

## **Worcester County Public Schools Master Plan Review of Adequacy of Existing School Facility Needs**

The Worcester County Public School System is committed to providing every student with an excellent educational experience. Providing educators and students with modern, well-equipped and flexible educational facilities is critical to the success of the instructional program. School buildings must be attractive, clean and well maintained to positively support teachers, staff and students. Classrooms and specialized learning environments should be designed to be flexible and easily adapted to meeting changing program needs. Successful school buildings allow for a variety of age appropriate learning opportunities and instructional outcomes to ensure the achievement of every student.

Every year, a comprehensive analysis is conducted of every school building to identify short and long-term school facility and capital improvement needs. With the support of school administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents and the community, an inventory and evaluation of each school building is conducted and an analysis of future capital needs is prepared. Future program and facility requirements are identified and proposed. Capital improvements and supporting school construction projects for the next ten-year period are presented annually in the Educational Facilities Master Plan in accordance with the Maryland Interagency Committee on Public School Construction guidelines. A brief summary of the status of Worcester County school facilities is provided on pages 12-13 of the annual facilities report.

In developing the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan and supporting Educational Facilities Master Plan, consideration was given to the following:

- **The process, participants and timeline that will be used to determine the capital improvements required to carry out the master plan**

For the 2003-04 school year, the development of recommendations for capital improvements in school facilities is driven by the identification of school building improvements necessary to successfully implement the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan. When developing the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan, the existing Educational Facilities Master Plan served as an initial information source to examine the current status of existing facilities, historical and projected enrollment patterns, and state and local building capacities. Proposed school construction and larger scale capital projects included in the Educational Facilities Master Plan were then compared to priority needs identified in the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan needs assessment. Where necessary, the recommendations contained in the Educational Facilities Master Plan are being adjusted to address Bridge to Excellence Master Plan priority needs in the areas of:

Student Achievement  
Highly Qualified Personnel  
Learning Environment  
Graduate and Post-Graduate Success  
Technology  
Parent/Community Involvement

The development of both the Educational Facilities Master Plan and Bridge to Excellence Master Plan were developed with broad staff and community representation. Participation in both plans included representatives of county instructional and administrative leadership, program supervisors and coordinators, school administrators,

teachers and support staff, and parents and community representatives. Results of the annual parent survey, comments and recommendations of school principals, staff, School Improvement Advisory Committees, and input from elected officials and community representatives were considered in the identification of immediate and future capital improvement needs.

The Bridge to Excellence Master Plan, Educational Facilities Master Plan and Operating Budget are mutually supportive. It is recognized that the recommended capital improvements identified in the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan must be carried forward in future capital planning and budget development. Development of the 2003-04 Educational Facilities Master Plan will include the capital improvement priorities identified in the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan. To assure clarity of purpose and the efficient use of human and capital resources, local facility planners participated in the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan (BEMP) development and review process. It is anticipated that these two critical planning documents will continue to be reviewed annually and serve as the foundation for future budget development. The annual review and revision of the 2003-04 Educational Facilities Master Plan is being conducted on the basis of the following timeline:

#### September

- Distribute Parent Questionnaires to the home of all students

#### October – November

- Collect and review results of Parent Questionnaires identifying perceived successes, concerns and capital needs
- Collection and review of program and student achievement data by the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan Committee
- Conduct building surveys to identify programs operating in inappropriate spaces and other facility needs
- Identification of instructional priorities and facility requirements by the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan Committee

#### December

- School Improvement Advisory Committees present FY 04 budget requests to the Board of Education

#### January – February

- Conferences with school principals to clarify principal and School Improvement Advisory Committee proposed budget requests and critical needs
- Comparison of Bridge to Excellence Master Plan program priorities and facility requirements and FY 04 school budget requests with the existing Educational Facilities Master Plan
- Identification of additions or modifications required in future capital planning to address educational needs and priorities

## February

- Review of proposed budget requests with School Improvement Advisory Committees
- Incorporation of recommended improvements in the FY 04 budget request
- Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed Operating and Capital Budgets to the Board of Education

## March

- Adoption of the Proposed FY 04 Operating, Technology, Capital Improvement and School Construction Budgets
- Forward budget requests to the Worcester County Commissioners
- Review and update ten-year enrollment projections

## April – May

- Public hearing by the Worcester County Commissioners on all budget and capital improvement requests
- Completion of draft Educational Facilities Master Plan

## June

- Review of draft Educational Facilities Master Plan by Worcester County Office of Planning and Zoning

## July

- Review and adoption of the 2003-04 Educational Facilities Master Plan by the Board of Education and submission to the Interagency Committee on Public School Construction
- **Capital improvements necessary to implement pre-kindergarten programs for economically disadvantaged students and full-day kindergarten programs for all students by the 2007-08 school year**

Pre-kindergarten programs are currently offered at all elementary schools. Existing pre-kindergarten classrooms are sufficient to successfully accommodate projected pre-kindergarten enrollment through the 2007-08 school year at Showell, Ocean City, Buckingham, Pocomoke and Snow Hill Elementary Schools.

All day kindergarten programs are in place at Buckingham, Pocomoke and Snow Hill Elementary Schools. Locally purchased portable classrooms have been added at Buckingham (4) and Snow Hill (3) Elementary Schools to accommodate all programs and services offered at these schools. If future enrollment projections are accurate, additional portable classrooms may be required at Buckingham (1) and Snow Hill (2) Elementary Schools to maintain the existing all day kindergarten program. Locally purchased portable classrooms will be requested, as necessary.

Two additional classrooms will be required at Ocean City Elementary School to introduce all day kindergarten. Architectural planning is already underway. Ocean City Elementary School construction is scheduled for completion in September 2005. The new school will provide the additional classrooms required to offer all day kindergarten.

Showell Elementary will also require four additional classrooms to provide all day kindergarten. The ten-year Capital Plan recommends the installation of a four-classroom modular unit for September 2005. Architectural planning for a renovation and addition is proposed to begin in 2007-08. Additional classrooms will be provided in the Showell renovation/addition to accommodate all day kindergarten.

- **Capital improvements required to support other educational programs and services and the strategies (e.g. special programs for identified populations, alternative programs, class size reduction) proposed in the Master Plan**

Worcester County has the second fastest growing school system on the Eastern Shore and the fourth fastest growing school system in the state. Since 1988, school enrollments have increased by 29.27%. Enrollments in the northern area schools have increased by 53.42%. The majority of Worcester County schools were built or renovated in the 1970's or early 1980's. At that time, facility planners did not foresee the accelerated growth in both the general and school population observed in the mid-1990's. Original building designs of the 1970's and early 1980's also did not provide for the reduction of class sizes, the expansion of alternative programs designed to enhance the academic program and accelerate the academic achievement of all students, and proliferation of extended school day and extended school year programs. With the exception of Stephen Decatur High School, all schools are operating programs in spaces originally designed for other uses. A total of 145 educational programs or services are located in 33 portable classrooms or converted spaces, such as workrooms, storage areas, corridors, shops, media centers and stages.

With the exception of Stephen Decatur High School, long-range capital planning includes the eventual renovation and or expansion of all school buildings. A complete renovation and 51,000 sq. ft. addition was completed at Stephen Decatur High School in 2002. Architectural planning is well underway for the replacement of the Ocean City Elementary School. The new school replacement will provide sufficient classrooms and other instructional spaces to accommodate all current and projected programs.

Preliminary feasibility studies will be requested in 2002-03 to support planning for renovations and/or additions at Pocomoke High School, Snow Hill High School and the Worcester Career & Technology Center. The ten-year Capital Plan also identifies the need for additions at Stephen Decatur Middle School and renovation/addition at Showell Elementary School.

- **Non-capital improvement approaches to facility needs that are being considered**

Worcester County is a rapidly growing rural community with a strong and vibrant economic base. Public, commercial and residential properties are not available to meet

demand. Active construction is ongoing to meet the real estate demands in public, private and residential sectors. Purchasing or leasing and converting existing property for public school use is not a realistic alternative.

A rigorous capital improvement program continues to be projected over the next 10-15 years through renovation, expansion of existing school facilities and new school construction, when necessary. In the short term, immediate facility and program needs will be met with the conversion or modification of existing spaces, when possible, or installation of portable or modular classrooms.

