

Northwest Cluster

NORTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL

Kingsview Middle School

Lakelands Park Middle School (shared)

Roberto Clemente Middle School (shared)

Clopper Mill Elementary School

Darnestown Elementary School

Diamond Elementary School (shared)

Germantown Elementary School

Great Seneca Creek Elementary School (shared)

Ronald McNair Elementary School

Spark M. Matsunaga Elementary School

FY 2011-2016 CIP Testimony to the Board of Education November 11, 2010

Good evening Dr. Weast, President O'Neill and Board Members. My name is Beth Kennington and I am one of the Northwest Cluster Coordinators.

I would like to begin by delivering our Cluster's sincere regard to Veterans who have gone before us, are retired or actively enlisted and to offer our deep gratitude for the commitments and sacrifices each of them makes and has made for us.

In the Northwest Cluster, we understand the **commonality** in challenges we all share in this fiscal climate. The Northwest Cluster would like to reiterate the message from last year that we cannot afford to fall behind. As such, we support the Superintendent's recommendations for this 2011-2016 CIP and are very appreciative of this CIP's stated recommendations to address overcrowding in the Northwest Cluster.

In particular, we would like to offer sincere appreciation for the System's recommended improvements to **Darnestown ES's** septic system, school capacity and restrooms. This school is one of the smallest elementary schools in the county and is one of the oldest in our cluster. Although the Darnestown ES facility only holds about 264 students, it has six portable classrooms and exceeds its core capacity by over 41%.

Diamond ES is a high performing elementary in the system with many exciting programs and curricular achievements occurring daily. With that, the school enjoys a transient and diverse population. The addition of the Quince Orchard Park to the Diamond population and its still-growing populace continues to add to Diamond's enrollment. The recommendation for a feasibility study is whole-heartedly supported and desired by our Cluster, as space for learning, pull-outs, lunches, physical education, specials and choral and instrumental performances, continues to challenge the Diamond community.

Overcrowding at **Spark Matsunaga and Great Seneca Creek Elementaries** continues to challenge the cluster and is met with both enthusiasm and curricular ingenuities that make our cluster proud! As a whole, the cluster welcomes the opportunities for discussions

including the capacity studies to review overcrowding in the Cluster elementaries. Testimony to this point is offered by the Matsunaga PTA and is attached.

In early 2010, a capacity study was performed to explore the options of tearing down and rebuilding **Germantown ES** at double its capacity or to find additional land on which to build a new elementary school in the Northwest cluster, both for the purpose of accommodating students from over-utilized Matsunaga-Longview and Great Seneca Creek Elementaries. The Germantown community enjoyed participation in the feasibility/capacity study and in viewing potential design options for a new school. The Cluster looks forward to participation in the site selection committee, recommended by the CIP in the coming winter. Additional testimony is offered by the Germantown ES PTA in the document attached.

The Northwest Cluster has a growing concern about over-utilization of schools at all levels – elementary, middle and high – by the end of this CIP cycle. With 10 of its 11 schools projected to be over capacity by 2016, it is clear that additions or new school construction are not only needed, but definitively *required*.

Modernizations to aging schools should address safety in terms of the location of front offices in order to control entry to the school facility. Our cluster supports an additional holding school in the Up-County Region. We would like to see all students across the County benefit from the technology that many of our schools enjoy (including Promethean Boards, Elmo Projectors, etc.) and “Green” buildings like Great Seneca Creek ES, that benefit everyone with tremendous operational cost savings.

Finally, safety continues to be an issue in our cluster and the entire County. Pedestrian safety continues to be a major concern at Northwest High School along Great Seneca Highway, at Kingsview Middle School along the newly expanding Father Hurley Boulevard, at Lakelands Park Middle School along both Main at Bright Meadow and Main at Route 28/Darnestown Road. Now, more than ever, School Resource Officers (previously known as “EFOs”) and the County’s Pedestrian Safety Initiative are needed to keep our students safe *en route* to and from and IN their schools. Just this week alone in the NW Cluster **two students were struck by vehicles** *en route* to school and just last week a student fight broke out in a Silver Spring HS, which involved use of a gun. One of the intersections in question at Lakelands MS was studied and it was later determined that placement of a stop sign would (quote) cause more safety concerns than it would prevent (unquote). We cannot continue to operate on a reactionary basis where student safety is concerned. We need MCPS’s advocacy and involvement in both the ***preventative*** and the reactionary safety processes.

In summary, the Northwest Cluster understands the challenges we all face in the current fiscal climate and sincerely appreciates all that MCPS is prepared to do within the CIP budget to modernize, add-on and to address overcrowding in our schools. With those thoughts in mind, and for the record, in future budgetary cycles when school construction funds are more readily available for construction funding in all its forms, the Cluster would like to urge MCPS to reconsider its methodology and formulations utilized in the planning processes for new school and additions/modernizations construction. We applaud MCPS’ planning for future additions with new schools, but nonetheless, feel compelled to offer our concern about the size inadequacies of new-school construction in our Cluster in the past.

The Northwest Cluster and I would like to offer our thanks for the work that you do for our children!

Respectfully,

Beth Kennington, Susan Burkinshaw and Bob Murphy

2010-11 Northwest Cluster Coordinators