

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In re: Neighborhood Schools Plan  
Public Hearing

McKean High School  
301 McKennas Church Road  
Wilmington, Delaware

October 22, 2002  
7:00 p.m.

BEFORE:

JEANNE ALLEN  
DR. JOSEPH A. PIKA  
DENNIS SAVAGE  
DR. CLAY SMITH

ALSO PRESENT:

ANN CASE, Policy Analyst  
LOUANN VARI, Deputy Attorney General  
for the State Board of Education

-- TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS --

WILCOX & FETZER  
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1 DR. PIKA: I'd like us to get started on  
2 some preliminary steps here. We're still expecting one  
3 or two more Board members to join us. Since this is the  
4 first time that we've been to the school, finding the  
5 location and then winding our way through the hallway to  
6 find our way was a little tricky.

7 We have a sign-up sheet here that Ms. Case  
8 is overseeing. So anyone who would like to address the  
9 Board on the issues before us this evening, if you'd like  
10 to come up and sign up -- Do you have anybody that signed  
11 up?

12 MS. CASE: We have four.

13 DR. PIKA: So all of you who have wished to  
14 speak have signed up. Is that correct?

15 A VOICE: Yes.

16 DR. PIKA: I'd like, then, to call this  
17 public hearing to order. My voice has suddenly expanded.  
18 Thank you for coming out this evening to address this  
19 issue before the Board.

20 The purpose of the hearing this evening is  
21 to discuss the resubmitted plans, the Red Clay and,  
22 potentially, the Christina School Districts. The Board  
23 decided in March that the original Neighborhood School  
24 Plans submitted by the Red Clay and the Christina School

1 Districts did not meet the requirements of the  
2 Neighborhood Schools Act and directed the districts to  
3 resubmit those plans.

4                   Tonight's hearing, then, is intended to hear  
5 the public's ideas, thoughts, reflections, comments, on  
6 the revised plans that have been submitted to the State  
7 Board by Christina and Red Clay, particularly the  
8 Red Clay plan this evening. If there are people here who  
9 would also like to discuss the Christina plan, we'd ask  
10 that you leave your comments until the end of the  
11 evening. We'd like to focus on the Red Clay issues  
12 first.

13                   I do believe that there are copies of the  
14 resubmitted plan. Is that correct?

15                   MS. CASE: The original and the resubmitted.  
16 We also have transcripts of the original evidentiary  
17 hearings and the most recent evidentiary hearings. Both  
18 are there.

19                   DR. PIKA: So they will be here on the table  
20 in the front, if you'd like to avail yourselves of those.

21                   I have with me this evening the  
22 vice president of the State Board, Jeanne Allen. I'm Joe  
23 Pika, the president of the State Board. We have as well

24 Ann Case, who is the assistant to the Board, and the

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1 Board's lawyer, Mrs. Louann Vari.

2 We will call the speakers one at a time from  
3 the list, the sign-up sheet. We will ask that you limit  
4 your comments to a reasonable length of time. Since we  
5 don't have an enormous turnout this evening -- I must say  
6 when I saw the cars outside this evening when I drove up  
7 I thought, oh, this is going to be interesting, but then  
8 I learned that there are lots of other activities going  
9 on in the school as well this evening.

10 We are being joined now by Dr. Clay Smith,  
11 another member of the State Board.

12 I will also point out that we have a court  
13 recorder here with us this evening. So when you do  
14 address the Board, we ask that you would identify  
15 yourself, spell your last name, in particular, and that  
16 you speak in a slow fashion loudly enough for the court  
17 reporter to hear you and for the rest of the Board as  
18 well.

19 We've also been joined by Mr. Dennis Savage,  
20 the fourth and final member of the Board that we expect  
21 to be here this evening.

22                   We also welcome any written comments which  
23                   you would like to submit to the Board. Perhaps you have  
24                   not had the opportunity to read through the resubmitted

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1                   plan. So we welcome any additional submissions that you  
2                   would like to send to the Board. You can do so by  
3                   sending them to the State Board of Education at the  
4                   Townsend Building in Dover. Mrs. Case can give you the  
5                   full address as well as give you an e-mail address if you  
6                   prefer to send your comments by e-mail. But we would  
7                   like to have your comments before December the 4th, I  
8                   believe is a reasonable target.

9                   Okay. With those as the preliminaries for  
10                   this evening's proceedings, I'll ask Ms. Case if you  
11                   would call the first person to the dance, please.

12                   MS. CASE: Kris Chalfant.

13                   MS. CHALFANT: Good evening. My name is  
14                   Kris Chalfant, C-h-a-l-f-a-n-t, and I have two children  
15                   attending Warner Elementary School.

16                   Last February I spoke out against Red Clay's  
17                   All-Choice District, and the arguments I put forth then  
18                   still stand. In its September 27th transcript, Red Clay  
19                   implies that since only a small number of people spoke  
20                   out against its choice district that it goes to reason

21 that everyone else supports its plan. That's quite a  
22 claim and one that I would be curious to see applied to  
23 other works of life, say, for instance, the primary  
24 election.

6

1 Red Clay has made no widespread attempt to  
2 inform its population of the mechanics involved in an  
3 all-choice district, and it's my opinion that one cannot  
4 make an informed choice without all the facts. To listen  
5 to the Red Clay School Board, one would be forgiven to  
6 believe that they are -- forgiven to believe that they  
7 are adamantly against neighborhoods schools, but they  
8 aren't. What Red Clay doesn't like is the Neighborhood  
9 Schools Law. It is my opinion that Red Clay has put  
10 forth its choice district in the hope of avoiding a court  
11 date, not resegregation. Red Clay also states that by  
12 being forced to follow the Neighborhood Schools Law that  
13 many schools, namely Suburban Elementary, would become  
14 overcrowded while others, mostly city elementary, would  
15 become underutilized.

16 I propose that Red Clay doesn't need to  
17 implement the Neighborhood Schools Law for this claimed  
18 hardship to become reality. Based on the September 30th

19 figures for last year, the four city elementary schools,  
20 as well as Baltz Elementary, had 731 empty seats. If you  
21 remove the 323 out-of-district students from these five  
22 schools, that number grows to 1,054 empty seats.

23                   It seems to me that underutilization is  
24 already occurring and that Red Clay's solution has been

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1 to convert these underutilized classrooms into office  
2 space. This concerns me greatly. For while suburban  
3 children attend class in trailers, Red Clay has 300  
4 trailer seats. Perfectly acceptable classrooms remain  
5 empty of students. Overcrowding? Underutilizing? It  
6 seems like we're already doing that.

7                   And what about bus transportation in an all-  
8 choice district? This topic alone is enough to put an  
9 end to this plan. In order to make school choice,  
10 shouldn't a parent be provided with a map showing every  
11 single bus stop for every single school? This  
12 information could greatly influence a parent's choice.

13                   As it stands now, it is the parents'  
14 responsibility to get their child to and from a choice  
15 school or the nearest bus stop, which may be miles away.  
16 And while this may be possible for a two-parent, two-car  
17 flexible schedule household, it is a hardship for a

18 family that does not possess such flexibility.

19 In conclusion, lower socioeconomic families  
20 may discover that in the end Red Clay's Choice District  
21 offers them no choice at all.

22 Thank you.

23 DR. PIKA: Mrs. Chalfant, before you leave,  
24 I wonder if I could just ask you about the bus stop

8

1 question that you've.

2 MS. CHALFANT: Yes.

3 DR. PIKA: In your own case, is this a claim  
4 that you're making that the bus stops could be miles  
5 away, the closest bus stop for the schools that you would  
6 potentially want to choice your children into, or do you  
7 have a personal experience that confirms that that is the  
8 case?

9 MS. CHALFANT: No. But I've had friends in  
10 the district who have wanted to go to a different school  
11 and then they'll say, well, the bus stop is, you know --  
12 I may as well just drive them to the school because the  
13 closest bus stop is almost all the way to the school.

14 So they are -- They're not just spread out.  
15 If I'm going to choose between School A and School B,

16 where that bus stop is going to be located is going to  
17 influence my choice.

18 DR. PIKA: Then your issue about not having  
19 full knowledge about the bus stops before you make a  
20 choice: What kind of information do you have about bus  
21 transportation prior to the choice deadline?

22 MS. CHALFANT: None really comes home with  
23 the child. You basically just get the choice application  
24 form, and you can pick the school. But there really

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1 isn't anything that comes and says, well, if you live in  
2 this area and you pick this school, this is where your  
3 bus stop would be compared to, if you pick B school, this  
4 is where your bus stop would be.

5 Basically, Choice has been functioning that  
6 people are pretty much signing on to them. By picking a  
7 choice school, it is my responsibility to get my child to  
8 that school, whereas an all-choice district changes that  
9 scenario. I feel this is a topic that must be addressed.  
10 Bus stops need to go hand in hand with making a choice.

11 DR. PIKA: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Chalfant.

12 MS. CHALFANT: You're welcome.

13 MS. CASE: Michelle Concha.

14 MS. CONCHA: Good evening. I'm Michelle

15 Concha.

16 DR. PIKA: Could you spell your name?

17 MS. CONCHA: C-o-n-c-h-a.

18 My comments are not as well prepared or as  
19 eloquent as the previous speaker, but I also believe that  
20 there should be no reason why we cannot implement a  
21 system that will allow our children to go to the closest  
22 schools to our homes.

23 As the law states clearly, it's my  
24 understanding, if a seat is not available in the closest

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1 school to my home, then my child will then be sent to the  
2 next closest school available. My understanding of the  
3 choice system is, first, it is a lottery. My child may  
4 or may not go to the school I choose. And secondly, the  
5 alternative to that, if I, as a parent, choose not to do  
6 the paperwork to make a choice, then we keep the current  
7 feeder patterns. For me right now that would be that  
8 my -- We live in this area here. My children would then  
9 go into the city to go to school.

10 I think everybody -- every parent wants  
11 neighborhood schools. I think there has been elaborate  
12 discussions and forums on that. And we as a population,

13 as parents, really want the opportunity to send our  
14 children closer to home so we can become more involved in  
15 schools.

16 We're all busier than we were years ago. I  
17 think to lay the burden on the parents who first do the  
18 paperwork and choose their child to some school -- We  
19 have to research the school. We have to do the  
20 paperwork. Then it becomes a lottery. I see no reason  
21 why every school in our district can't be acceptable for  
22 my child to go to.

23 So if I live closest to Heritage, there is  
24 no reason why that school shouldn't be acceptable for my

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1 child to go to. To say that, you know, it's a choice,  
2 then I have a lot of research involved that we, as  
3 parents, have to do that. And again, there is no  
4 guarantee that we'll get the school that we want. And  
5 then it's back to square one, the feeder pattern, which I  
6 think no one is really that happy with.

7 So I would hope that the Board would  
8 seriously consider looking at those numbers. I mean, I  
9 think if I look at those numbers, you know, yeah, there  
10 are a lot of schools that are underutilized even in this  
11 area. So, then, we need to take where the overflows

12 are -- I think Lewis was one of those schools -- and  
13 start sending them to the next closest school that is  
14 underutilized. So that's what I would like to see done  
15 in our district.

16 DR. PIKA: Before you leave, could you just  
17 answer a question? What has been your experience with  
18 the choice program? You're implying that your effort to  
19 choice your children to the school that you preferred was  
20 unsuccessful.

21 MS. CONCHA: Yes. I did have one experience  
22 where I could not choice my child into the school that I  
23 wanted to, and that involved a lot of research on my  
24 part, you know, going to the different schools, seeing

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1 what they had available, and then choosing the school,  
2 and then not getting that choice. I really didn't see  
3 the point in it because, you know -- because it's done on  
4 a lottery system. You know, there's no preference given  
5 to somebody that's living closer to school.

6 And I also, you know -- kind of going off in  
7 another direction on that -- I don't think it's fair that  
8 there are some schools in our district that go by  
9 different rules. For instance, there is Brandywine

10 Springs. Why is it that's an all-choice school? Why  
11 shouldn't we all be under the same set of rules? That  
12 just doesn't make any sense to me at all.

13 I heard that that school is built on the  
14 idea of choice. Well, to my knowledge, that school was  
15 built with our tax dollars. So I really think that we  
16 need to relook at that and, you know, treat every school  
17 equally where more resources are needed because of, you  
18 know, populations, etc. Then, you know, we should put  
19 those dollars there.

20 DR. PIKA: My understanding of the revised  
21 plan that Red Clay has submitted is that the Brandywine  
22 Springs School will become part of the overall system.

23 Is that a fair way of describing that?

24 That is my understanding. It was an issue

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1 that the State Board raised as well.

2 MS. CONCHA: Okay. Well, I'm happy to hear  
3 that. Unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to look at  
4 the plan in depth before tonight.

5 DR. PIKA: So if I could just understand,  
6 then, the preference, your number one preference, was the  
7 closest school, and your child was unable to attend that  
8 because you were unsuccessful in the lottery.

9 MS. CONCHA: No, no. That's not the case.  
10 But I think the whole idea of choice and that whole  
11 expectation you build around and schools are presented or  
12 present themselves with, you know, better resources and  
13 stuff. I don't think it should happen in the public  
14 school arena, because then your child ends up in another  
15 school in the feeder pattern and you have this sense of  
16 disappointment.

17 I think that, if we're all on a fair, you  
18 know, playing field, then, you know, there is no reason  
19 to build one school up against the other. You know, this  
20 is better because of this. They should all -- If this  
21 one isn't as good because of this, this and this, let's  
22 work on that problem there and try and get some equity in  
23 all the schools.

24 I just, you know -- I'm not real comfortable

14

1 with that.

2 DR. PIKA: Okay. Thank you very much.

3 MS. CONCHA: Thank you.

4 MS. CASE: William Dunn.

5 MR. DUNN: I'm William H. Dunn, D-u-n-n,  
6 past school board member in the Red Clay School District.

7 Red Clay's contention that the  
8 implementation of a Neighborhood Schools Plan would  
9 create -- to quote Mr. D'Angelo -- "severe hardship" on  
10 the district because of over- and underutilization of our  
11 schools is inconsistent with how the Red Clay Board has  
12 chosen to implement the Choice law in the district.

13 I encourage the State Board to evaluate  
14 Red Clay's September 30th counts against program capacity  
15 at their schools over the past five years. The Red Clay  
16 Board has consistently had little contention in over- and  
17 underutilizing programs to forward their implementation  
18 of choice but defines the same situation as "hardship"  
19 when it comes to the implementation of the Neighborhood  
20 Schools Act. This is clearly a hypocritical position.  
21 The hypocrisy, I believe, is the primary reason why  
22 Red Clay has chosen not to invoke their -- chose not to  
23 invoke the "hardship" provision in their original  
24 proposal.

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1 To substantiate this claim, I ask the State  
2 School Board to review the minutes of the February 28th,  
3 1998 Red Clay School Board meeting at the A.I. High  
4 School in which Mrs. Eaton and myself, with the support  
5 of Mr. Cavanaugh, presented a revised Choice Application

6 Acceptance proposal that was designed to address two  
7 primary concerns, program utilization and educationally  
8 responsible decision-making. The Board's majority, who  
9 still maintains a quorum today, rejected that plan.

10           You will also find with the review of the  
11 September 30th count that it was no "hardship" for the  
12 district to reallocate resources to accommodate their  
13 choice policy. The need for reallocation began with the  
14 suburban flight from Lewis and Shortlidge and continued  
15 at Warner. There was never any effort to control the  
16 abrupt change in population and the dramatic negative  
17 impact it had on those programs. As recently as four  
18 years ago, Warner ranked in the top quartile in the  
19 State's DSTP third- and fifth-grade testing and second in  
20 the district. Today they're basically at the bottom.

21           As Mrs. Graham -- Ms? Mrs?

22           DR. PIKA: Ms.

23           MR. DUNN: -- Graham highlighted in her  
24 review, Red Clay has had every opportunity to develop a

1 plan that implements a reasonable neighborhood preference  
2 zone around each school campus, something that has been  
3 done time and time again for choice implementation, and

4 then, reasonably and educationally responsibly, divide  
5 the rest of the district to address -- to rationally  
6 address the pupil home-to-school-facility disparity.  
7 Under this scenario, the argument of "hardship" would be  
8 reasonable and rational. After two attempts they've  
9 chosen to reject this option.

10 For Mr. D'Angelo to refer to any reasonable  
11 person's approach to define reasonable feeder patterns as  
12 "artificial determinations" is absolutely ludicrous.  
13 Although I question the legislator's decision to pass an  
14 Act such as the Neighborhood Schools, I don't question  
15 their ability to recognize the fact that just about every  
16 school district does -- does not have their schools  
17 exactly where they need them.

18 Please hold the Red Clay School Board  
19 accountable for not meeting the requirements of the  
20 Neighborhood Schools Act.

21 I also have some material from back when I  
22 was on the Board as I noted in my comments that  
23 Mrs. Easton and I had developed a plan to more  
24 responsibly implement choice in Red Clay for the school

17

1 year, I believe, '98-99 -- I believe that's correct --  
2 and which was a modified version of what the

3 administration was proposing the Board adopt. I don't  
4 know if this is the actual version, but it's somewhere  
5 close to it, as to how our plan had deviated from the  
6 administration's plan. Also --

7 DR. PIKA: Are you submitting this for our  
8 consideration?

9 MR. DUNN: Actually, I would prefer that the  
10 Board review the minutes of the meeting of Red Clay  
11 because I don't know that that is the exact version that  
12 was presented that evening. I was digging through e-mail  
13 files and all kinds of stuff trying to find the last  
14 version before. But you can review that if you like.

15 Also, we -- A number of us had real concerns  
16 about over- and underutilization in the school programs.  
17 And to help to present a proposal to the Board to form a  
18 committee to let them review choice implementation in  
19 over- and underutilization of school programs -- the  
20 committee met a number of times through spring of '78  
21 until about fall of '78 and came forward with a  
22 recommendation which was watered down at the table the  
23 night of the Board meeting. So for them to contend that  
24 over- and underutilization is a critical reason to -- or

1 critical aspect as far as hardship just really doesn't  
2 hold water. I have a real problem with them saying that.

3 That's it.

4 DR. PIKA: Thank you, Mr. Dunn.

5 Any questions at this time?

6 It's still a little bit ambiguous exactly  
7 what's happening here with this document. Are you  
8 leaving this with the Board?

9 MR. DUNN: Yes. You can have it. Actually,  
10 I have the proposal to put together a committee, the  
11 charter we gave the committee, and their final  
12 recommendations, if you'd like to put them in. I believe  
13 these are the versions that were presented at the time.

14 DR. PIKA: Just to summarize, you're  
15 basically arguing that these materials document that  
16 over- and underutilization of schools has not been  
17 considered a hardship in the past.

18 MR. DUNN: Never been considered a hardship.  
19 Not only with the move forward with choice plans but  
20 after the fact recognize, oh, we don't have enough space  
21 in that school. We've got to rent trailers to  
22 accommodate all those children at half of those schools,  
23 which means coming out 100 percent out of local tax  
24 dollars.

1 DR. PIKA: Mrs. Vari.

2 MS. VARI: Mr. Dunn, I have to earn my keep  
3 tonight. I'm just going to say, in addition to those  
4 three sets of documents that you identified a couple of  
5 minutes ago, you also previously handed up to the Board,  
6 that the Board will now take as part of the record, an  
7 eight-page document that looks to be a PowerPoint  
8 presentation, perhaps.

9 MR. DUNN: Yes. Exactly.

10 MS. VARI: The first page of that simply  
11 says Choice Implementation '98-99 Administrative  
12 Proposal. That's just to make sure that we know for the  
13 record what we have as documents.

14 MR. DUNN: Right. If you go down four or  
15 five pages, there is what is referred to as a board  
16 proposal and it's highlighted Dunn/Eaton afterwards.

17 DR. PIKA: Okay. Thank you very much.

18 MS. CASE: Yvonne Johnson.

19 MS. JOHNSON: My name is Yvonne Johnson,  
20 Y-v-o-n-n-e.

21 First, I want to comment first on what Kris  
22 Chalfant said. I totally agree with her about the bus  
23 stops. I have lived this. I -- my children -- I have a  
24 17-year-old son that goes to this school, and I have an

1 eight-year-old who is in third grade at Brandywine  
2 Springs. My son went to five schools in six years with  
3 the choice program to keep him close to home. I want him  
4 to have neighborhood schools.

5 I had to drive him to school for five years  
6 because the bus stop was over two miles from my home.  
7 But in sixth grade -- When they go to school, the light  
8 is out. You can't let your child walk to a bus stop,  
9 especially in today's day and age. But definitely I  
10 wasn't able to do that. When you call transportation to  
11 try to straighten this out -- this is still existing  
12 today -- you get nowhere because they set these bus stops  
13 the first year of Choice and they do not change them.

14 Just this year -- I'm very involved at  
15 Brandywine Springs, and I was asked the first day of  
16 school. Parents are coming through there. The bus stops  
17 aren't coming to their developments because there is no  
18 bus stop in that development. They have to go three  
19 developments over to get a bus for kindergarten. It's  
20 ridiculous.

21 So in order for Choice to work, which I am a  
22 big supporter of Choice and a huge supporter of  
23 neighborhood schools, you have to do something about the  
24 bus stops. I just had to comment on that because I

1 totally agree with Kris that you have to do that.

2 I've been involved with the Red Clay  
3 Neighborhood School Coalition since its inception, and I  
4 strongly want the Board to recognize that the K-5  
5 configuration is something that Red Clay residents lobby  
6 for. We fought for this long and hard. Just look at the  
7 K-5 school we have at Brandywine Springs. It's  
8 completely full, and there is a huge waiting list.

9 Now, when the new school opens in Hockessin,  
10 I believe -- and this is something that the Red Clay  
11 Board has told us -- that everybody who choices should at  
12 least -- at the very least -- get one of either their  
13 first, second or third choice, because it will open up a  
14 lot of seats for that -- Those people in Hockessin are  
15 choicing to Brandywine Springs. So then those kids will  
16 go to the school in Hockessin which will leave seats open  
17 at Brandywine Springs. So I think when that school  
18 opens, which, I think, is three years down the road --  
19 three years down the road -- that will usually help the  
20 configuration and where the kids are choicing to.

21 Before choice busing existed and -- My son  
22 was stabbed on the school bus in fourth grade with a  
23 scissor. He was going to Palmer Elementary, which is in  
24 Christiana. I lived in Christiana at the time. And it

1 was November. And Choice was about to happen. I think  
2 it was 1994 was the first year. And I choiced him to a  
3 school that was right next door to my house but wasn't in  
4 my district. I was lucky because I got into that school.

5 I will never let my children ever go on a  
6 bus ride like that again. It's too difficult for a bus  
7 driver to control the kids on the bus. You know, they  
8 have to concentrate on 95. We want them to be driving.  
9 So I'm totally against busing because I have lived  
10 through pain with it. And I would send my child to  
11 private school if I had to.

12 I think that what we need to do is remember  
13 that we want to keep children in public education. We  
14 don't want them exiting and going to private schools or  
15 possibly moving to Landenberg to go to another school  
16 district. We need to keep our children going to public  
17 schools in Delaware. If this busing continues and we  
18 don't have neighborhood schools, that's exactly what's  
19 happening.

20 That's what happened when we -- suburban  
21 children, when they were -- I guess when you first had  
22 segregation -- deseg. I didn't live here, but a lot of  
23 people pulled out of public schools. That's why Delaware

24 has the highest rate of private school attendance in the

23

1 country.

2                   As far as the test scores go that Mr. Dunn  
3 talked about, the suburban children masked poor  
4 performances by the children in poverty at those schools.  
5 If there were more highly-identified poverty schools --  
6 We need to propose smaller classes for those kids.  
7 Children are still scoring the same as they scored on  
8 DSTP. But when you take those suburban children out of  
9 the schools to make that school, for example, like  
10 Shortlidge or Warner or one of those schools, they  
11 deserve to have money and funding from the state to make  
12 those schools -- either to make them a magnet school or  
13 giving them money to help these children identify their  
14 problems and help the kids and their families. It's not  
15 fair to pull everything out -- all their resources -- and  
16 leave them just standing there. They definitely need  
17 help from the state.

18                   I think that was all I wanted to say.

19                   I just want to say one more thing about  
20 neighborhood schools. Neighborhood schools gives our  
21 families and our children the opportunity to keep

22 siblings together in a school close to home. It's an  
23 advantage to everyone -- to the children, to the parents  
24 and to the neighborhoods. It's nice when you're walking

24

1 down the street and every child is going to the same  
2 school. "Hi. You're in third grade at my school. Oh,  
3 you're in fifth grade at my school. Oh, he's in  
4 kindergarten just starting." It's a really nice thing to  
5 see. We are finally starting to see that in Delaware.  
6 We need to stay there.

7 DR. PIKA: Any questions?

8 Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

9 Anyone else here this evening who would like  
10 to address the Board on this matter or respond to any of  
11 the things that have been said?

12 Last call.

13 Mr. Dunn.

14 MR. DUNN: There was some reference to the  
15 choice bus stops. And while I was on the board, there  
16 was some consideration over the issue. When Choice first  
17 came into Red Clay, which was right around the time the  
18 law was changed, they had decided at that time that they  
19 would provide bus stops for any child from any  
20 neighborhood to go to any school that they choose to go

21 to.

22 By the time I came on the board, the  
23 district was spending -- I believe the figure was about  
24 650,000 local dollars for additional bus routes to

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1 accommodate all these kids going all the places that they  
2 wanted to go to. So while I was on the board, it was  
3 decided that what we would do is, whatever bus stops  
4 existed at that time, we would freeze those bus stops,  
5 and as they became vacated, they would be eliminated.

6 Well, in retrospect, after thinking about  
7 that, what I believe it created was that the people that  
8 were most interested out in the greater suburban areas to  
9 get into suburban schools -- A neighborhood would tend to  
10 migrate or commit to one suburban school. North Star  
11 committed most or -- most of the kids were trying to get  
12 into Forest Oak or something like that. So that what  
13 ended up happening was that those bus stops never ended  
14 up becoming vacated.

15 But the occasional child, say, in Stanton  
16 that wanted to go up to H.B. duPont, he might be the only  
17 kid standing there. But him and his parents believed  
18 that that was the best school for him to go to. When he

19 left that bus stop, that bus stop went away. So there  
20 was no more -- no further accommodation for that child to  
21 get to that school unless that parent got in a car and  
22 drove him up to the nearest bus stop which might be four  
23 or five miles away.

24 So that continues to be an issue with some

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1 families where they live in one area of the district and  
2 they want to choice to another because of educational  
3 programs or their perception of their feeder schools.  
4 They can't get there outside of driving the kids across  
5 the district.

6 That's it.

7 DR. PIKA: Thanks very much, Mr. Dunn.

8 MR. DUNN: You're welcome.

9 MS. CONCHA: I just wanted to say I think  
10 this is something the Board needs to hear. Someone here  
11 in the audience needs to say it. You may be thinking,  
12 well, we don't have many people here so people really  
13 don't care about this issue or what you decide. I think  
14 we need to interpret the tiny crowd that we have here as  
15 that maybe people feel like, if they're not being heard,  
16 why bother going. So please look at it that way as  
17 opposed to, you know, people don't care, because people

18 do.

19                   The other thing -- Geez, I forgot what I was  
20 going to say. Oh, in terms of Choice -- just one last  
21 comment on that -- I would support Choice for the high  
22 schools because I think each high school can offer, you  
23 know, specialties. Maybe one is strong in math, one is  
24 strong in the languages, and one is strong in the arts.

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1                   But in terms of choice for K through eighth  
2 grade, I think that we should have strong curriculum in  
3 every school, and they really shouldn't be different or  
4 much different. Maybe different styles of teaching. But  
5 our children should be learning the same basics and have  
6 the same foundation whether they go to Heritage, whether  
7 they go to Warner or whether they go to Brandywine  
8 Springs. So if that is a stronghold for the Board or  
9 something that you really want to keep -- You might gear  
10 it more towards where it really might be useful, and that  
11 is in the high schools.

12                   Thank you.

13                   DR. PIKA: Thank you.

14                   We have a new speaker. Would you mind  
15 signing your name?

16 MS. WAGNER: I'm Leslie Wagner.

17 DR. PIKA: Would you mind spelling your last  
18 name?

19 MS. WAGNER: W-a-g-n-e-r.

20 I'm really speaking on behalf of Red Clay  
21 and Choice and how it has benefitted me and my family.  
22 For me Choice has been the best option for Red Clay. I  
23 live in an area where, if we institute neighborhood  
24 schools, I don't have a neighborhood school. And I know

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1 that that's true for a lot of people in the northern  
2 quadrant of Red Clay. For right now, until we can  
3 realign our schools and get the buildings there, I don't  
4 feel that neighborhood schools can best facilitate  
5 Red Clay.

6 My kids have been to Heritage, Highlands,  
7 Marbrook, Shortlidge, H.B. I've always used Choice, and  
8 it has been a real benefit for me. I get on Brandywine  
9 Springs. So I just -- My kids have been around a lot,  
10 and I just feel that Choice has been a real asset to me  
11 and my family.

12 Thanks.

13 DR. PIKA: Thank you.

14 Question.

15 DR. SMITH: In all of the instances in which  
16 you chose to use Choice, were you fortunate enough to get  
17 your first choice in each instance?

18 MS. WAGNER: Actually, I was.

19 DR. SMITH: If you didn't get your first  
20 choice, were you satisfied with what would have been your  
21 second?

22 MS. WAGNER: Truthfully, I have had great  
23 experiences across the board from Shortlidge to Marbrook,  
24 Highlands, Heritage. It's my oldest daughter who is now

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1 in eighth grade. She has transitioned very well. She  
2 has had excellent teachers at every school. It has been  
3 a very positive experience. So I -- Choice has been  
4 great for me, and I'd hate to see that whole system go  
5 away until we can actually accommodate neighborhood  
6 schools in Red Clay.

7 DR. SMITH: Thanks.

8 DR. PIKA: Thank you.

9 Anyone else?

10 I don't see a rush to the microphone. Well,  
11 in that case, I would like to express the appreciation of  
12 the Board for those of you who have come out this evening

13 to our hearing.

14 This is the second of three hearings that  
15 the Board is holding as you may have gathered from the  
16 article in the newspaper this morning. The final hearing  
17 of the series of three will be next Monday on  
18 October 28th in the City of Wilmington at the Howard High  
19 School Auditorium, at which time we will be reviewing  
20 both the Red Clay and the Christina District plans. The  
21 Board's time line on this matter is that we are planning  
22 to deliberate as a group in the beginning of December and  
23 hope to have a decision and a final order issued at the  
24 beginning of the new year.

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1 You are welcome to submit any additional  
2 written materials that you like that you wish to do so  
3 for the Board's consideration during those deliberations.  
4 And as I mentioned earlier, if you're interested in doing  
5 so, please contact Ms. Case, and she'll be able to give  
6 you the address and an e-mail address as well that would  
7 be able to get your submissions to the Board.

8 With that I would like to close this  
9 hearing. Thank you very much for coming this evening.

10 (The hearing closed at 7:45 p.m.)

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County of New Castle )

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Robert Wayne Wilcox, Jr., Registered Professional Reporter and Notary Public, do hereby certify that the foregoing record, pages 2 to 30 inclusive, is a true and accurate transcript of my stenographic notes taken on October 22, 2002, in the above-captioned matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand  
and seal this 24th day of October, 2002, at Wilmington.

Robert Wayne Wilcox, Jr.  
Certification No. 101-RPR  
(Expires January 31, 2005)

DATED: October 24, 2002