adjustments; however, this was the best judgment of the program people for a range for the ideal comprehensive high school. They were not saying it was an absolute minimum or maximum. For example, when they talked about having a large Blair High School, they knew they would have to design the facility differently and program differently with schools within the school.

Mrs. Fanconi suggested that the Board needed an extra night just to talk about program size. She, for one, lacked the knowledge the program people had. This issue was coming up in the context of a facilities policy, but this was a very important issue for the Board. Dr. Cheung suggested that the staff prepare a brief paper to expedite the Board's discussion. Mr. Abrams said he would support the idea of another discussion meeting rather than have staff prepare a paper. Dr. Vance said that if they did have this discussion they could have principals of small and large high schools and those with diverse populations present to talk with the Board.

Mrs. Brenneman thanked Mrs. Gemberling for her comments. She liked the idea of a broad flexibility in the numbers. She recalled that when Rosa Parks was being built and middle schools were being built with an 800 capacity, but the County Council had

said to build them at 1,200 students. She wondered if by having the large range they would leave themselves open for the Council to drive the program because of the money issue. Mrs. Gemberling explained that the upper end was not as high as the facilities could accommodate.

Mrs. Fanconi thought they ought to have a discussion about the elementary schools. She would like to find out from principals with 800-capacity schools running at 1,000 students what that did to their ability to educate children. The Board should be able to say to the Council that this was working well or it had not worked out and the Board would recommend going back to a 600-capacity school. She said this was an important issue. They had moved to a smaller middle school, but she did not see a discussion of an optimal size for elementary and the high school.

Mr. Ewing observed that they could have the staff's judgment about what it was that size was a function of. For example, when they were a more homogenous school system, the size could be smaller. Today in the Blair situation they had size as a function of diversity. It was also a function of some intangible factors about students getting lost in a large school. Many believed that largeness meant a school was impersonal. They should discuss functions relating to size. If they had to build larger schools, they had to think about how they could be designed and operated in ways to take advantage of the possibilities for smallness within a large building.

Mr. Crispell stated that the current policy for the high school was 300 regular students per grade. A facility designed for 2,000 students would still be operating efficiently in their 80 to 100 percent range with an enrollment of 1,600. The last part of this matrix dealt with facility standards, utilization, and how they ranked capacity. There was general agreement they needed to get away from the 70 to 90 percent range for secondary schools and 80 to 100 percent for elementary schools. They were proposing a single type of capacity to calibrate all utilizations to 80 to 100 percent. Mrs. Fanconi asked whether this would solve the problem with the Planning Board and the Council, and Mr. Crispell thought it would help. Mrs. Fanconi asked for an example of this.

Mr. Crispell said the next matrix was on desired outcomes. They were recommending carrying the same objectives from the old policy and making them desired outcomes. They proposed adding an outcome for the role of the community in facilities planning. Another objective in the old policy was designed to promote equal access to programs for special students countywide, but the first part referred to services and resources which should not be in a facilities policy. Another place had to be changed because they mentioned the intermediate level which had to be changed to the middle school.

Mrs. Brenneman noted that the old policy talked about elimination of split attendance patterns. However, they now seemed to be increasing split attendance patterns. She asked whether this would be eliminated from the policy or be left in as a goal. Ms. Briggs replied that in all likelihood they probably would have more shared facilities throughout the decade. Mrs. Brenneman suggested it might be eliminated from the policy. Mrs. Fanconi thought the Board needed to think through how they would like to phrase it. If they did have to have split feeders, they might have parameters for doing this. They could say they would like to keep a large number of students together from elementary school to secondary school. Ms. Briggs pointed out that the first five pages of the policy dealt with growth, and the last five pages dealt with closure and consolidation. The wording on split attendance patterns was specific to closure and consolidation, and they might want to modify that to apply this across the board.

Mr. Abrams suggested they give some thought to normalizing split articulation. He pointed out that in public hearings people stated that the Board was violating its own policy when the Board considered split articulation. It might be worth their while to think of more neutral language regarding split articulation. Mrs. Brenneman thought that if they were to have guidelines they would have to be extremely broad.

Dr. Cheung asked that another meeting be scheduled to continue discussion on the policy analysis paper.

RESOLUTION NO. 422-93 Re: ADJOURNMENT

On recommendation of the superintendent and on motion of Mr. Abrams seconded by Mrs. Fanconi, the following resolution was adopted unanimously by members present:

Resolved, That the Board of Education adjourn its meeting at 9:10 p.m. to a closed session.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

PLV:mlw