

APPROVED
32-2004

Rockville, Maryland
October 25, 2004

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in regular session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Monday, October 25, 2004, at 8:05 p.m.

Present: Ms. Sharon W. Cox, President
in the Chair
Mr. Kermit V. Burnett
Dr. Charles Haughey
Mr. Walter Lange
Mrs. Patricia B. O'Neill
Mr. Gabe Romero
Mr. Sagar Sanghvi, Student Board Member
Dr. Jerry Weast, Secretary/Treasurer

Absent: None

or () indicates student vote does not count. Four votes needed for adoption.

RESOLUTION NO. 604-04 Re: **CLOSED SESSION**

On recommendation of the Superintendent and on motion of Mr. Burnett seconded by Mr. Romero, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

WHEREAS, The Board of Education of Montgomery County is authorized by the *Education Article* and *State Government Article* of the *Annotated Code of Maryland* to conduct certain meetings or portions of its meetings in closed sessions; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education of Montgomery County conduct a closed session on October 25, 2004, in Room 120 from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. to discuss collective bargaining negotiations, as permitted under Section 10-508(a)(9) of the *State Government Article* and Section 4-107(d)(2)(ii) of the *Education Article*; and be it further

Resolved, That the Board of Education of Montgomery County dedicate part of the closed session on October 25, 2004, to acquit its executive functions under Section 10-503(a) of the *State Government Article*; and be it further

Resolved, That this portion of the meeting continue in closed session until the completion of business.

RESOLUTION NO. 605-04 Re: **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

On recommendation of the Superintendent and on motion of Mrs. O'Neill seconded by Mr. Sanghvi, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

Resolved, That the Board of Education approve its agenda for October 25, 2004.

Re: **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The following people testified before the Board of Education:

| | <u>Person</u> | <u>Topic</u> |
|-----|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Deborah Kirkland | Boundary |
| 2. | Richard DiPippo | Boundary |
| 3. | Kate Marley Emery | Boundary |
| 4. | Stephen Szot | Hampshire Greens |
| 5. | Darnell Daisey | Boundary |
| 6. | Minya Zeru | Downcounty Consortium |
| 7. | Ricardina Mancco | Downcounty Consortium |
| 8. | Maria Rodriguez | Downcounty Consortium |
| 9. | Carlota Ocampo | Downcounty Consortium |
| 10. | Joseph Tilley | Boy Scouts |
| 11. | Jill Hsu | Boundary |
| 12. | Robert Bruffy | Boundary |
| 13. | Mary Tucker | Boundary |
| 14. | Deepa Chopra | Boundary |
| 15. | Jane Nickerson | Boundary |

RESOLUTION NO. 606-04 Re: **ARCHITECTURAL APPOINTMENT – WAYSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FEASIBILITY STUDY**

On recommendation of the Superintendent and on motion of Mrs. O'Neill seconded by Mr. Romero, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

WHEREAS, It is necessary to appoint an architectural firm to provide professional and technical services to conduct a design feasibility study for an addition to Wayside Elementary School; and

WHEREAS, Funds for this architectural planning were programmed as part of the FY 2005 Capital Budget; and

WHEREAS, An Architect Selection Committee, in accordance with procedures adopted by the Board of Education on July 14, 1998, identified BeeryRio Architecture + Interiors as the most qualified firm to provide the necessary professional architectural and engineering services; and

WHEREAS, Staff has negotiated a fee for the necessary architectural services based on the

project scope; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montgomery County Board of Education enter into a contractual agreement with BeeryRio Architecture + Interiors to provide professional architectural services for the Wayside Elementary School feasibility study for a fee of \$20,000.

RESOLUTION NO. 607-04 Re: SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOLS MAGNET CONSORTIUM

On recommendation of the Superintendent and on motion of Mrs. O'Neill seconded by Mr. Romero, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:#

Resolved, That the superintendent of schools be authorized to receive and expend, subject to County Council approval, an FY2005 supplemental appropriation of \$2,441,487 from the United States Department of Education, Magnet Schools Assistance Program initiative, for the Middle Schools Magnet Consortium.

| <u>Category</u> | <u>Positions</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|---|------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Administration | | \$ 42,966 |
| 2 Mid-level Administration | 5.2 | 690,383 |
| 3 Instructional Salaries | 3.0 | 640,129 |
| 4 Textbooks and Instructional Materials | | 84,343 |
| 5 Other Instructional Costs | | 777,160 |
| 12 Fixed Charges | — | <u>206,506</u> |
| Total | <u>8.2*</u> | <u>\$ 2,441,487</u> |

Positions

- * 1.0 Program Coordinator
- * 3.0 School Coordinator (B-D)
- * 0.5 Evaluation Specialist (B-D)
- * 0.5 Technical Analyst (25)
- * 3.0 User Support Technician II (17)
- * 0.2 Secretary (14)

and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the county executive and County Council; and be it further

Resolved, That the county executive be requested to recommend approval of this resolution to the County Council.

RESOLUTION NO. 608-04 Re: **UTILIZATION OF THE FY 2005 PROVISION FOR FUTURE SUPPORTED PROJECT FUNDS**

On recommendation of the Superintendent and on motion of Mrs. O'Neill seconded by Mr. Romero, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:#

WHEREAS, The grant qualifies for a transfer of appropriation from the Provision for Future Supported Projects, pursuant to the provisions of County Council Resolution No. 15-631, approved May 27, 2004; and

WHEREAS, The project does not require any present or future county funds; and

WHEREAS, Sufficient appropriation is available, within the FY 2005 Provision for Future Supported Projects, to permit the transfers within state categories; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the superintendent of schools be authorized to receive and expend, within the FY 2005 Provision for Future Supported Projects, as specified below:

| <u>Projects</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|---|------------------|
| Collaboration Council After School Activities Project | <u>\$ 52,900</u> |
| Total | <u>\$ 52,900</u> |

and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the county executive and County Council.

Re: **UPDATE ON THE DOWNCOUNTY CONSORTIUM**

Dr. Weast invited the following people to the table: Mr. Erick Lang, director, Northeast/Downcounty Consortia; Mr. Phillip Gainous, principal, Montgomery Blair High School; Dr. George Arlotto, principal, Wheaton High School; Ms. Jeannie Franklin, acting coordinator, Preferred Choice, Northeast/Downcounty Consortia; Ms. Barbara Armstrong, instructional specialist, Northeast/Downcounty Consortia; Grade 9 student, Montgomery Blair High School; and Grade 9 student, Wheaton High School.

The Downcounty Consortium (DCC) is an initiative that is part of the overall strategic plan to improve academic performance, narrow the achievement gap by race and ethnicity in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), and address student enrollment issues. The high schools in the DCC are Montgomery Blair, Albert Einstein, John F. Kennedy, Northwood, and Wheaton. This update on the successful initiative includes a description of the school-

choice process, a comprehensive marketing strategy, new courses, small learning communities in Grade 9, and themed academies in Grades 9 through 12.

The Choice option allows parents and students to select a high school based on the academy programs—unique and attractive instructional opportunities. Based on criteria established by the Board, students are able to choose from among five high schools. The establishment of base areas provides each student with a high school assignment associated with the student's residence.

Students who reside in the Downcounty Consortium are eligible to participate in Round 1—the first round of the school choice process. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) centers are located at each of the five Consortium high schools for those students who require services and these students participate in Round 1. High school assignments for special education students who require more than 15 hours per week of service are determined through the Individualized Education Program process. Private and home-schooled students who reside in the Consortium area may participate in the choice process in Round 1.

Approximately 2,100 students were eligible to participate in Round 1 of the 2004–2005 Downcounty Consortium student assignment process. Of the 1,906 students who submitted applications, 73 students did not receive their first choice school. This year, there were more students who requested Montgomery Blair High School as their first choice than there were seats available. Seventy-nine Grade 9 private school students enrolled in MCPS to attend Downcounty Consortium high schools.

The application deadline for Round 1 in year two of the Downcounty Consortium choice process is December 13, 2004. Parents and students will be notified of their school assignments during the first week of February. The deadline for Round 2 is March 14, 2005. Students new to MCPS after Round 1 and students who did not receive their first choice in Round 1 are eligible to participate in Round 2. Following Round 2, students may appeal choice assignments in writing. At that time, staff will review individual reasons for requests to particular schools.

The Downcounty Consortium staff and middle and high school staffs continue to build on the successful marketing campaign implemented last year. The plan for informing all segments of the community, including staff, parents, students, and the community in general is well under way for this school year. In September, *Milestones*, the Downcounty Consortium newsletter, was mailed to all Grade 8 students currently enrolled in Downcounty Consortium middle schools.

In October, the Downcounty Consortium staff hosted informational meetings designed to meet the unique needs of the Downcounty Consortium community. Eight parent and student informational meetings were held during October. Each meeting had six breakout rooms for

presentations delivered in Chinese, English, French, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Each breakout meeting included a facilitator, informational video, and PowerPoint presentation in the appropriate language. Other materials, including flyers in six languages, were mailed to homes prior to each informational meeting. An academy pathway book was distributed to provide a sample four-year plan for each academy.

In November, each high school will hold an open house. The open houses will allow Grade 8 parents and students to interact with high school staff and students and tour the facilities. High school staff and students will provide information on the unique aspects of their school. In early December, a meeting will be held for private school students interested in enrolling in one of the five Downcounty Consortium high schools.

The Downcounty Consortium Web site is designed as a one-stop shop for information about the choice process and the academies at each high school. The information on this Web site was translated into five languages to better serve the culturally diverse Downcounty region. Plans are in place for communication with local churches, real estate agents, and community organizations. Information on the choice process and the academies at each high school will be mailed to these groups. Offers to hold additional informational sessions will be provided.

Downcounty Consortium middle school counselors, in collaboration with school-based ESOL and special education teachers, developed a series of College and Career Exploration lessons. The lessons focus on applying decision-making and goal-setting processes, investigating personal abilities and interests, exploring the high school academies, and exploring post-secondary opportunities and future careers. Lessons were developed for each grade level in Grades 6–8, and two in-service meetings for middle school counselors, special education teachers, and ESOL teachers were held. The lessons are being piloted during the 2004–2005 school year. The Northeast Consortium/Downcounty Consortium staff, in collaboration with school-based staff, is committed to the continued development and implementation of the lessons.

Consortium leadership staff and the Department of Planning and Capital Programming staff work together to monitor demographic trends and student choice patterns in the Downcounty Consortium. The first year of choice for high schools was difficult to project because there were no previous trends in student choices to apply to the forecast. Enrollment at Downcounty Consortium high schools was projected to be lower this year than last year, as Northwood High School began to draw students out of the other high schools. The degree of this relief was not expected to be substantial because Northwood High School only opened with Grade 9. Preliminary 2004–2005 enrollment does show a slightly lower enrollment than last year at Albert Einstein, John F. Kennedy, and Wheaton high schools. However, Montgomery Blair High School has more students enrolled this year than last year.

Despite the opening of Northwood High School, enrollment continues to increase in all base

areas in the Downcounty Consortium, limiting the relief projected with the opening of Northwood High School. This pattern of growth is greatest now and will slow in the next five years to approach an enrollment plateau. Therefore, as Northwood High School fully phases in with Grades 9–12 by 2007–2008, Montgomery Blair High School and other Downcounty Consortium high schools will drop in enrollment. To ensure that relief is provided to overutilized schools, the student choice process may need to restrict non-base area assignments to schools that face overutilization. Consequently, student assignments into overutilized schools, like Montgomery Blair High School, from outside their base area will be more restricted next year.

Staff in the Department of Transportation worked long hours to ensure a smooth opening of the school year. Bus rides for Consortium students average 35 minutes. Some Grade 9 students have a bus ride as long as 60 minutes to areas at the outer perimeter of the Consortium. It is expected that travel time will be reduced as each grade-level of the Consortium is phased in and more buses are added to the fleet. Increased demand for ridership will create more direct runs to each high school.

In the Downcounty Consortium, there are two forms of small learning communities. Students currently participate in Grade 9 teams, and themed academies will be available to all Grade 10–12 students. In each case, students will be part of a cohort group that will share a common set of teachers.

Each academy has a specific focus and is designed to serve a student audience with a particular interest. Academies will serve all and will provide them with challenging courses and other academic opportunities related to their individual interests. In addition, with students organized into cohort groups with common teachers, students will have more opportunities for individual attention and authentic learning. Each academy also offers capstone programs such as internships, college-level credit for courses, senior research projects, and college/career portfolios.

The academies will be phased in over a four-year period. The Grade 9 teams and academy programs officially started in August 2004 with the first Grade 9 class to participate in choice. Some Grades 10–12 themed academy courses are being piloted this year. This model allows growth in the structure and curricula of the academies as they are phased in over this four-year period. Experience and time will allow for thoughtful and consistent implementation of the academy programs.

The Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs and the Office of School Performance work closely with school-based staff on the development of new courses related to the academy themes. Curriculum supervisors, curriculum coordinators, principals, resource teachers, and classroom teachers meet regularly to discuss the goals and content of proposed courses. On March 9, 2004, the Board of Education approved 12 new courses for

piloting. Additional courses are under review and will be presented to the Board later this year for approval to pilot. All new courses have been developed in alignment with the Board Policy IFA, *Curriculum*.

Connections is a Grade 9 transition/college-prep course that prepares students for college-level work as they develop an understanding of the relationship among their interests, skills, academic performance, and future college/career choices. Connections is the cornerstone course for Grade 9 teams at Downcounty Consortium high schools and was implemented as part of the USDE Small Learning Communities Grant. Connections teachers work collaboratively with ninth grade team members and other school staff to reinforce and strengthen academic skills for success across curriculum areas and to provide opportunities for college and career exploration.

The Connections curriculum provides teachers with resources and strategies to prepare freshmen for future success. The curriculum is aligned with curricula in other core subject areas, allowing teachers to work together to strengthen skills and help students apply these skills in other course work. Connections can be offered as a one- or two-semester course (Connections A & B). High schools have the option to offer student advisory, academy introduction, and/or community service components to enhance and expand the curriculum.

The Downcounty Consortium recently entered the final year of the three-year, \$1.9-million USDE Small Learning Communities grant. Funds from the grant are allocated to support the development and implementation of the academy programs. Funding includes positions to support academy leadership as well as funds to support curriculum development, professional development, and the purchase of instructional materials.

To ensure funds are in place to support the continued implementation of academy programs and the implementation of the choice process, the FY 2006 Operating Budget includes a request for local funding of positions currently funded by the grant. More specifically, the positions include 5.6 academy coordinators, 2.0 instructional specialists, and a 1.0 administrative secretary. In addition, a 1.0 registrar position was requested to assist with student enrollments at the Consortia Center. The new registrar will support the student enrollments for the Downcounty Consortium and the Magnet Middle Schools Consortium.

The establishment of the Downcounty Consortium is a collaborative effort among staff, parents, and the greater school community. Intense work is in progress to ensure successful implementation of the academies and the choice process. Based on the support and resources already provided by the Board of Education, it is clear that the success of the Downcounty Consortium is a high priority. Work is proceeding on schedule. Because of the importance of this critical initiative, the Board will continue to receive regular updates on the progress of the work in the Downcounty Consortium.

Re: DISCUSSION

Mr. Burnett thought there was good news and bad news about Montgomery Blair's enrollment since more students chose that school. He asked if there will be a leveling out through the choice process in the next year. Mr. Lang replied that development of the programs at the high school level will provide more choice for students.

Mr. Burnett asked if the Connections Course is taught by content teachers throughout the consortium. Staff replied that the trend is that an increasing number of teachers who have a strong content background are teaching the Connections Course since skills cannot be built in isolation from content.

Mr. Sanghvi reported that previous students had a problem with the Connections Course. It looks good on paper, but the implementation is not where it should be. The mandatory course was not helping all students, and the students who would do okay were being held back. The students see it as a waste of a credit. Students thought the course should not be mandatory, and staff could reach out to those who would benefit from the course. Mr. Lang stated that the course is different than in the past. Feedback from students, parents, and teachers has been folded into the revised course. The intention of the course is to prepare all students for rigorous course work by teaching new skills and strategies for academic success.

Mr. Sanghvi asked about the avenue to get this kind of information through counseling services, especially for the students not attending their base area schools. Finally, information about the school and staff could be disseminated through assemblies at the beginning of the year.

Dr. Haughey thought the Connections Course would be more beneficial in the eighth grade rather than the ninth grade. Are all youngsters required to complete the course or are there waivers? Is there an objective long-term evaluation of the course? Mr. Lang replied that the course is mandatory, but there is a waiver process. An evaluation is ongoing through the grant and will be completed next year.

Mr. Romero inquired about the counselor ratio, especially with ESOL students. The students feel they do not have enough time for guidance. Staff responded that there are two designated counselors for the ninth grade team. The counselors are seeing more students and attend all team meetings. Thus, it is an organizational and efficiency issue, not a staffing issue.

Mr. Romero congratulated staff on the parent outreach and asked how the middle school career exploration was related to child development. Staff stated that all material is age-appropriate. The course starts an investigation into opportunities and expands vocabulary and self-awareness.

Mr. Lange believed that education should be interesting and relevant. He agreed with Dr. Haughey that the Connections Course should be offered earlier than the ninth grade. He hoped it would lead to an acceptance of responsibility among students for their own learning. The smaller learning communities will require a smaller ratio of staff to students. Is that sustainable with current staffing levels? Mr. Gainous replied that it requires a reorganization of the school into small groups, a new scheduling process, and a different use of staff.

Mr. Lange pointed out that high school staffs have been resistant to team and interdisciplinary activities, and the culture has to change. Mr. Gainous stated that teachers are excited because the new concepts work.

Mr. Lange asked if every ninth grade student is in smaller learning community. Mr. Gainous responded that there is only one exception this year, and all other students are on a team.

Mr. Lange inquired about student motivation and eligibility for extracurricular activities. Mr. Gainous stated that the interims show that 50 percent fewer students are getting two or more "E"s. Staff was hopeful that could be sustained through report cards and exams.

Mrs. O'Neill pointed out that the Board made the right decision to include Wheaton High School in the consortium. As a parent, she was skeptical about committing a year for the Connections Course because of the required courses for high school. She thought it should be offered in the eighth grade. Mr. Gainous said his school has the Connections Course in place of physical education in the ninth grade.

Mrs. O'Neill believed that teaming is a good concept, and she wanted to know if second semester teachers stay the same in order to be connected to the students. Mr. Arlotta replied that the ninth grade academies are connected for the entire year.

Ms. Cox thanked staff for its tremendous amount of work, and said it was gratifying to see the beginning of success. There is confusion in the community between the learning communities and academies. Do all students have to choose academies? If they do not choose an academy, how is the connection maintained? Mr. Gainous replied that all Blair students choose an academy. However, some students will switch, and they will be in more than one academy.

Ms. Cox asked if there was an effort to maintain adult connection other than the guidance office. Mr. Lang responded that staff is looking at that, and it is a huge scheduling issue. Through a series of meetings, there is an expectation that technology can help solve the problem.

Ms. Cox asked how interims were distributed to parents/students. Mr. Gainous replied that

Blair decided to provide ninth grade interims every three weeks, and the computer program produces interims in three languages.

Ms. Cox asked about the data on the reduction of students with two or more "E"s. How will the data be interpreted for those students who did not show that reduction? What needs to happen to make that improvement? Mr. Gainous stated that there is a homework support program for those who have academic difficulty, and for some students, it is mandatory.

For those receiving more than one "E", Ms. Cox inquired if there was a consistency based on characteristics, such as special education, ESOL, or poverty. Mr. Gainous replied that the only consistency is that those students come to the school with a severe lack of reading skills.

Ms. Cox asked about the Web site and feedback on Connections Course. Staff stated that had not been much feedback since the school year started.

Ms. Cox wanted to know if students are required to select an academy at Wheaton High School. Mr. Arlotta stated that the school does not have the capacity for that at this time; over time, the plan is to build added academies.

Ms. Cox asked about the issues with adult/student connections. Mr. Arlotta replied that each academy has a supervisor to coordinate students and data. If they are not in an academy, students are in a traditional high school setting, and constraints are based on schedules.

**Re: UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUMS
AND STRUCTURE OF OPERATING BUDGET
HEARINGS**

Dr. Weast invited the following people to the table: Dr. Frieda Lacey, deputy superintendent of schools; Mr. John Q. Porter, deputy superintendent for strategic technologies and accountability; Mr. Larry Bowers, chief operating officer; Ms. Aggie Alvez, director, Department of Communications and Public Information; Mr. Roland Ikheloa, staff director to the Board of Education; and Dr. Marshall Spatz, director, Department of Management, Budget, and Planning.

On February 10, 2004, the Board of Education adopted a set of recommendations from the Research and Evaluation Committee to change the process for public involvement in the development of the MCPS strategic plan and operating budget. The Board's goals included encouraging greater public involvement in long-range strategic issues and emphasizing public involvement in the development phase of the strategic plan and the operating budget, instead of primarily in the critique phase following the superintendent's presentation of the operating budget.

As a result of this initiative, the Board sponsored three community forums: September 9, September 23, and October 7, each held in the auditorium of the Carver Educational Services Center from 7:00 until 10:00 p.m.

Each forum began with a welcome by Ms. Sharon Cox, president of the Board. Each evening focused on one or more goals of the strategic plan: Goal 1 on September 9, Goal 2 on September 23, and Goals 3 and 4 on October 7. A deputy superintendent or the chief operating officer introduced the goal for the evening, explaining how the strategic plan reflects the goal or goals and the status of work toward achieving specific performance measures. After this, invited speakers representing key stakeholders/organizations made opening statements on the strategic goal or goals identified for that evening. While many of the speakers represented organizations that have regularly testified in the past at Board public hearings on the operating budget, many speakers represented organizations relatively new to the process. Some speakers did not deliver their entire statements orally because of time constraints.

After completion of opening statements, the forum was divided into six breakout groups for more detailed discussions of the issues raised in the introductory statements. Approximately 100 participants (parents, staff, students, and community members) attended each forum and took part in the discussions. Participants addressed three principal questions: 1) What strategies and initiatives are on target to achieve the goals? 2) What's missing or falling short? 3) How can MCPS communicate the goals and objectives of the strategic plan more effectively to the community? Staff facilitated the discussions and took notes as necessary to supplement the work of the scribes. After about one hour of discussion, the breakout groups reassembled in the auditorium to report on their discussions.

The forums resulted in substantial feedback on issues involving the strategic plan. Because there was such a variety of opinion, it is difficult to categorize or summarize all of the conclusions. There was a consensus that early childhood initiatives and increased rigor in the curriculum are on target. Strategies that need further improvement were identified specifically for children with special needs, including special education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and gifted and talented programs. In addition, many participants cited a need to improve counseling and mental health services. There also was a consensus that more needs to be done to communicate the strategic plan internally and externally, and a variety of suggestions were made for ways to accomplish this. After the forums, additional feedback was received in writing and through the MCPS Web site. Seventeen comments were received that were consistent with the concerns raised in the forums.

In addition to participating in the small-group sessions, forum participants were given the opportunity to write their responses to the three guiding questions and to evaluate the strategic planning and budget process. Many of the written comments followed the same pattern that surfaced during the breakout sessions. With regard to the level of satisfaction with the

process itself, 97 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that:

- ! the purpose of the forum was well communicated to all participants;
- ! during the breakout session discussions, everyone was encouraged to participate; and
- ! overall, the forum achieved its stated purpose.

In addition, 94 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the reports from the breakout groups accurately described the participants' input. Overall results indicated that people were pleased with the process.

All forums were videotaped and aired on cable Channel 34 in September and October. The MCPS Web site was updated regularly with information about the forums. In addition, the Web site provided a means for people to send staff comments.

This initiative reflects the efforts of the Board and the superintendent to improve parent and public participation in education reform in Montgomery County. Specifically, the strategic plan forums responded to Board core governance policy ABA, *Community Involvement*, and Goal 3, Strengthen Productive Partnerships. The forums speak to the Board's commitment as stated in this policy: "This interest and support can best be secured and maintained through good communication between school and home and through citizen involvement in decision-making...." In addition, the forum process reflects Policy KBA, *Public Information*: "MCPS shall assess periodically the informational level, attitudes, expectations, and needs of Montgomery County citizens with respect to their schools...."

Significant follow-up activities will take place before the completion and release of the operating budget in December. The feedback from the forums will be presented by executive staff at meetings with a variety of stakeholder groups, either at regularly scheduled meetings of these groups or at special meetings arranged to discuss the strategic plan input. These meetings will occur over the next two months. As part of his operating budget presentation on December 15, 2004, Dr. Weast will address how the priorities and initiatives in the strategic plan are included in the operating budget. In addition, the Board has scheduled public hearings on the operating budget on January 13 and 20, 2005.

Re: DISCUSSION

Mrs. O'Neill was impressed with the level of commitment of those who came to the forums. It was important that various stakeholders hear each other's priorities. However, the best part was the break-out sessions and the dialogue.

Dr. Haughey commended staff who compiled all the information from the break-out sessions. He thought it was a positive process, and it has build a fine foundation on which to build next year.

Mr. Sanghvi was pleased that students participated, and they had a lot of good things to say about the forums.

Mr. Romero concurred with his colleagues and their comments. He read the *resolves* to emphasize the change in budget hearings. Ms. Cox reported that the MCCPTA leadership is collaborating with MCPS on changes to the structure of the hearings over the coming years. Mr. Romero thought another advantage was to hear the concerns of more people in a systematic way, and he was pleased to have community participation much earlier in the budget process.

Mr. Lange was pleased with the summary that captured all the information presented at the strategic planning forums. He was impressed by the presentations since they were mature and responsible. The dialogue in break-out sessions was critical.

Mrs. O'Neill noted that some comments centered on closing the gap and class size, and she thought it would benefit people to know the dollar amount for their suggestions.

Ms. Cox thought that when people have a better understanding of the strategic plan, it will be easier to make the connection between the strategic plan and operating budget. One way to do this is to make the connection when the budget is presented.

Mr. Burnett believed the value in the process is the continuation of Board's willingness to seek public input and participation. The Board has sought input on policies and special education. This gives the public time to present their input early in the process which will lead to public support for the budget.

Ms. Cox thanked staff for the forums as well as for inviting people and encouraging them to attend. There is a need to help people make the connection between strategic plan and the operating budget. Perhaps, the focus should be on the outcomes the Board is striving to accomplish. The emphasis is support for the strategic plan and confidence that the operating budget supports the plan. Also, MCPS should be able to demonstrate that the budget contains no elements that are unrelated to the strategic plan.

**RESOLUTION NO. 609-04 Re: UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUMS AND
STRUCTURE OF OPERATING BUDGET HEARINGS**

On recommendation of the Superintendent and on motion of Mrs. O'Neill seconded by Mr. Sanghvi, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

WHEREAS, The Board of Education held three public forums on September 9, 23, and October 7, 2004, to seek input on the strategic plan; and

WHEREAS, The strategic plan serves as the foundation for the Superintendent's Recommended Operating Budget and the Board of Education's Operating Budget Request; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Education is committed to seeking broad-based input from stakeholders on matters of public concern; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Education has scheduled two public hearings regarding the operating budget; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education will hold public hearings on the FY 2006 operating budget on January 13 and 20, 2005; and be it further

Resolved, That the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations, Montgomery County Education Association, Montgomery County Association of Administrative and Supervisory Personnel, SEIU Local 500, municipalities, and elected officials will be allotted five minutes for testimony; and be it further

Resolved, That all PTA clusters will be allotted a five-minute slot on one of the two evenings; and be it further

Resolved, That other organizations and individuals who call the Board office will be provided a three-minute time allotment; and be it further

Resolved, That for the public hearings on the FY 2007 operating budget, anyone wishing to testify, including PTA clusters, will be required to call the Board office.

Re: BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Dr. Weast commented that student achievement will be improved through efforts that include extensive use of volunteers from the community to serve as tutors. The new Ruth Rale Reading Tutorial Initiative was made possible in part by a pledge of \$270,000 from Joshua and Debby Rales of the RFI Foundation.

Mr. Lange said he participated with the Montgomery County Network of Partnership Schools. It is a collaborative effort between Johns Hopkins University to facilitate training for parent outreach.

Ms. Cox outlined the process to fill the Board vacancy created by the resignation of Dr. Henry Lee.

RESOLUTION NO. 610-04 Re: CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTION

On recommendation of the Superintendent and on motion of Mrs. O'Neill seconded by Mr. Sanghvi, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

WHEREAS, The Board of Education of Montgomery County is authorized by the *Education Article* and *State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland* to conduct certain meetings or portions of its meetings in closed sessions; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education of Montgomery County conduct a closed session on Tuesday, November 9, 2004, in Room 120 of the Carver Educational Services Center to meet from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. to discuss personnel matters, as permitted under Section 10-508(a)(1) of the *State Government Article*, consult with counsel to obtain legal advice, as permitted by Section 10-508(a)(7) of the *State Government Article*; review and adjudicate appeals in its quasi-judicial capacity; and discuss matters of an executive function outside the purview of the Open Meetings Act (Section 10-503(a) of the *State Government Article*); and be it further

Resolved, That such meetings shall continue in closed session until the completion of business.

RESOLUTION NO. 611-04 Re: **REPORT OF CLOSED SESSION**

On recommendation of the Superintendent and on motion of Mrs. O'Neill seconded by Mr. Sanghvi, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

On October 12, 2004, by unanimous vote of members present, the Board of Education voted to conduct closed sessions as permitted under the *Education Article* § 4-107 and *State Government Article* § 10-501, *et seq.*, of the *Annotated Code of Maryland*.

The Montgomery County Board of Education met in closed sessions on October 12, 2004, from 9:15 to 10:00 a.m. and 1:15 to 2:05 p.m. in Room 120 of the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, and

1. Reviewed and adjudicated the following appeals in its quasi-judicial capacity outside the purview of the Open Meetings Act (Section 10-503(a) of the *State Government Article*) with a subsequent vote to approve in open session: 2004-58.
2. Discussed the Human Resources Monthly Report and Appointments with a subsequent vote in open session, as permitted under Section 10-508(a)(1) of the *State Government Article*.
3. Considered the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto, as permitted under Section 10-508(a)(3) of the *State*

Government Article and Section 4-107(d) of the *Education Article*.

4. Discussed matters of an executive function outside the purview of the Open Meetings Act (Section 10-503(a) of the *State Government Article*).

In attendance at the closed sessions were: Aggie Alvez, Larry Bowers, Sharon Cox, Charles Haughey, Richard Hawes, Roland Ikheloa, Don Kress, Frieda Lacey, Walter Lange, Henry Lee, George Margolies, Pat O'Neill, Brian Porter, John Q. Porter, Lori Rogovin, Glenda Rose, Sagar Sanghvi, Matt Tronzano, and Carey Wright.

RESOLUTION NO. 612-04 Re: **LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM**

On motion of Mrs. O'Neill and seconded by Dr. Haughey, the following legislative platform was adopted unanimously:

The Montgomery County Board of Education has adopted this legislative platform for the 2005 session of the Maryland General Assembly. The platform provides a vehicle for summarizing the Board's positions on priority issues without precluding the consideration of additional legislative and budget issues that arise during the legislative session.

School Construction

The FY 2006 State Capital Improvements Program (CIP) request for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is \$125.5 million. This figure is based on current eligibility of projects approved by the County Council in May. \$38 million of this request is comprised of projects for which MCPS has already received state planning approval and unquestionably should receive state funding. The balance of the \$125.5 million (\$87.5 million) is for projects that will require state planning approval, but already have been approved for funding by the County Council. The projects are being requested for both state planning approval and construction funding.

Of the \$38 million for state-approved projects, \$3.4 million is for projects that have received partial state funding in a prior year; \$32.7 million is for projects that have received state planning approval; and \$1.9 million is for systemic roofing and HVAC (heating/ventilation/air conditioning) projects.

Public policies designed to address the critical early years through initiatives such as mandatory full-day kindergarten and targeted part-day pre-kindergarten programs, require more classrooms, and more state school construction dollars. Based on MCPS capital improvement needs, the following points also need to be considered during public policy deliberations on this subject.

- Funding is needed for systemic projects, such as roofing and HVAC. As indicated above, \$1.9 million is needed for these projects in FY 2006.

- The state's capacity formula and square-footage-per-pupil allowance need to reflect the realities of new state and federal education mandates.
- MCPS has utilized, to the fullest, the Aging Schools Program. Since the program's creation, the interiors and exteriors of schools have been painted using monies from the grant that now amounts to just under \$1 million annually for MCPS. A moderate increase in the program would go far toward giving more schools a much-needed face-lift.
- The number of relocatable classrooms has increased with enrollment growth and class-size reduction initiatives, rising to 720 in Montgomery County for the 2004-05 school year. Of the 720 relocatable classrooms in use, 470 are used for enrollment growth, 205 are used for class-size reduction, four are used for full-day kindergarten, and 41 are used to accommodate child care programs. Enrollment growth translates into more than 17,000 students being taught in temporary facilities. The best way to address the increased reliance on relocatable classrooms is to provide more state aid for school construction.

State school construction funds continue to be inadequate to meet the substantial and growing capital funding needs of MCPS (\$125.5 million for FY 2006) and other school systems across the state. Given the magnitude of the additional financial needs, support has broadened for the state to take on more debt to pay for school construction. The Board of Education supports consideration of the expansion of the state's bonding capacity to fund school construction projects to meet the growing facilities needs across the state.

Education Funding

The Montgomery County Board of Education is committed to improving student performance and closing the achievement gap. While achieving these goals requires a significant increase in resources, the county has shown its commitment by providing additional funds to reduce class size, expand full-day kindergarten, increase special education services, and improve reading and math instruction.

The Board of Education strongly supports full implementation and funding of the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002. Monies should be identified to fully fund the Bridge to Excellence Act as envisioned by the Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence, including the Geographic Cost of Education Index, in FY 2006 and beyond. Efforts to decrease state funding or extend the phase-in period should be opposed. Consideration should also be given to passage of legislation that requires increasing local contributions consistent with the adequacy goals of the 2002 law.

Special Student Populations

MCPS and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) share costs incurred for providing appropriate special education services for students with significant educational disabilities who are served in nonpublic schools. Prior to FY 2005, the local school system funded 300 percent of the average per pupil cost plus 20 percent of the excess costs of the nonpublic tuition. Through the Nonpublic Tuition Assistance Program, MSDE has funded 80 percent of the excess costs of financing nonpublic school tuition. In the 2004 legislative session, this funding formula was revised by increasing the local share of costs to 300 percent of the average per pupil expenditure plus 25 percent of the excess tuition costs. Though the formula change is only in effect for one year, the result has been an increased fiscal burden to MCPS in excess of a half million dollars.

The Board of Education opposes efforts to increase the local share of nonpublic placement tuition costs for local school systems in FY 2006 and beyond. The MSDE Nonpublic Tuition Assistance Program has been beneficial in supporting our obligation to provide appropriate services to students who require intensive special education programming.

During the 2004 legislative session, the General Assembly also modified the reimbursement formula for educational services at the state Regional Institutes for Children and Adolescents (RICA), located in Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties, operated by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Instead of a flat amount of reimbursement, the legislature instituted reimbursement based on rates used to reimburse nonpublic special education placements. Because costs centrally maintained in nonpublic school accounts are scattered among many cost centers in public school systems, the information needed to calculate the reimbursement formula is generally not easily or precisely available in current budget systems. In addition, staff is not currently available to handle the complicated administrative procedures during the school year to maintain individualized student records to qualify for reimbursement billing.

Because the new RICA funding formula increases the administrative burden on local school systems that provide educational services at the RICA sites, the Montgomery County Board of Education requests a simplification of the new formula to parallel the system currently used to contract for spaces in nonpublic placements with a large number of locally funded special education students.

State legislation (HB 99, 1998) initiated the Autism Waiver Program through the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene beginning in July of 2001 for an initial three-year period. The waiver was intended to prevent the institutionalization of children with autism spectrum disorder by providing medically necessary services at home and in the community. On October 1, 2004, the federal agency responsible for Medicaid programs approved a five-year renewal of the waiver. For the next five years, the Maryland State Department of Education will assume the fiscal responsibility for some of the wrap-around services that were previously

paid by the local school systems during the initial waiver period.

The Board of Education continues to support legislative and budget initiatives, such as the autism waiver, that provide critical services for families to maintain children with disabilities in their homes and communities.

Early Childhood Education

Launched in the 2000-2001 school year in 17 schools, the MCPS Kindergarten Initiative now involves all Title I schools with kindergarten programs and many other schools with a high proportion of low-income students. Seventeen new schools have implemented full-day kindergarten classes for the first time during the 2004-05 school year. This brings to 73 the total number of schools offering full-day kindergarten to students – well over half of the 117 elementary schools in the school system with kindergarten classes. With the current expansion, the school system is on track for full-day kindergarten in all elementary schools by the state deadline of fall 2007. Full-day kindergarten is part of the MCPS Early Success Performance Plan for Pre-K through Grade 2 to raise the bar for all students and provide them with the skills and knowledge to succeed in reading, writing, and mathematics. Local, state, and national assessments have shown MCPS students from all racial and ethnic groups achieving at higher levels in kindergarten and sustaining their performance through early elementary grades.

The Board of Education supports state funding of innovative public early childhood programs that demonstrate the ability to further academic achievement standards and goals and opposes efforts to modify the early childhood requirements under the Bridge to Excellence Act.

Staffing

Since 1998, school systems in Maryland have been permitted to rehire teachers and administrators who had retired from their own or other Maryland public school systems without having the rehired retirees suffer reductions of their retirement benefits. The laws permitting this rehiring without penalty expired on June 30, 2004, as the General Assembly ran out of time before legislators could agree on a bill. Efforts to again adopt laws permitting rehiring of retirees under limited circumstances will be considered in the 2005 legislative session.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports the reenactment of legislation permitting the rehiring of retired teachers and administrators, particularly when staff are needed to provide experienced help and leadership in schools that are at risk of not making “adequate yearly progress” under the No Child Left Behind Act, in Title I and other high-needs schools, and for subject areas where there is an inadequate supply of qualified teachers.

As envisioned through passage of the Bridge to Excellence Act, the teacher retirement program should continue to be maintained as a state-funded categorical program and enhancements to the program should be considered. The Board of Education opposes any shift in funding responsibility for teacher retirement costs from the state to county governments and local schools systems.

Opposition to Public Funding for Private Schools

Nonpublic schools are neither subject to state accountability measures nor to the same legal requirements as public schools, such as those set out in special education laws and teacher certification regulations. With the many unmet needs in public schools, state funds must be used to meet the continuing and growing needs of public school students in Montgomery County and throughout the state.

While acknowledging current federal mandates for use of public funds for public school students in Title I schools, as well as public funding provided for public school students educated in nonpublic special education placements, the Board opposes the appropriation of public funds for private and parochial schools and direct aid to private and parochial students.

Local School Board Authority

While the state Board of Education establishes, through regulations, broad statewide policies and mandates, it is the responsibility of the local board to establish policies and procedures for the public schools within its jurisdiction. Likewise, it is the authority of local boards to develop curriculum within the broad guidelines set by the state Board. The program of studies in each school system is developed as a whole and is linked to state and local assessments. Legislative proposals that speak to public charter schools can only be supported to the extent that the proposals reaffirm that the sole authority for establishing public charter schools is vested in local boards of education. Efforts to expand charter school authority beyond local schoolboards or otherwise weaken academic or fiscal accountability requirements should be opposed.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports local control of educational policy, administration, and curriculum, and opposes any legislative initiatives that have the effect of reducing local and state Board authority or creating unfunded mandates. By retaining decision-making authority at the local level, a local board of education can best balance educational practices, available resources, public input, and accountability.

Re: **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

RESOLUTION NO. 613-04 Re: **ADJOURNMENT**

On recommendation of the Superintendent and on motion of Mrs. O'Neill seconded by Mr. Burnett, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

Resolved, That the Board of Education adjourn its meeting of October 25, 2004, at 11:00 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JDW:gr

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION SUMMARY SHEET

October 25, 2004

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