

THE NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM

A Consortium of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook Clusters

Comments on the FY 2012 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2011-2016
Capital Improvements Program

On behalf of The NEC High Schools

November 11, 2010

Blake High School
Paint Branch High School
Springbrook High School

Good evening Superintendent Weast, Mrs. O'Neill, and members of the Board. My name is Patti Twigg and I am the Area Vice President for the Northeast Consortium and Sherwood Quad-Clusters. I am here tonight to speak on behalf of the CIP needs of the three high schools in our Northeast Consortium — Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook.

The Northeast Consortium fully supports the MCCPTA Resolution on the FY 2012 CIP Budget and Amendments to the FY 2011-16 CIP and MCCPTA Resolution on the Restroom Renovation Project in the FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvement Program.

Within the Northeast Consortium, we share a commonality of purpose and passion for the education of our children. I know that you can imagine the excitement in the Paint Branch community as we watch the construction of our new school. I hope that you have been able to drive by to see the progress. If not, I have included a picture taken this morning in my testimony.



We are extremely grateful for the vision that made this project move forward. I am personally grateful to not have to be harping on it any longer. However, rather than being able to turn my harping skills to my family, there are other very pressing needs in the Northeast Consortium which require my honed abilities.

Springbrook HS has serious problems with their restrooms. This is their top priority. I have been testifying about this every year, and looked back to find it in testimony from before my time as Cluster Coordinator, starting in 2006. They are experiencing recurring plumbing issues that require frequent maintenance requests and work orders, with numerous visits by depot personnel. We question the cost effectiveness of this approach. Many of the fixtures are so old that replacement parts are no longer available. Springbrook has all metal stall dividers, which have been etched in and are repainted almost daily. Painting these over and over has become a real problem. Springbrook needs nonabsorbent stall dividers, which allow for quicker/easier clean up. Their first floor bathrooms, which need to accommodate not only students but most visitors, are so unappealing as to reflect poorly on the school.

Unfortunately, they are not on the current list for the restroom renovation program, which goes out through 2016. If we adhere to the restroom renovation program as it stands, Springbrook HS will be waiting a **minimum** of six years for repairs that are needed **now!** It is our opinion that it is clearly more cost effective and realistic to put the money into maintenance and repair of the restrooms in our schools. Last year the MCCPTA Delegates voted to support a resolution placing the importance of maintenance above the current restroom renovation program. Springbrook HS would certainly benefit from this approach.

We all understand the importance of technology in modern education. Springbrook High School needs their TV Studio to be modernized. They are offering a state-of-the-art technology education to their students. However, the TV Studio is outdated. I again looked back at past testimony, and was disheartened to see this request also predates my time as Cluster Coordinator. They need to have their lighting replaced due to the old wiring, an upgrade to the TV switch chroma key, the soundboard updated and need software for their students to process their raw footage. Given that Springbrook houses the Technology Signature Program, it seems only logical that its equipment remain state-of-the-art and functional to optimize the opportunities for the students there.

Blake HS is once again requesting more storage space for equipment. The need is especially critical in the auditorium area for the storage of props, costumes and supplies and they request an addition be considered to expand the scene shop area. The building was designed before the signature program was determined and they have been trying to retro-fit ever since.

Frankly, Blake HS is a good example of the costs and problems associated with not fully funding the CIP projects. The lesson to be learned is that when the school was built, they scaled back its size, including the core capacity, and no matter how many classroom additions are built the core facilities will always be too small. That is very expensive, and thus practically impossible, to fix. That is the danger of not fully funding the CIP projects. Please don't let this happen to any other schools.

High schools behind Paint Branch on the modernization schedule, Gaithersburg, Wheaton, Seneca Valley, are also eagerly waiting their turns to see their schools transformed into the gems of their communities, and we strongly support them in seeing their projects, and indeed all modernizations and additions, completed on time and as planned. In addition, we would like to see modernizations be given at least equal priority to additions when planning the budget. We feel that both are critical to student achievement, health and safety.

We fully support the budget increase for desperately needed heating and air conditioning improvements to \$15 million and the \$1 million increase for routine life-cycle asset replacements in order to restore funding that was cut from last year's budget. We also are supportive of the continuation and expansion of the BMPI, Roof Replacements and School Security county wide projects funding. However, as stated last year, we would like to have more information provided as to the anticipated replacement or rehabilitation of HVAC systems. What is their current expected lifetime? We would also like more information about exactly what projects are included under the BMPI line item, perhaps in the form of a list. There has been confusion in the past about what belongs in that category, and having a list of typical projects will help us communicate clearly with our local schools. Another important program is the PLAR program, and we would like to see some of what we consider routine upkeep included in this. Springbrook High School was painted 13 years ago and needs a complete new exterior paint job. At Blake HS, floor tile throughout the building is in horrendous condition; far beyond what would be a result of natural wear and tear. It is separating, buckling, and gathering mold due to separations. The majority of hallway tile, specifically on the lower floor, needs to be replaced. Not only is it aesthetically a nightmare and a safety issue with people tripping on separated and lumpy tile, but mold is a concern as a significant number of the tiles are edged in black mold. This is a possible health hazard. This has been an ongoing problem at the school, with one area being repaired, only to have the problem recur somewhere else.

Programs that could also benefit from continued expansion are the Roof Replacement and School Security programs. While it is not currently an issue, over the last few years, Paint Branch has had some significant roof leaks, resulting in damaged equipment. And, because our high schools are large, outdoor cameras are particularly important for the protection of our buildings. For instance, Blake has a 93 acre campus, making the issue of outdoor security that much more complex.

While maintenance is an Operating Budget item, we feel it is important to mention that it really is a critical issue for our aging buildings, and it would make sense to link it to the CIP Budget. Maintenance plays an important role with the issues focused on by MCCPTA advocacy. We need well defined preventative maintenance programs for our schools that lessen the need for costly repairs and remediation.

As we work for continuous improvement in our schools, for reaching benchmarks, for raising test scores and student achievement, we need to be mindful that to accomplish these goals, our children need the proper resources. Our number one priority should be to provide each student with a safe, secure and modern facility that is conducive to learning. This is all about the

children! I am confident we share this commonality of purpose. We must fully fund the projects in the CIP.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft Renewal and Modernization Policy. We agree that it is important to link the replacement of buildings with a systematic approach to the replacement of major building systems. However, we would like to see the draft policy strengthened to include meaningful goals to guide MCPS's activities. The policy should identify the specific targets for maintaining schools in good working condition, and it should establish criteria for determining when modernization, as opposed to systemic maintenance, would be appropriate. Without both specific goals and realistic timelines, there is too much leeway that could lead to the deferral of not only upgrades, but even necessary maintenance. This needs to be clear, and in writing, so that every community knows exactly what the criteria and timelines are. Finally, it is important to fully staff and fund these projects.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to comment on the FACT criteria for the next round of schools to be modernized. We are once again grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback, and we are also grateful that a large range of stakeholders were included in the development of the criteria. We appreciate that there will be an additional round of public comment on the criteria after the scoring methodology and weighting criteria have been developed. In the Northeast Consortium and Sherwood Clusters, we have seven elementary schools, one middle school, one special programs center and an elementary holding center on the list of schools to receive scores in this next round, so being able to provide input is very important to us. In addition, because of the fact that we are talking very long time-lines for these projects, we want to emphasize the importance of also attending to maintenance of major systems for schools not on the list to be assessed.

We very much appreciate your giving us the opportunity to speak on behalf of our high schools tonight. Thank you for your time and your consideration of these requests.

Respectfully,

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