

why EPI was created. FLES was established in 1975 to provide language instruction. This year 61 schools participated, and 2,230 students were enrolled in French and Spanish. However, parents were concerned about articulation into the middle school, because students were not allowed to continue a language in sixth grade. Therefore, parents had asked that FLES continue in the middle school. They were now serving two schools, and next year they would add three more. The cost was \$70 for classes from October to May.

Dr. Pitt commented that he hoped to put them out of business in the sixth grade in a year or so. He complimented them on their program, and he agreed that it was important to look at the middle school situation because more and more schools were becoming middle schools. He indicated that he would put emphasis on languages in the middle school a year from this budget.

Mrs. Katz stated that she hoped Hands-on Science would never go out of business because there was a place for extracurricular science. The growth in the program had been phenomenal. They were projecting 673 classes with close to 7,000 students participating. She showed the Board a teacher's kit which had been packaged by a sheltered workshop in Prince George's County, and she explained that they had received their second grant from the National Science Foundation to support their activities. One of their goals was to show children that things do not come in push button form. Each class ended with a mystery word to add to the children's vocabulary, and the kits used materials found in homes. Mrs. Katz showed Board members the contents of one kit for studying anatomy.

Mrs. Katz explained that they did have a program for four- to six-year olds in the summer. In addition, they worked with Q.I.E. to provide scholarships. They wanted to get children interested in science at an early age, and she indicated that class numbers started to drop in the fourth through sixth grade when fewer girls enrolled. She explained how the title of a class could "turn off" girls from enrolling if it sounded too technical.

Mrs. Hobbs inquired about the number of ESOL students enrolled, and Mrs. Katz replied that they did not have those figures although about 30 percent of their students were visibly minority. They had translated their application forms into Spanish and Vietnamese to attract more students. Mrs. Praisner asked about handicapped students. Ms. Janet Frekko, associate director, told her that they had a large number of hearing impaired students enrolled as well as one blind child. Mrs. Katz added that they also had a number of children who had been labelled as learning disabled.

Mrs. Smith invited the area vice presidents and Mrs. Charlotte Wunderlich to the table. She expressed her thanks to the Board of Education and the cluster coordinators for a successful two years of being president of MCCPTA. She had found that being president was a full-time job but a rewarding one. She wanted to take this opportunity to share with the Board MCCPTA's perspective on class

size. This had been an issue for many years, but this year it had become their focal point in discussions with the County Council. A year ago the state PTA also decided to make class size an issue with the state Board of Education. A group had been formed, and Montgomery County's representative was Mrs. Wunderlich. She asked Mrs. Wunderlich to share her perspectives on class size and also to give an overview of information she had garnered on the effects of reduced class size.

Mrs. Wunderlich reported that she had participated in a committee of school funding which quickly got into the issue of class size. She had prepared a summary of information on the effects of and feasibility of reducing class size in the Montgomery County Public Schools. She said that among the benefits of reducing class size were a reduction in stress and improvements in attitudes, behavior, and achievement.

In regard to improving achievement, Mrs. Wunderlich had done an ERIC search because there were many schools of thought about the effects of a class size reduction. The consensus was that if they looked at group averages they might not see any statistical difference, but individual students did receive extra help. She cited terms used in the various data bases which included caseloads and how that affected qualities, workload shedding which meant someone was overloaded and had to set some priorities, prevention vs. cure and the idea of investing in preventing problems, priorities which meant making budget choices, cutback management meant shifting of resources, and resource allocation which included where the resources would have the most impact on students.

In response to Dr. Shoenberg's question regarding "other" schools, Mrs. Wunderlich reported that a couple of months ago she had seen a list of schools in the Harrison survey. In addition, she had personally surveyed other school districts. Dr. Shoenberg noted that the Harrison list for the most part contained very small school districts in jurisdictions that were wealthier than Montgomery County. These were bedroom communities supporting their schools and willing to pay more taxes. He wondered whether these communities offered the range of programs that MCPS did. For example, Montgomery County could reduce class size within the present resources if they cut out a whole lot of special programs like TAPESTRY, Integrated Arts, etc. He would also want to know what kind of a special education program these districts were supporting because, for example, in New York these programs were managed by the state rather than individual jurisdictions.

Dr. Shoenberg said that the issue of class size became a question of whether they were going to shift resources or add new funds. If they were going to make a substantial reduction in class size, they would have to take all the improvement money they had available and for about years put this into class size reduction. They would also need the classrooms to put the teachers in. So this was a capital budget issue as well as an operating budget issue. The alternative was to take resources from existing programs and put them into reducing

class size. He did not think the community would stand for the latter.

Mrs. Wunderlich replied that as far as the issue of new classrooms they had discussed this at the state level. In some schools, if they were overcrowded they might be talking about aides or team teaching. She explained that they were really talking about providing more individual attention to children. She thought that in the poorer districts they provided lower class sizes through resource shifts. Dr. Shoenberg said he would question whether these districts were offering special education, gifted and talented programs, art, music, and physical education.

Dr. Pitt noted that Fairfax County had a six-period day and MCPS had a seven-period day. This required 14 percent more staff. If they went to a six-period day and maintained that same staff, they could decrease class size.

Mrs. Wunderlich reported that in her discussions with suburban districts there was a sense of surprise that Montgomery County might have 28 to 32 students in a class. A lot of districts had adopted a limit of 25 students. Dr. Cronin wondered what reaction they would get if they added \$25 million to the budget to reduce classes by five students. Dr. Pitt commented that they could have an average class size of 25 right now, but principals used their judgment in assigning classes. The tendency was to reduce classes where students were not achieving well and up the class size for those who were achieving at a higher level. In other school systems with one or two high schools, the system made decisions about teacher assignments and class sizes. He pointed out that they could use people other than teachers to reduce class size which was much more efficient in terms of costs. The other issue was to move a lot of nonclassroom personnel to the classroom.

Dr. Cronin wondered what the reaction would be in the community if they started with the idea of adding \$20-25 million to the budget, limiting programs, or ending seven-period, or looking at salaries. Mrs. Smith replied that he made the assumption that if they were going to reduce class size the only options were to remove the very things they wanted.

Mrs. Smith stated that last year their goal was to increase communication. This year it was to focus on the family. She noted that there were 29,000 volunteers in the classroom, and 82 percent of those were parents. Parents in Montgomery County were acutely aware of what was going on in their schools and how the school system was burdened with a lot of social and economic problems and social change. This was not just in Montgomery County but in the nation as well. She noted that the Board set priorities which appeared to be driven by a budget instead of the Board's driving the budget. The reality was if the Board could do things differently, they would. Parents were saying that they could not continue to say that society had problems. They knew society had problems. Parents were beginning to say they should stop talking about it and bite the

bullet. She pointed out that the PTA could not reach families and Social Services could not reach families. The school system had the children the longest next to the parents. The school system was burdened economically with trying to meet the needs of many children and families. Parents were beginning to recognize that the school system might be the only ideal place as of 1989 to begin to meet the needs of these children.

Mrs. Smith reported that they had pushed to increase elementary school counselors, and they had asked for increased psychologists. They were willing to go and fight before the County Council even though they knew that those resources did not have a direct relationship to education. They were also aware there was an indirect relationship. Because of the way the county was set up, they were willing to fight for the MCPS budget because of critical needs that must be met. However, the amount of money going into education was getting less and less. In the county it would be down to 45 percent of the budget when it used to be over 50 percent. As the population of children grew in Montgomery County, it made no sense that the budget to meet their needs was getting smaller. Most people who did not have children in public schools thought that the \$6,000 per child was actually going to educate children. Parents were aware that the \$6,000 was covering many other needs of these children.

Mrs. Smith pointed out that when they had students with problems such as ESOL, the immediate thing they did was to put this group into a smaller class size. They did this to give these children more individual attention. Parents knew it would be expensive to reduce class size, but there were creative ways to give the children a sense that someone was really paying attention to them. They were saying that there was no one way to reduce class size, but they needed to continue to put some money into just education which was constantly being cut. Therefore, they had asked Mrs. Wunderlich to look at how other school systems were reducing class size. She asked that the Board not continue to piecemeal education. They were looking for vision from the Board of Education as their leaders in education. Mrs. Phyllis Feldman remarked that it was becoming increasingly apparent that they had no argument with the Board of Education. The Council was becoming the obstacle. She sensed there was still a lot of misinformation around as to who held the purse strings in the county. They needed more funding, and they had told Council members that they needed a tax increase.

In regard to class size, Mrs. Wunderlich pointed out that David Elkind had suggested class size be 18 and lower. He was talking about getting the administrators in the classrooms in the local schools because the problem was critical. She hoped that Montgomery County would find it possible to get more individual attention to children.

Mrs. Smith recalled that last year when Dr. Pitt had come out with his four-year plan parents were very receptive. Inclusion of class size in the plan was encouraging. MCCPTA recognized that because of

capital improvements that they could never get down to 18 to 1 at every single class and have all these resources. They were trying to say that the nation needed to face the fact that education was going to cost money and that children were under tremendous stress. She hoped that they would be able to convince the County Council that they had to be partners. The Council had just as much impact on where the county was going to go in meeting the needs of society. The school system had been burdened with this.

Dr. Cronin stated that he thought they had had an agreement with the Council about elementary school gymnasiums, but somewhere the logic had shifted and they had lost practically all the gyms. Mrs. Smith recalled that that agreement had been made three years ago, and Mr. Hanna had changed this. Dr. Cronin commented that Dr. Pitt's four-year plan also had certain predications built in from the County Council.

Mrs. Praisner reported that this was not the first multiyear plan for class size reductions. She endorsed the concept of a multiyear design, but she resented the implication that this was the first time the Board had done that. This had been done in previous budgets, but this was always cut by the Council.

Dr. Shoenberg remarked that when they put effort into something year after year it made them a little defensive when they were unsuccessful. While the four-year plan showed where some of their priorities were, things such as asbestos, New Hampshire Estates, and Broad Acres came along that they also had to deal with. He did not think the list represented a vision of any kind, but it did represent some sense of direction. Mrs. Wunderlich had listed a number of advantages in reducing class size. For those students who were most at risk, they had reduced class size enormously. MCCPTA was concerned about the other students who were under stress. He agreed that reducing class size would to some degree contribute to the reduction of stress and might deal with behavior problems and attitudes, but he wondered whether reduction in class size was the thing they could do to serve best to deal with some of these societal problems. He was not convinced that that was the case.

Mrs. Smith asked about other solutions. There was a tremendous community interest in the schools, and they supplemented the budget in the schools. However, they had parents who were really trying to do too much and more than what they should be doing. All she knew was what they were doing now did not seem to be the right thing. In regard to reducing class size or providing another instructional person in large classes, Dr. Shoenberg wondered what it was that those people were going to do that would have an impact on problems of drug and alcohol and on pressures students had in facing a lifetime where they would not do as well as their parents did financially. What impact would this have on students who were holding down jobs in order to have money to buy material things or on students living with single parents, divorcing parents, and parents who both worked? This assumed that the adults in the classroom were going to spend some portion of their time addressing those kinds of

issues rather than helping students to learn more and better.

Mrs. Janet Garrison commented that a reduced class size would improve the self image of every child. If they had a correct class size, they would not have a bright child overlooked by the teacher. Children would be better equipped to deal with these stresses and better able to say no to drugs or alcohol. She did not see it as a matter of reducing stress by taking off an academic load. They had students graduating who could not spell, could not do percentages, and could not complete sentences. Dr. Pitt pointed out that children were graduating a lot better than they were ten years ago. There were problems throughout the country, but there were a lot of good things happening now. He suggested they focus on how they could improve those good things. There were students who did not write, but 15 or 20 years ago those students would have dropped out of school.

Dr. Cronin commented that it could be that reduction in class size did give attention to the child. However, he was not sure this reduction would help them deal with drug and alcohol abuse and with abused children. About a month ago he had met with the directors of the human resources providers in the county. Next Thursday he was going to meet with Mr. Kramer and after that with some Council members to look at how the county provided youth services. He hoped to start an umbrella organization that would take a good part of that out of the school system and integrated services. This would pull in a variety of volunteer agencies.

Dr. Robert Perry stated that they could brag about the success of programs in which they had reduced class size. This was part of the Rosemary Hills reorganization, and the program had done marvelous things. He felt that things were being done for the character of all the children at school because teachers and aides had more time with fewer children to reinforce certain kinds of attitudes and behavior. There was evidence that this program was working because they had set some limits and had provided some extra support in the classroom. Mrs. Wunderlich commented that identifying needs of children started in the classroom. If there was an aide or a smaller load for the teacher, the need would be spotted earlier. The teacher could not solve the need but there were other services. Class size had a direct influence on identifying problems.

Mrs. Praisner said she was convinced they needed to do some things to look at the class size issue. Because of her experience with other school systems, she was convinced that it was difficult to compare school districts. Therefore, she resisted applying data on school districts. She knew a number of the districts on the list supplied by MCCPTA, and she was not sure how accurate those statistics were. She also had a discomfort with the budget process. Things came to the Board during the budget process that should be discussed at other times. The class size issue was one that deserved a different kind of discussion. Any discussion of class size had to get into the issue of choices, and choices associated with changing the way they did things now as opposed to just adding to what they did now. In

order to sell and fund something, it had to have some legitimacy to it for the funding agencies. It had to have some weight and strength to it that would allow it to continue and exist beyond one budget, one Board, and one Council. It was important for them to talk about class size as a component of a lot of issues. They might talk about aides or taking other resources like curriculum specialists and using them back in the classroom. She thought that perhaps the flexibility pilots would also show some direction of alternatives for organizing schools. They might look at smaller pupil/teacher ratios rather than the issue of class size. She did not think they could discuss these strategies and issues during the budget process. It was important that MCCPTA be a major player in the discussion, but she would caution about drawing assumptions based on someone else's research.

Mrs. Sharon Friedman stated that she was bothered because the burden of attending to this problem was unduly resting on the school system. There was a wealth of resources available in the county, and it was a shame that the service package was not better coordinated. A parent should be knowledgeable of where they could go for assistance other than the classroom teacher. She was pleased that Dr. Cronin had started on the road of coordinating services.

Mrs. DiFonzo remarked that she had attended a school district that was on the list supplied by MCCPTA. She was curious to find out what educational revolution had happened in that blue collar town to cause that school system to have a pupil/teacher ratio of 18 to 1. A few years ago friends had reported classrooms with 34 to 35 students. They did not have the add-on programs that Montgomery County had.

Mr. Goldensohn reported that his wife taught sixth grade in a new school with a very small sixth grade. She now had 22 students in class, but the fourth and fifth grade classes were running at 27 and 28. She had said that the difference of five children was night and day. While it did not make it easier for the teacher, it did make it possible for the teacher to do a better job. While the county needed coordination of services, the first person the parent turned to was the classroom teacher. A good teacher would put parents in contact with a counselor, the principal, or some county agency. If his wife had a larger class size, it would be harder for her to spot problems. Mrs. Smith appreciated the candid conversation. She pointed out that they would not work so hard to support the school system if they did not think it was outstanding. She knew there were limitations with the budget, and she asked that MCCPTA be kept informed so they could support the Board. She was pleased to see Mrs. Praisner's proposed resolution on the budget.

Mrs. Elayne Clift, special needs chairperson, reported that two years ago when she came in there were 33 special needs chair people at the local level. Last year there were 67 chairs. She gave recognition to the parent information training center and Pat Coffin and Stan Fagen. This year they had almost 100 chairs. They had created an infrastructure which was working, and she asked for the Board's support. They had very good area chair people. She met with them three times a year, and there were three area meetings each year.

They had countywide meetings three times a year as well. Those meetings were for program purposes and for sharing information and advocacy training. This was a parent group that was very, very informed. She had challenged the notion that Montgomery County was a leader in the nation. She thought they needed a comparative study on their special needs program because what she had heard was anecdotal and resting on past history. In many respects they might be a model, but they could not continue that defensive posture with respect to their programs.

Mrs. Clift thought that there was a lot that could be done with adaptive materials and the curriculum. In regard to smaller class size, she pointed out that special needs children were at double jeopardy. If their needs were not picked up, they would never regain that time. If they failed a child, they failed that child 100 percent. If they failed a child, they had failed all the children. They wanted to meet the needs of these children at the individual level, at the school level, and within the community. This year their final meeting would be an awards ceremony to recognize individuals and programs. There were 11,000 diagnosed children with special needs in the county.

Mrs. Clift reported that she heard the most about transportation issues, psychologist services, and the notion of adaptive curricula and materials. The Level 4 speech and language children were a year or two years behind grade level and this was unacceptable. Another issue was that resources were driving the diagnosis and the coding. There were children who were not being coded or diagnosed because of the lack of resources.

Mrs. Smith reported that the Board had been invited to their delegate assembly meeting on fund raising. She hoped that the evening would be a success and that they would all have a better understanding of the situation.

Dr. Cronin thanked MCCPTA for meeting with the Board. He extended congratulations to Mrs. Smith on her leadership of MCCPTA.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

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

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

HP:mlw