

for information technology.

Dr. Villani pointed out that staff is looking at how they can best serve the needs of the teachers, principals, Board members, parents, students and staff who need all the information that MCPS will be gathering and sharing through the wide area network (WAN).

Ms. Seikaly stated that when dealing with a project this large and complex, implementors tend to think of the distance left to go rather than look at the distance that has been covered. She went on to illustrate by charts where MCPS was at this point last year, where MCPS is now, and where MCPS will be in FY97. Last year at this time MCPS had two schools wired, and this year there are twenty schools wired. Staff has five schools left in the FY96 to wire and all of those bids have been written. At this point, forty-one secondary schools received research learning hubs. Given the funding in the FY97 capital budget, staff expects to have complete research learning hubs in all schools.

Mr. Baugh briefly reported on the WAN over the past couple of years. One of the technologies MCPS has used is frame relay that provides connectivity between the school buildings and central office. Staff installed frame relay circuits in selected schools, Carver Education Services Center, Personnel Services, Food Services and the Office of School Administration. The plan is to install frame relay circuits at 45 sites -- 32 are SIMS and 13 are Global Access schools designated for this year. In CESC, staff has installed a systemwide, centralized router that provides frame relay access from this site to all the schools. Another important thing that this does is provide Internet access over a fiber optic link to NIH. Two Dec Alpha servers have been installed at CESC, and one Dec Alpha server at Montgomery Blair High School. These three servers will provide services such as access to the World Wide Web, FTP services, news feeds, E-mail using First Class, among other things.

Ms. Gutierrez and Dr. Cheung had questions regarding the LAN, WAN, and the ability of schools to update databases and download from the mainframe. Staff advised that there are 25 Global Access schools that would have full LANs. In addition to those 25, there are some modernized schools that also have LANs. The MCPS plan is that all schools will have WAN capability in the future.

Dr. Cheung complimented staff on their presentation and the number of schools and sites brought on line in terms of Global Access, research learning hubs, and also the WANs and LANs. Dr. Cheung asked where in the reorganization chart were the functions dealing with planning, evaluation, and technology assessment. Dr. Villani explained that assessment is done by the Department of Educational Accountability and strategic planning for technology is handled by the leadership team in the office.

Dr. Cheung asked about the implementation of technology in terms of output to help the Board improve the mission of education and improve the management and performance. Dr. Villani responded that the Board's guiding principle was an emphasis on accountability in developing applications and systems that will link financial information with student performance and/or personnel performance information so that managers have a comprehensive source of information in order to make policy and goal-setting decisions. At the present time, staff is working on developing an executive information system per the Board's directive by using the available information to build into the executive information system the ability for the executive to extract whatever information he or she wants to get the kind of report requested.

Mrs. King complimented staff for the enormous task they have accomplished. As far as updating Global Access schools, Mrs. King stated that technology improves every year, and she inquired as to how MCPS plans to update that technology. Ms. Seikaly stated that the basic configurations -- LANs, file servers, and/or the software -- is standard as of today. MCPS has negotiated licenses to include the upgrades. At the rate MCPS is implementing Global Access, it will be way down the road before we are ready to start the upgrade and staff will need to build upgrades in sooner. Dr. Villani added that MCPS tried to prevent obsolescence by using open architecture on the technology; therefore, the technology does not need to be replaced but the hardware can be upgraded, if necessary.

Mrs. King inquired about machines that are broken down and MCPS' ability to repair all the machines on a timely basis. Dr. Villani responded that there are three approaches in getting technology back on line quickly: (1) the local user support specialists that are in Global Access schools; (2) network services department; and (3) outside contractors.

Ms. Gutierrez questioned where MCPS stood with the original approach that MCPS had for a six- or seven-year plan. It was her understanding that for 1997, all schools would have research learning hubs and WANs. She asked where MCPS was on costs, the annual project figures, and how it is distributed in the different areas according to the plan. She added that it is an inherent part of any project review to report where the projects are regarding costs and schedule.

Mr. Bowers stated that the Board was provided with several scenarios in the spring regarding financial data per school. That data has been updated slightly with some newer cost figures but the costs are on target.

Ms. Gutierrez also inquired about home pages and connection with the Internet. Staff assured her that this technology will be

available soon.

Mrs. Gordon joined with other Board members to complement all staff who had worked so hard to get things up and running in the schools for staff and students when they started the year. She added that it took a tremendous amount of work. She also complimented the building staff and administration for their cooperation. She inquired about a focus on client service for the mainframe and whether MCPS would continue to use the mainframe to the extent that it has in the past or is MCPS looking at Global Access and these capabilities in local schools to do some of the things the mainframe did. Staff responded that they are definitely looking at a distributed database model; however, there are certain applications that should remain on the mainframe such as finance, payroll, and personnel. Within those systems, it is possible to make access to the mainframe more user friendly and more client centered.

Mrs. Gordon stated that she wanted to follow up on Mrs. King's question about maintenance of hardware and installation of software. If MCPS is spending time sending people out to do that, it could save time and energy and be more effective if school staff are trained. Dr. Villani responded that the school applications and network services teams are providing support. Local user support specialists will take on some of that responsibility in the schools where they are located.

Dr. Cheung pointed out that another area discussed by the Board was to establish special users, and expert panels who can share information. He made a plea to the staff that in development of the executive information system that staff consider a decision support system to help the Board or executives make decisions.

Ms. Gutierrez asked if everyone is scheduled to be on First Class and the Internet by a certain time. Ms. Seikaly replied that in a non-Global Access school a teacher would have to go to the research learning hub or have a computer and modem in either at school or home. Staff can use First Class for Internet mail but the only schools where full Internet access is available is the Global Access schools.

Mrs. King asked if there will be enough First Class accounts for more PTA members. Staff replied that two accounts were available for each school and added accounts for executive staff or special committees.

* Mr. Abrams temporarily left the meeting at this point.

Re: UPDATE ON CONTROLLED CHOICE

Mrs. Gemberling introduced Mr. Hickman, chair of the committee, who

introduced the following members of the committee: Susan Millroy, Ann Jelen, Cindy Waetjen, Phil Kaylor and Bridget McLeman. A final written report had been provided to the Board and the purpose of the meeting was to have Mr. Hickman and members of the committee highlight the report, share particular perspectives, and allow time for a dialogue with Board members.

Mr. Hickman expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to present the final report of the Controlled Choice committee. Mr. Hickman went on to say that the committee started on August 25, 1994, and it was charged to study the feasibility of choice. During their time together, members read voluminous amounts of material on choice plans in school districts from Seattle, Washington, to Indianapolis, Indiana, to Harlem, New York. The committee interviewed people who have had first hand experience in establishing choice for school systems. The committee discussed and debated the consortium approach from numerous and different aspects. The committee's thirty-one members and ad hoc persons include representatives from the PTAs of each of the three high schools included in the study area, community representatives, teachers, students, principals from each of three schools, and two attorneys from Hogan and Hartson. The three high schools in the consortium area are Paint Branch, Sherwood and Springbrook with the addition of the proposed Northeast Area high school.

Mr. Hickman stated that the formal presentation would be made by five members of the committee each representing one part of the study. First, the background presented by Susan Millroy (Sherwood); second, the overview of the survey by Bridget McLeman (Paint Branch); third, the definition of choice by Cindy Waetjen (Springbrook); fourth, a summary of conditions and concerns given by Ann Jelen (Springbrook); and fifth, a review of what is to be gained by the consortium plan by Phil Kaylor (community/parent); and finally, a wrap up by Bridget McLeman (Paint Branch).

Mr. Hickman stated that with strong conviction about the positive outcomes for MCPS students in a choice plan within a Northeast consortium, the committee recommends to the Board of Education a controlled choice model and urges that a planning and implementation committee be established. There was a second part to the recommendation that deals with the need to attach cost figures to the plan. The study has laid the groundwork for this data and it seems appropriate to begin gathering that information. Mr. Hickman believed that budgetary support for the Northeast consortium is within the county's current fiscal framework. He suggested that departments within the school system that are related to features within the Northeast consortium plan be instructed by the Board and superintendent to provide the financial data necessary for planing.

Mr. Abrams rejoined to the meeting.

Ms. Susan Millroy, Sherwood High School PTA Representative, gave a brief background of the Controlled Choice Committee's charge and findings. In the winter of 1993-94, the superintendent convened a PTA advisory committee for the purpose of studying secondary school space needs in the high school cluster in the eastern area of the county. Of particular concern was that Paint Branch, Sherwood and Springbrook would each be exceeding their operating capacity within the next several years. When a new Northeast high school was recommended to relieve these three schools, consideration was given to development of feeder patterns. To achieve the objectives of educational quality and diversity with traditional boundary changes, the committee was concerned that such a solution might entail busing students long distances, establishing non-contiguous service areas, creating split articulation from middle schools and/or disrupting communities that have experienced many other school assignments and changes in the past five years. After reviewing many options, representatives from the Paint Branch, Sherwood and Springbrook clusters requested the opportunity to study the feasibility of a new concept known as controlled choice as an alternative to traditional geographically based student assignments. That request was motivated by the educational benefits associated with choice.

As a result of the guidance from the community, Sherwood's position must be clearly stated as not wishing to develop as one of the choice high schools. The Sherwood representatives would like the Board to know that it was impressed by the merits of choice and it encourages the Board's support of further work on this concept for the schools that are interested.

Dr. Vance and Mr. Felton joined the meeting at this time.

Ms. Bridget McLeman, ad hoc Research Assistant, provided an overview of the committee. The committee looked at how controlled choice would be designed in ways that would suit students so that it was advantageous to academic enrichment and, yet at the same time, resolve boundary change issues that were facing the area. A Department of Educational Accountability survey was completed on behalf of the committee to build a profile of parents and families and what would make them choose, what would make them change from their current assignment, what would be attractive features in a school which might make them want to change, and whether specific groups would more likely choose than other groups. The opinions about choice were fairly consistent whether or not families were informed about choice and no one racial, ethnic, or socio-economic group was more likely to choose than another.

Ms. Cindy Waetjen, Springbrook High School PTA representative, provided the Board with the working definition of what controlled choice was in this particular situation. That definition includes specifics that we feel are critical to ensure the success of this

plan and it is broad enough to allow for creativity and innovation. That definition includes:

Controlled choice is a proposed plan for enrolling students into a senior high school by enabling students and their parents to select and apply to a high school of their choice. Choices would be controlled to create and maintain demographic and educational load balance at each of the schools. This balance would reflect the composition of the student community it serves. The geographic location encompassed by the study is the eastern section of Montgomery County currently serving students in Paint Branch, Sherwood, Springbrook, and the new Northeast area high schools.

The controlled choice plan would create equally desirable high schools. Each school would offer perhaps specialized programs and curriculum themes, a unique organizational structure, and/or a non-traditional daily course schedule. A controlled choice plan, offering alternative and innovative choices, would allow a student's special, basic, and extended needs to be met readily and more effectively than in any one traditional school. Administrators, staff members and their students have equally varied styles of teaching and learning. Creating school together, matching interests and styles by choice could promote harmony within the greater community and renew the commitment to education child.

Ms. Ann Jelen, Springbrook High School's PTA representative, listed the eight conditions that identify the components of the plan that would need to be addressed in the design of a plan for this particular area. Those conditions include:

1. The controlled choice high school attendance area must be clearly defined (particularly the area of the Sherwood cluster that will be included) prior to the design and implementation of controlled choice.
2. A transportation plan should be designed that ensures a means of transportation for all students to, from, and perhaps between campuses and that addresses activity bus use.
3. Comparable facilities and instructional resources must be provided at all schools.
4. Racial/ethnic balance and educational load must be established and maintained through a publicized control formula applicable in the controlled choice geographic area.
5. Equally desirable high schools must be created, each with a comprehensive educational program along with its own distinguishing marks.
6. School-based staff must have direct involvement in design, themes, and organizational structure of the school.
7. A commitment to fully fund the controlled choice plan must be made.
8. Implementation of controlled choice must coincide with the

opening of the Northeast area high school; however, established schools could begin formulating and phasing in their distinguishing themes as soon as possible.

Mr. Phil Kaylor, ad hoc member from Paint Branch High School, outlined the gains from controlled choice. He stated that boundary changes were just one topic; however, the real topic is a vehicle for change. The most important gain would be to better address the needs of all students. Another gain would be a very organized parent/mentoring program. However, the two most important ingredients are passion and planning. The committee feels that it is time to take the passion and add some planning to bring about innovations. MCPS could get still greater involvement by local businesses, Montgomery College, the University of Maryland, foundations, and the federal government. If the Board puts students together whose interests are the same, it will create a harmony never seen before. MCPS can become an innovator not only in the state of Maryland but in the country.

Ms. Bridget McLeman concluded the presentation by stating that the committee realized that many of these innovations are currently in practice in many individual high schools in Montgomery County. What is so special about this program and what makes it different and innovative is that it involves a large area covering about 4,000 to 5,000 students. The planning would be coordinated so that MCPS could use effectively and more efficiently the choice of electives. There would be a consistency of approach and students would have the opportunities to explore their individual interests.

The committee provided a central framework that sets out what could be done in the Northeast area. This plan is consistent with the long-range facility planning policy in that it rationalizes facility uses and balances enrollments. It is consistent with the QIE policy in that it has a living definition of demographic and socio-economic balance that does not need to be addressed year after year or as populations change. This new process would require a new policy.

The transportation costs will increase until 1998 regardless of what happens because there is a need for a new high school. Bus costs regardless of whether we have controlled choice will be significant. At present, MCPS special programs require busing students across the county, and the committee felt the educational significance for whatever choice selected would be consistent with the Board's policy.

Developing this plan can enhance MCPS' capacity to meet accountability requirements. This plan is consistent with the Board's policy on success for every student. There is no better way in which the Board can meet its goals and MCPS' students meet their goals and to have children maximizing their interests and

involvement in school.

Mr. Abrams left the meeting at this point.

Mrs. King asked if the Sherwood cluster is not willing to be a part of this whole plan, can it succeed without them? She also inquired about an appeals process. Mr. Hickman responded that the plan could succeed without Sherwood's full participation but an in-depth study as well as a design and implementation plan would need to be developed by staff.

Mr. Felton complimented the group for an exciting study. Mr. Felton stated that he did not like the term controlled choice and would like to see a more positive term such as multi-campus consortium. Mr. Felton also expressed concerns about Sherwood's desire to limit their participation.

Mr. Felton questioned the concept of the distinguished/signature programs and did the committee believe that once that evolves would there still be the traditional tie to the local school. Committee members stated their hope is that the community will get away from the local school concept and that there will be a clamor to get to the school that best serves the needs of each child.

Mr. Felton was concerned about racial and ethnic balance within each school, When dealing with signature programs or distinguished marks, the program itself will or may be more appealing to certain groups than others. He asked if there was any dialogue about which should be the priority. Committee members responded that is the whole control part of choice. The schools should be similar in diversity, educational programs, and capacity. People have to understand clearly what they are choosing. The committee was guided by the Board's own policy that in opening a new school there needs to be demographic balance between that school and its neighboring school. MCPS currently has highly diverse schools. The committee thought that one of the great things about choice is that diversity can be achieved without artificially forcing youngsters into a specific school and voluntarily design a choice system so that students get to choose what they want and in the process reflects the community in which it exists.

Mr. Felton asked about the ability to look at the management structure and see some savings. Ms. McLeman pointed out that one of the reasons choice schools are advocated is to create a free market competition. Areas of savings could be administrative procedures and office management systems regarding allocations and routing systems.

Dr. Cheung expressed his excitement and the chance to create an innovative new system. He agreed with Mr. Felton that controlled choice should denote a positive aspect. He commended the committee

for emphasizing learning, education, and academics as well as flexibility in choice. Dr. Cheung questioned which of the eight conditions were most costly and how should the eight conditions be prioritized. He went on to ask if a student could select two or three periods in one school than select another offering in another school. Mr. Hickman stated that the committee was eager to see MCPS do planning and then attach budgetary figures. At this juncture, once the actual planning for implementation is started, the planners may be surprised that it is not as costly as one would think before such a study. However, there is an immediate need to pay for planning and preparation for an in-depth study.

Ms. Gutierrez commended the committee on their presentation and stated that she had several questions. Her main concern was that the committee's response to traditional boundary changes problems developed a "vehicle for change" that moved students from one community to another. She was also concerned about students being astute enough to know what motivates them in order to make a decision. Ms. Gutierrez stated that the theory is, that with a variety of choices, there will be a natural mix from the different communities which are right now identifiable as separate communities.

Mr. Kaylor replied that it does two things: it might improve schools in a quantum leap because the Board allows it to and because the passion flows toward that dream and it simultaneously addresses a situation which was the charge of this committee to address unnatural boundary changes of the Northeast high school.

Ms. Miller also replied that each high school would offer a core high school program and any student attending any high school would get that core high school program whether they choose to participate in the theme or not.

Mr. Kaylor added that the committee's focus has shifted to improving the schools but the Board cannot lose sight of the fact the Board charged the committee with the responsibility of finding an alternative to unnatural boundary changes.

Ms. Miller added that balancing the schools demographically and having pockets of populations that would have to be moved to balance those schools is significant in drawing boundaries. The county will have pockets of communities being placed in different schools with noncontiguous boundaries based on the demographics of the community. The committee finds this unacceptable and the whole controlled choice concept has evolved into a very exciting opportunity to solve a really devastating problem to communities.

Mrs. Gordon stated that the committee had done an outstanding job and presented a creative and invigorating report. She stated that the other reality is that whether the Board goes with controlled

choice or does something else, MCPS will open a new high school. There are students in the Springbrook and Paint Branch clusters who already go past the closest school to get to attend another school. This is an issue that the community in the Northeast area has already dealt with. If the Board is committed to providing those kinds of opportunities for students throughout the county, we have the obligation to provide those kinds of opportunities for students in the eastern area of the county. The Board consistently hears that change has to take place in education and that across the country the Board is looking at educational change and innovation. It was her hope that the recommendation of the Board was to move forward and study controlled choice further.

Dr. Vance stated that he was very anxious to plan a process and include those extremely critical questions of the Board. With the Board authorization, the superintendent agreed to prepare an outline to plan controlled choice in the Northeast area by November 1, 1995.

Mrs. Gordon stated that the Board needs to study the plan in terms of the CIP and, if the superintendent does not bring a recommendation for further implementation, then he should bring in boundary change recommendations for this entire area.

The Board supported continuing to plan for controlled choice, having answers to questions that have been raised by the committee and Board members, and moving forward to plan. If the Board is not to go forward with controlled choice, then it is the expectation of the Board that the superintendent will come forward with boundary change recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

PLV:gr