

FAA-RA Workgroup
MCCPTA Position Paper

January 24, 2006

MCCPTA appreciates the opportunity to participate on the workgroup to review the interim regulations for Policy FAA and to offer comments and revisions for new regulations. MCCPTA supports the changes in the language as drafted by the workgroup. However, we urge that you add statements regarding site size, school capacity and enrollment, on boundary studies and other facilities planning advisory committees and most importantly, on community involvement, back into the Policy itself.

The workgroup consisted of a number of MCCPTA representatives, and two Civic Federation members, and was facilitated by, Joe LaVorgna, consultant to MCPS, and Bruce Crispell, Director of Long-Range Facilities Planning. Representatives from a number of other county-wide organizations were also invited to participate but did not attend. Occasionally, there were observers or experts participating in the meetings.

The workgroup was small but all members contributed to discussions and made recommendations for revisions. Revised drafts were made available to members prior to meetings enabling us to prepare edits and comments. Members of the group were respectful of each other, followed the process and did their best to maintain the schedule of the workgroup. We have taken the unprecedented inclusion of community members on a workgroup to develop these regulations quite seriously.

We particularly appreciate the opportunity to participate in writing the regulations in light of our stated concerns regarding the major revision to Policy FAA. MCCPTA voted last spring on the need to slow down the abbreviated schedule for adoption of the revised Policy; and on the removal of specific language in the Policy that spoke to parental involvement and the framework for public participation. While we understand the Board's desire to distinguish between overarching policy and the details of regulations, we remain concerned about the lack of a policy statement regarding site size, school capacity and enrollment, and on boundary studies and other facilities planning advisory committees.

The 1986 Policy FAA was adopted after a concerted effort by the Board of Education and MCCPTA to set a standard of involvement for parents and the community in the processes of planning and decision-making for a wide range of facilities issues. This effort started with the inclusion of parents in the development of the Policy, then involved the community with county-wide public hearings, and resulted in a Policy that was clear, predictable, and understandable.

The processes of public notification, parental participation, and comments from the community have worked. The boundary process has a framework to provide a timeline, input, and public hearing on the recommendation for all parents and communities. Boundary studies often provoke strong feelings about school assignment and everyone is not always happy with the outcome but they have had the opportunity to be informed and many take the opportunity to speak before the Board prior to the adoption of new school boundaries. The process of adopting an annual CIP is clearly stated. Advisory groups on facilities design, planning, and construction are specifically laid out in terms of who participates, timelines, and scope of the committee work. Most of these processes transfer directly to the regulations without much change in either language or intent. Where needed, there have been clarifications, rearrangement in placement order or actual revisions, such as, updating boundary change language to include school assignment choices for consortiums. We have changed the date for cluster comments to be due in May of each year in response to many comments from cluster coordinators about the difficulty of doing them in the summer when new PTA leaders are just getting started.

We have concerns about the change in calculating school size that were in the Interim Regulations, that the change from numbers of students per grade level to an overall per school range may allow school size to generally increase. We agreed with a revision that brought school size more in line with past policy. This change regulated larger schools at every level. We ask for research on school size as it relates to success for students so that we may have data on optimum school size, and the benefits or detriments to schools outside the current ranges.

Typically regulations are drawn up by the Superintendent's staff without need or opportunity for community comment and without requirement for the Board to approve them. Policies are approved by a process that includes community involvement and a vote by the majority of the Board of Education. The preferred size of a school site should not be changed without input from the community and the Board of Education- this is an overarching policy belief, backed up by data, that schools should be built on the preferred acreage for maximum potential of all students in all academic, physical, and social-emotional areas. There is ample language in the regulations for deviations from the preferred acreage or other ranges in a case by case situation. A very large high school can be built if the community desires it; as in the case of Blair High School, there was active parent and community participation.

The workgroup labored over the definition of community and when to use that term vs. parents or PTA's. We believe that students, parents and school staff are the primary stakeholders, and that the community is often an important stakeholder. There are instances when parental involvement is required but the broader community may only act as observers on a committee, such as on boundary studies. The definition of community and a statement regarding the necessity of community participation needs to be in the Policy.

We have attached draft language that we believe belongs in the Policy.

In a related matter, we would like to once again request that Policy DNA, the Policy on the Disposition of Board of Education Property, be revised. This policy, which governs the sale or transfer of surplus land, needs to be updated to include public notification, parent involvement in an advisory capacity and an opportunity for the community to comment to the Board.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate on the workgroup to revise the regulations; it truly has been a collaborative process and we commend the leadership of Joe LaVorgna and Bruce Crispell. We hope that this will be a model for true parent involvement in future policy and regulation development.

PTA Representatives included:

Marney Jacobs MCCPTA CIP Co-Chair

Jim Keenan MCCPTA CIP Co-Chair

Paul Morrison (Northwest, Poolesville, Quince Orchard, Seneca Valley)

Deborah Panzer-Stevens (Northeast Consortium (Blake, Paint Branch, Springbrook) and Sherwood)

Mark Rother- (DCC- Blair, Einstein, Kennedy, Northwood)

Andrew Varner- (BCC, Whitman, Wheaton, Walter Johnson)

Carolyn Wallert (Churchill, Wootton, Rockville, Richard Montgomery)

Crispin Taylor (Churchill, Wootton, Rockville, Richard Montgomery)

Policy FAA

(proposed additions in italics)

C. POSITION

The long-range facilities planning process will continue to:

2. Provide a constructive and collaborative advisory role through public hearings, position papers, written comments, and advisory committee memberships for parent organizations (such as the PTA) and other community groups in capital improvements program. *In addition to MCCPTA, local PTAs, other parent or student representatives, community involvement may include MCPS staff, municipalities, local government agencies, civic and homeowner associations, countywide organizations, individual citizens, and other interested parties.* An advisory committee, in which community participation is specifically defined, will be established for facilities planning activities listed below:
 - a. Selection of School Sites
 - b. Facility Design
 - c. Boundary Changes
 - d. Geographic student choice assignment plans (such as consortia)
 - e. School Closures and Consolidations
3. Provide a six-year capital improvements program and educational facilities master plan which include enrollment projections, educational program needs and available school capacity countywide, and identify:

d. Facility utilization levels, capacity calculations, school size guidelines, and school site size (adopted as part of the Board of Education review of the superintendent's recommended CIP)

The preferred range of site size to accommodate the instructional program including related outdoor activities is:

1. 12 usable acres for elementary schools
2. 20 usable acres for middle schools
3. 30 usable acres for high schools

The preferred range of enrollment for schools will be considered when planning new schools or changes to existing facilities. If larger or smaller schools are built or created, alternative approaches to school construction, management, organization, or staffing will be considered in order to facilitate effective delivery of educational programming. The preferred range of enrollment is:

1. 300-620 students in elementary school
2. 600-1125 students in middle school
3. 1000-1800 students per grade in high schools
4. special and alternative program centers will differ from the above ranges and generally be lower in enrollment

The capacity rating per room is based on the state rated capacity for regular programs; special education programs or initiatives require classroom ratios different of those listed.

<i>Level</i>	<i>Capacity ratings per room</i>
<i>Head Start & Pre-Kindergarten</i>	<i>40:1 (2 sessions per day)</i>
<i>Head Start & Pre-Kindergarten</i>	<i>20:1 (1 session per day)</i>
<i>Grade K ½ day</i>	<i>44:1 (2 sessions per day)</i>
<i>Grade K full day</i>	<i>22:1 (1 session per day)</i>
<i>Grades 1-6 elementary</i>	<i>23:1</i>
<i>Grades 6-12 secondary</i>	<i>25:1</i>
<i>ESOL</i>	<i>15:1</i>

All schools should operate in an efficient utilization range of 80 to 100 per cent of program capacity. If a school is projected to be underutilized (less than 80%) or overutilized (over 100%) facilities planning to address these utilization levels may be undertaken. In the case of overutilization, an effort to judge the long-term needs for permanent space should be made prior to planning for new construction. Temporary measures such as the use of relocatable classrooms may be appropriate. Underutilization of facilities also should be evaluated in the context of short-term and long-term enrollment forecasts.

6 provide a process for changing school boundaries and establishing geographic student choice assignment plans that: consider ~~four~~ **FIVE** main factors in development of school boundaries and student choice assignment plan, including:

1. demographic characteristics of student population
2. geographic proximity of communities to schools *and keeping in mind contiguous, logical geographic boundaries whenever possible*
3. stability of school assignments over time
4. facility utilization
5. *plans for base areas or a single unified area for school choice; as defined areas surrounding each participating school (known as "base areas") where students may be*

guaranteed attendance at the school in the base area, or, the area may be a single unified area that encompasses all communities that have a choice of a school to attend

7 Provide a process for closing and consolidating schools that meets the requirements of COMAR. *The Board will provide community notification and conduct public hearings for potentially affected school communities prior to any action affecting attendance areas for the closure or consolidation of schools.*

D. DESIRED OUTCOME(S)

A long-range educational facilities planning process that identifies the infrastructure necessary to deliver high quality educational facilities to all students and incorporates the input of parents, staff, and community and as appropriate, students by:

1. Providing the facilities and future school sites necessary to sustain high quality educational programs at reasonable cost, including non-traditional facilities where there provide needed educational programs

2. utilizing schools in ways that are consistent with sound educational practice and consider impact of facility changes in the educational program and visa versa and on the related operating budget requirements and on the community

3. providing a schedule to maintain and modernize older school buildings in order to continue their use on a cost-effective basis, and to keep facilities current with educational program needs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

(this section does not exist in revised Policy FAA- regulations should cover implementation; however, we would prefer some kind of statement regarding parent involvement in regulations)

Regulations will implement the policy with specific guidelines on all facilities planning, and decision making processes with notification of publications, review and comment schedules, and involvement from the outset of these planning activities, including parental and community involvement and participation.