



setting one community against another. She indicated that in the last section of the report they had developed recommendations to the Board. Mrs. Lefkowitz said it had been suggested that they discuss the recommendations and, if the Board wanted, it could direct the staff to respond to the suggestions. She pointed out that some of the recommendations would require Board action.

Mr. Ewing commented that he would have found it helpful if there had been a tabulation of the results of the survey. Mrs. Lefkowitz replied that she had 57 pages of the original response tabulations; however, they felt that they could not put numerical values on these because they were afraid they would draw conclusions that were not valid. In regard to the item on awareness of the role of socioeconomic factors, Mr. Ewing requested more information. Mrs. Carbone explained that this was a request that the Board be sensitive to the fact that not only budgetary considerations were involved in a consolidation. Mr. Ewing asked why they had not mentioned racial balance, and Mrs. Carbone replied that they wanted the Board to be sensitive to a broad range of considerations.

Mrs. Spencer asked whether they had listed all the different comments that had come in. Mrs. Lefkowitz replied that every idea returned to them was listed in the compilation of the survey. Mr. Ewing asked whether there were things in the list of recommendations which suggested the Board ought to change the way it applied the policy or change the policy itself. Mrs. Lefkowitz called attention to the section on timing because communities were more comfortable when a school was closed if they knew what was going to happen and when. They had also discussed whether students from the closed school should be absorbed into the receiving school or whether there should be a new school; however, they had received responses on both sides of the question.

Mrs. Spencer asked whether they could tell whether some people felt their school was very good in its present form. Mrs. Lefkowitz replied that if the receiving school was unhappy with its present principal it welcomed the new school concept. She added that many principals looked at the closure process as an opportunity to renew themselves in a new situation.

Mrs. Dianne Brasile asked about specific guidelines for the placement of the upper level continuum education classes because parents did not know where their children were going and the schools did not want these classes. She also inquired about special preparation of the staffs to receive these classes. The superintendent replied that this was supposed to happen as part of the process, and if there were places where this was not being done he would like to hear about them. Mrs. Zappone pointed out that where there was mainstreaming some efforts had been made to keep the groups together. Mrs. Brasile felt that those groups needed to know where they would be next year, and the superintendent agreed that they would try to do this first.

Mrs. Lefkowitz said that parents were also very concerned about what was going to happen to the faculty of the closed school. Another

area was PTA donated materials and the regulation on the placement of these materials. Dr. Pitt replied that they had had some discussions on this, and it was a problem when one school was closed and consolidated into several schools. He said that if one school had two computers and the other had one, they would move the computer from the closed school to the one with only one computer unless there was a question of the enrollment in the school. Mrs. Lefkowitz pointed out that there was a lot of PTA donated equipment out there such as refrigerators and microwave ovens, and she suggested that they look at a way of dividing up the equipment.

Mrs. Zappone asked about their impression as to the responses they received from the survey as to whether things were working well or everything was terrible. Mrs. Carbone replied that the responses were mixed, and there was no trend one way or the other. Mrs. Lefkowitz felt that the response depended on how effective the school was before it closed. The superintendent agreed that people who were happy with their school would be unhappy when the school was closed. He asked whether there was some way they could isolate the schools on a case-study basis. Mrs. Lefkowitz replied that a lot of the responses had to do with how well the community was informed about the process, how strong the principal was, and how both communities worked together on the consolidation.

Mrs. Carbone suggested that there should be some method of involving parents even though the school was no longer in their community. Dr. Pitt remarked that one of the suggestions was the idea of assigning a specific area staff member to be involved in the consolidation. The superintendent agreed to provide the Board with a staff reaction to the MCCPTA paper. Mrs. Spencer requested that this be included on an upcoming agenda.

Mrs. Lefkowitz reported that there were also problems with transportation. Dr. Greenblatt suggested that they consider a letter to parents stating that they would be informed about transportation during the summer. Mrs. Spencer added that in those cases where some of the children would be walking to a different school the boundaries should be described. She said that principals and the Board had recently received the MCPS guidelines for closed schools, and she thought they should receive the MCCPTA report as well.

Mrs. Wallace commended the members of the MCCPTA for their report and the many hours of work they had put into it. She felt that the report went hand in hand with the Board's review of the policy itself and hoped that prior to that time the Board would hear from MCCPTA. She hoped that MCCPTA would help the communities over the two-year period involved in the closure process.

Mrs. Lefkowitz reported that the last time the school system had reduced from five to three areas they had to redo their organization and since the Board had been talking about clusters of schools they changed to three areas with area vice presidents and a coordinator for every high school. She thought that they should hear from the cluster coordinators as to how this new organization was working.

Mrs. Nicole Oeschger, Northwood cluster coordinator, explained that the majority of the schools in her cluster were involved in some way in the closure process, and they were working hard to make some sense of where they were going. She said that some of the schools had acting principals who would have to be replaced which was one of their concerns. In addition, they wanted to have information on closures a little bit earlier.

Mrs. Wallace asked whether they were finding that the cluster concept worked and whether they had easier access to the area superintendent. Mrs. Adrienne Clifton replied that the rapport between the clusters and the PTA was excellent, and they did have very good access to the area office. Mrs. Wallace asked whether the workload in the areas had been eased because of the PTA organization. Dr. Alan Dodd, area associate superintendent, replied that they were apprehensive about the number of schools assigned to each area. He said they had had a meeting with each cluster and the principals, and he felt that the communication had been good. He thought this had worked out well. Mrs. Spencer asked whether the cluster organization had provided more equity of access. Dr. Dodd explained that the new organization had shared their concerns in a different way. Mrs. Lefkowitz added that in Area 1 they were concerned about one of their clusters even getting a coordinator, and now this person had said this was the only way to organize.

Dr. Lee Etta Powell, area associate superintendent, commented that with the new plan the cluster meetings created a better working relationship. The focus of their meetings was on the program continuity, K to 12. Mr. Paul O'Connor explained that Area 3 was different because of its immense size which made communication a little more difficult. He said that they had two clusters which did not have PTAs at the high school level, and the size of the cluster tended to make it a little more difficult to have constant communication.

Mr. Ron Wohl stated that the biggest problem in the Wootton cluster was being ripped apart from the Potomac area; however, they were settling into identifying with the upper county area. Among the problems they faced were transportation and curriculum coordination between the schools in the cluster.

Mrs. Peggy Slye said that in the Woodward area they had used the cluster concept for years, and it had been highly successful. They met regularly with Dr. Dodd, and they felt that they could use the cluster concept to suit their needs. Mrs. Kathy Greenfield said that in the Peary cluster after September 9 all but one of their schools had been named for possible closure. In the summer she had introduced herself to all the PTA presidents in the cluster, and she thought it was easy to set up a working relationship. The PTAs had evaluated the cluster coordinator arrangement and had felt it was effective but needed a little better communication and more rules and regulations.

Mrs. Ginny Miller said that they had met monthly in the Walter

Johnson cluster, and Dr. Dodd or his representative had attended all meetings. She felt that the arrangement was working well because they were able to answer questions raised by PTAs and communication was good.

Mrs. Lefkowitz said that the person responsible for the areas was Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo, and she wanted to thank her for the load she carried in this new organization. Mrs. Zappone inquired about communication within one level such as from one elementary school to another. Mrs. Miller replied that the cluster could help with consolidations because there was better communication. Mrs. Greenfield added that on an elementary level they could all learn from one another. Mr. O'Connor explained there was one place where they needed cluster awareness and that was in getting the PTAs to testify in support of the budget. He saw more awareness on the part of elementary school PTAs about such things as the advantage of the seven-period day in the high schools and they understood the need for continuity from the elementary to middle to high schools. Mrs. Wallace commented that when they cut back to three areas many Board members were concerned about communication, and she was delighted to hear that things were working smoothly.

In regard to high school course offerings, Mrs. Lefkowitz reported that their executive committee had passed a resolution that the Board of Education be reminded of the continuum of student needs including vocational/technical education as well as academic skills. She said that parents were concerned that courses would be eliminated without consideration of the needs of students. Mrs. Gloria Jackson said they had calls from some high schools asking that the senior high school chairman be advised of the possibility of the elimination of electives from the course offerings. They felt that this would place more emphasis on the academics at the expense of other courses because all children in the county were not headed for college. They agreed that at various times the curriculum should be reviewed to make it dynamic. What they were asking was that care be taken not to forget the exploratory courses such as home economics. She knew there would be a statewide review of curriculum; however, once a course was removed it was difficult to get it back. Mrs. Lefkowitz hoped that the Board would not go through the elimination of courses without hearing from parents.

Mrs. Zappone asked about their views on the vocational/technical center with its concentration of second level courses in one place. Mrs. Jackson replied that they were talking about the present concerns of parents. She hoped that if there were to be a vocational/technical center that it would meet the needs of students. Mr. Barse did not think there was any debate about the need for diversity and variety in serving the needs of the county population. The question was whether they could narrow each of the parts somewhat. He said it was not that anyone was against electives, but they did see the need to be more cost efficient. He thought that where there was a small enrollment the courses could be combined rather than eliminated.

Mrs. Spencer suggested that the PTA could analyze the courses and determine how the county viewed the MCPS program in terms of which courses were designed for salable skills, which were exploratory, and which were appropriate to be offered in a special building. Mrs. Lefkowitz thought that this would be a tremendous task. Mrs. Spencer remarked that she was not sure it needed to be that formal, and she said that each cluster could look at this and what their students were enrolled in. Mrs. Wallace felt that if the PTA were to undertake this it would be a good thing. She said that as the resources diminished and courses had to be cut back it was important for each cluster to give the Board a list of priorities among the electives.

Mrs. Peyser commented that she was concerned about the best use of students' time and the best use of resources. She said they had to consider where they placed their emphases. She pointed out that they offered over 500 courses and only 115 were the required academic courses. She felt that the academic courses were important not just to college bound students but also to those not going on to college. She said that they often heard from employers regarding the reading, writing, and computation skills of MCPS graduates. She said that the class sizes of the academic courses were often twice as large as the electives, and she thought the situation should be the reverse and maybe one way was to combine the electives.

Mr. Ewing stated that he was troubled by this kind of concern because the distinction made between academic and other courses was an improper and imprecise one. He said that English and math were intended to be practical in every respect, and he would say the same ought to be true of social studies. Therefore, he did not see those as being exclusively academic. He said that beyond that they did not know in particular ways what employers wanted and what the marketplace would look like five or ten years down the road. He pointed out that some employers searched for versatility and a wide range of interests. He said they could make a mistake if they thought they could design a school system that would fit every child and a program that every child could follow. He cautioned that they had better be careful not to take a path that would serve their children ill.

Dr. Gilbert August reported that at the beginning of the year at Rockville High School they asked their membership about concerns. One of the areas that was discussed was how to help the children choose advanced academic courses. He said that by a five to one margin it was felt that the grade point average should be weighted. He understood that a committee had been formed to look into this. If their recommendation was adopted, there would be a statement on the student's transcript. However, this did not address the issue of trying to get the students to take the honors courses. Dr. Greenblatt commented that when she had visited Churchill High School the students were talking about weighted grading. She felt that the Board should address this subject and would appreciate comments from other communities. In regard to the issue of electives, she said the Board had received letters from home economics teachers. However,

the Board was not talking about eliminating home economics, but rather the issue was should they be offering these elective courses with very small enrollments when they could not offer English classes with small enrollments. Dr. August commented that they could probably run a lot of the required courses at 30; however, there were a lot of electives that could not be run that way such as advanced science, photography, and art courses.

Mrs. Phyllis Brush said that some high schools put a stamp on the transcript which showed honors, gifted and talented, and advanced placement courses. However, other high schools did not do this. She had checked into this and found there was no definition of honors courses; therefore, any school could declare a certain course to be an honors course. Dr. Pitt reported that they did have many schools with clear definitions of honors courses and did require this be listed on the transcript.

Mrs. Wallace said that there seemed to be some unevenness in terms of counselors in the various high schools. She indicated that recommendations to colleges from certain counselors carried more weight. She suggested that the Board and MCCPTA should be working on an upgrading of those counselors because all counselors were supposed to be trained for college counseling but some had more ability. Mrs. Lefkowitz asked that the Board feel free to call upon MCCPTA at any time, and Mrs. Zappone thanked the members of MCCPTA for their participation in the discussion.

Re: Adjournment

The president adjourned the meeting at 10:15 p.m.

President

Secretary

EA:mlw