

# Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

## D a m a s c u s C l u s t e r

November 11, 2010

Damascus Cluster Testimony before the Montgomery County Board of Education, Facilities Hearing

The Upcounty demographic has changed over the past few years making the Damascus Cluster more populated with a larger student population. As a result, the facility needs for the Damascus cluster has changed and become more urgent.

### A. New Building for Damascus High School:

The most crucial need for the Damascus Cluster is the need for a new building for Damascus High School. We encourage a decision and date for the designation of a new building to be made a priority. The DHS infrastructure is failing and complaints are rising. DHS recently celebrated its 100 year anniversary. The current building was originally built in the early 1950s, and it is one of the oldest in the county. Other buildings of the same age or newer have had new buildings constructed including Richard Montgomery, Rockville, Paint Branch, Whitman, Gaithersburg. DHS is currently listed as “;TBD”; in the CIP budget along with 2 other high schools. It is our understanding that Damascus High School will be reviewed soon and then a date will be set. Below are a set of troubling facts that make the need for a new building all the more urgent.

Damascus High School’s primary concern was noted in Middle States AFG review and mentioned to the board by cluster rep previously. While the Damascus Cluster appreciates the support of IMC HVAC/Dehumidifier Project this past summer, DHS requests continued support for full school replacement over next several years. Currently have at least 12 rooms where heat/ac isn’t functioning properly and many others that don’t maintain an ideal temperature and humidity level.

The AFG validation team included the following statement in their report: “The school needs to immediately address the HVAC issues within the building. All people in the building within the building are affected by this issue. As it is a health issue, the Validation Team recommends immediate attention.” One of those health issues is the air quality issue mainly due to pipe wrapping related to HVAC. There needs to be full school pipe wrapping replacement because many indoor air quality complaints are related to pipe condensation leaks.

Damascus is also slated for or in need of a current number of projects:

- Lighting It was included in the adopted CIP, FY09-14, and shown as FY10, but no work has been done in that area.
- Seats (scheduled for FY14) – We respectfully request that it be moved up to coincide with panel replacement in FY12
- Sound Panels (scheduled for FY12, already pushed up from FY11) -- Sound panels on walls need to be refurbished on the stage.
- Floor & Pit Cover -- The entire floor needs to be pulled up and redone -- estimated cost for flooring around \$25k; requesting this be done along with seat and sound panel replacement in FY12.
- Outdoor Athletic Facility -Damascus High School has outgrown its outdoor facility. There is not enough bleacher seating to handle our large crowds. This creates a dangerous situation. In addition, the fields are not sufficient for our athletic program and some of DHS Athletic teams have to practice elsewhere.
- Small Gym Floor Replacement -- Pieces continually break up, maintenance repairs them, and then more pieces break up. It has become a safety hazard and the floor needs to be replaced.
- Outside Window Replacement – Many windows continually leak especially in hard rain.

## II. Planned Lifecycle Asset Replacement

### A. HVAC Improvement and Replacement

There are some urgent needs in the Cluster that I am sure sound familiar to you. Three facilities, Clearspring Elementary, Rockwell Elementary, Baker Middle and as mentioned Damascus High School have had persistent problems with their HVAC this academic year. As Principal Holly Steel writes in an email solicited for this testimony, “This (lack of consistently operating HVAC system) creates an environment that is difficult for children to learn and teachers to teach. There were times in September where classrooms reached 90 degrees...yes, we placed work orders and sometimes people came out to work on them. They are getting old and we need them to be working at all times!” That sentiment is felt by other principals in the Cluster. We need a consistent and fast replacement and repair system so that children aren’t left in classrooms for hours at a time without any relief from the cold or the heat. We expect all children to be successful- and hardworking, but we expect our county to provide them with the facilities in an effort to reach that goal.

### B. Blacktop Resurfacing

Clearspring and Woodfield Elementary schools noted that they are currently on the list for Blacktop resurfacing projects. It's important to report that the Woodfield Elementary Blacktop is severely damaged. Anything that can be done to complete this project sooner would be appreciated, as prolonged exposure to damaged blacktop to snow and freezing temperatures make the job more expensive and difficult

#### C. Technology Improvements

Woodfield Elementary does not have enough electrical plugs in the building and the building and it is not sufficiently wired to meet current technology use in the school. According to one Administrative staff member "Since we still have fewer technological access than many schools, this can be severely problematic as greater technology is added in the future." Clearspring Elementary is in need of electrical rewiring of the school. Rockwell has no working access to live television as the U.S. cable system has switched from Analog to Digital.

#### D. School Security

Damascus high school does not have adequate coverage of the space of their current building. As the Security Resource Officer's budgets have been cut and consolidated, the lack of coverage is of serious concern.

While Rockwell elementary appreciates the new computer security system, Woodfield Elementary has noted some problems with their front doors. One mom at a PTA Board meeting at Woodfield said, "We need a more secure door at our front entrance since we are on a main road. Anyone can walk in and any kid can just walk out. Securing front doors and restricting access to students, especially at an Elementary school is crucial.

#### E. Playground Equipment

Rockwell Elementary is need of new playground equipment has its original playground equipment. We now have Moms whose children have played with the same equipment albeit 19 years later.

Thank you very much for your attention and consideration. In a time when the School Budget is tight, it is important to note that we all have the same concerns for each and every student in this county; and that is a safe and effective learning environment for each child.