

**Testimony of Laurie Halverson
Churchill Cluster Coordinator
Submitted on behalf of the Winston Churchill Cluster of PTAs/PTSAs
January 16, 2008**

President Navarro, Dr. Weast and members of the Board of Education, it is my honor to present the testimony tonight on behalf of the Winston Churchill Cluster. My name is Laurie Halverson and I'm an MCCPTA Churchill Cluster Coordinator representing 6,000 PTA members. Since the summer, our PTA presidents, delegates, cluster coordinators and principals have worked together to strengthen our schools through collaboration. The following testimony represents a coordinated effort from all of us.

Move to Grosvenor a Success

I'd like to start by mentioning a perfect example of MCPS and parents working together for our children. The move from **Bells Mill** to the Grosvenor holding facility was a seamless process for our children. The collaboration among the principal, Mrs. Oglesby, and her staff, the Division of Construction, Building Maintenance Staff, the Department of Transportation and the PTA was outstanding. Thanks to all who worked so hard to make our children transition so well. And thank you Board of Education for supporting the PLAR funds to give Grosvenor a facelift. Our children feel welcome there because everyone worked together to make it happen.

Thanks for Recognizing Our Strongest Asset

We are pleased you are keeping salaries competitive for our teachers. We can't emphasize how much our parents value passionate teachers who have the gift of engaging our students. We are all too aware that it is a struggle to find qualified special ed teachers and to keep our regular teachers due to the cost of living in our county, our cluster being no exception.

Penny Wise, Pound Foolish Maintenance Plan needs to change

Even when you have a bare bones budget, we want to draw attention to an area where there should be no compromise-maintenance of our buildings and portables. The proposed maintenance budget is barely enough to keep up with the current demand of 63,000 work orders per year for broken

facilities that need fixing. The budget also does not permit the Indoor Air Quality team the ability to serve its originally intended purpose of working proactively to improve air quality in our schools. The increase of services requested (from 118 in FY 2001 to 278 in FY 2007) in the IAQ Department and the shortage of HVAC mechanics have halted their proactive efforts.

Evidence from a 1998 report that can be found on the MCPS website and current reports indicate that for over 25 years, little or no preventive maintenance has been the practice at MCPS. No annual check-ups are scheduled, no routine cleaning or servicing of the ventilation units are completed, unless something malfunctions and a work order is placed. While most of us have our home air conditioners serviced at least once a year, many of our children are sitting in classrooms that have HVAC systems that have never been cleaned.

The current plan is a penny wise, pound foolish maintenance plan. It is a plan that is based on paying for something when it breaks, costing more over time than if it was routinely maintained. It is a plan that allows unit ventilators to become dirty and moldy, delivering only half of the designed air flow and stifling the efficiency of HVAC units so that they are no longer meeting code requirements. It is a plan that provides a fiscal practice of separating capital and operating budgets in a manner that makes it look like capital costs for renovation and new building projects are lower while not counting in the capital budget the higher maintenance costs that follow. And, sadly, it is a plan that uses our children and teachers as the indicators of air quality issues.

How will all this play out with the new LEED certification requirements? MCPS will pay 30% more for new green facilities. How can it be prudent to spend more money upfront when there is no plan to proactively maintain these new buildings in the future? These LEED buildings will not serve their intended purpose and the investment upfront will be wasted if you continue this pattern. As MCPS leaders, you must change the way you think about maintenance. It is not an expendable department MCPS can neglect in tight budget years. At a bare minimum, you should add enough staff to help the IAQ meet its proactive maintenance goals.

I also urge you to support a program where **portables** are inspected and HVACs are serviced at least once per year. I received an IAQ Inspection Report a couple weeks ago that shows that there are at least 77 portables that are rated by MCPS in fair or poor condition. (A portable that has a rating of 10 or under is considered in “good” condition, but could still have serious issues that need to be addressed immediately.) Develop better quality specifications for portables (without design flaws) with improved indoor air quality, better acoustics, and running water and bathrooms. As enrollment is again on the upswing, we don’t foresee portables disappearing anytime soon, so please do more to make these temporary classrooms better learning environments for our children and better teaching environments for our teachers.

Safety Concerns

We still have safety concerns in our cluster, especially during pick up and drop off times at school. At **Cabin John** a couple weeks ago, a student was bumped by a car, the adult driver yelled at the student in the middle of the crosswalk and then drove away. Early this fall, our request for a crossing guard was denied because from what we understand, MCPS decided that there weren’t enough children crossing the street to warrant a crossing guard, despite a crossing guard recommendation by the police department.

Increase Achievement

There are other important concerns in the Churchill cluster which are related to the goal of improving academic achievement:

- **Math Coaches:** Our cluster elementary schools would like to share one or two math coaches who can provide the support to students and teachers to make our accelerated courses within reach for all of our students.
- **Middle School Reform:** We support the middle school reform initiatives and look forward to hearing the data that shows that the initiatives increase achievement.
- **Immersion Program:** In our global economy, early language acquisition is an important element our schools provide through the Immersion programs. **Potomac Elementary** has a Chinese partial Immersion program and while we haven't heard that our teacher position will be affected, our community values this program greatly and hopes you will

not cut any support you currently give. We don't understand why MCPS would cut support of immersion teacher-time to prep/develop, while adding it for magnet middle schools.

- **Textbooks and Supplies:** Although the inflation rate applied has been decreased in the operating budget proposal for textbooks and supplies, costs in this area are increasing. So at a minimum, the allocation per pupil for textbooks and supplies should have a full inflation adjustment. The current textbook/supply money is not even meeting the need. There are times when MCPS doesn't send enough textbooks and supplies or does not support its own initiatives financially. Last year for example, one of our schools received 45 science textbooks with a new curriculum rollout, yet we had 62 children in fifth grade. As new math middle school classes were added to the elementary school curriculum, MCPS didn't support this extra need and left the principals to use their school budget to pay for \$65 books for an entire class.
- **Provide Support for Advanced and Accelerated Courses:** Our teachers, new to teaching middle school math, need more training/coaching/professional development for these new initiatives.
- **Hours Based Staffing in Home Schools:** We are concerned that hours based staffing is planned for only three more schools next year. It was our understanding that the support experienced in the learning centers would be provided by the hours based staffing model for students now remaining in their home schools. We don't understand how the children who would have attended a learning center can have their needs met without this support, and are concerned about the impact on all students in the regular classrooms.

Thank you for adding **lunch/recess aides** to your budget proposal. We are encouraged that you support this additional level of safety which is an identified need by our cluster. Thank you also for continuing to support the "**Super Team**" **Concept** in the Churchill and Wootton Clusters. Our principals are able to network among the schools to help students in the transition from elementary to middle to high school.

We are grateful for your commitment in helping "Montgomery County Public Schools" be one of the best school systems in the country. Let's continue to improve the relationships between parents, teachers, students and MCPS as we work toward the goal of building great schools, one child at a

time! **We believe that it takes a collaborative effort by all stakeholders to produce National Blue Ribbon schools like Winston-Churchill High School!**

Note: Our cluster voted in favor of the MCCPTA Operating Budget Compact.

Note: The Churchill cluster does not have any **parent outreach coordinators**, but we support this concept in areas of need. If a need is determined in our cluster through study circles, we will welcome the program.

Reasons for Preventive Maintenance in MCPS

“There are major challenges in maintaining the proactive effort of preparing BMPs. In 1998, the primary mission of the IAQ Team was to prepare building maintenance plans (BMPs) for schools and make annual visits thereafter to ensure that BMPs were being implemented successfully and that good indoor air quality was being maintained.

As schools have learned of the value of the IAQ Team’s involvement and work, requests for their (reactive) services have steadily increased -- from 118 requests in FY 2001 to 278 requests in FY 2007. Many of the more recent requests and demands for special assistance have involved assessing the condition of relocatable classrooms.

During this period of increasing demand for services, MCPS has been unable to fill vacant HVAC mechanic positions in the IAQ Team. Aside from the budgetary struggle of offering a competitive salary, recruiting for IAQ HVAC mechanics is made more difficult because they must work the 2nd shift (2:00-10:30 pm).

Consequently, the combination of increased services and shortage of mechanics has forced the mission to creep from proactive to reactive.” (*Sean Yarup, email January 3, 2008*)

“Although there are measures for effectiveness, cost, and timeliness for some support processes identified in Figure 6.2-1, there are no measures for the effectiveness of the support processes of Human Resources and Maintenance.” (*2006 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Feedback Report for MCPS found on MCPS website*)

“There are two distinct tasks that must be performed if managers are to achieve high operating efficiency in their air-conditioning systems; buy efficient, and maintain efficient. The most efficient system in the world will not remain that way if it is not properly maintained. And all the maintenance in the world can not make a system that is inefficient by design efficient.” (*facilitiesnet.com, Maintenance Solutions, September 2006*)

“Inadequate ventilation, and its effect on IEQ, is a recognized problem for portable classrooms.” (*Email from Peter Park found on MCPS website, January 10, 2006*)

“As I noted before, I think an additional benefit to continuous blower operation (and outdoor air supply) is room pressurization. Generally, buildings should be pressurized to reduce infiltration of outdoor air and moisture. **Such infiltration is a significant problem with portables, which have exterior siding that is not sealed to the frames.** As you can see in the attached image (ML222 soleplate.jpg), the aluminum siding rests against a trim piece positioned against the wooden soleplate (the picture was taken from the wall space with batt insulation and drywall removed), allowing for a continuous gap around the exterior. I’ve attached an image (ML222 ext wall.jpg) showing an exterior view of the trim pieces, which have a top lip on which rain water tends to sit. The portable in these images sustained extensive fungal growth and damage to the wooden frame, drywall, insulation, and subfloor (ML222 front wall.jpg; ML222 floor.jpg) requiring extensive repairs that displaced classes for over two weeks. We have seen similar damage to other portables. **I would suspect some level of moisture damage to most MCPS portables of this design.** (Peter Park email, January 10, 2006)

“**Another important item is canopy construction. These tend to be quite leaky, resulting in damage and fungal growth** as shown in the image (ML-559 canopy.jpg). This particular leak led to fungal growth inside the adjacent portable (ML-559 ceiling.jpg). (Peter Park email, January 10, 2006)

“Based on my experiences, I would request you pay particular attention to two problems common for all portables currently used by MCPS:

1. Moisture incursion, especially through the walls – rain water collects on top surfaces of exterior trim pieces and enters under the siding. This causes fungal growth (in wall cavities and floors) and damage to the studs, sole plates, insulation, and drywall.
2. Inadequate ventilation – because EM cycles ventilation units on/off based on temperature demands, adequate outdoor air is not supplied as required by the IMC (and recommended by ASHRAE). **Carbon dioxide readings I obtain for occupied portables are usually much higher than ASHRAE and MCPS recommended limits, typically ranging from 1300 to 2800 ppm.**” (Peter Park email, January 10, 2006)

“The key to improving IAQ in MCPS schools is to reduce the incidence of new problems via preventive measures, rather than to continue its piecemeal problem response.” (1998 Final Report of MCPS Indoor Air Quality Process Action Team)

“The primary means for preventing new problems is for MCPS to develop a school-based building maintenance plan (BMP) for each school in the county. **For the last fifteen years, there has been little to no money spent on preventive maintenance of elementary or middle school unit ventilators, high school air handling units, and other mechanical equipment essential to providing clean air to our classrooms. Dirty unit ventilator internal surfaces are often fouled with mold populations. Apparently some units have never been cleaned; others have not been cleaned or maintained in years.**” (1998 Final Report of MCPS Indoor Air Quality Process Action Team)

“MCPS should also hold an independent annual review at each school of progress towards implementing its BMP and post those results at the school.” (1998 Final Report of MCPS Indoor Air Quality Process Action Team)

“In addition to proactive maintenance, it is imperative that all new and renovated buildings be built to code; designed to reflect realistic use forecasts; commissioned to demonstrate that the design requirements have been met; and use technologies that are not problematic from an IAQ perspective. Currently, this is not the case. For example, the Montgomery County building codes state that ventilation systems must supply 15 cubic feet per minute (cfm) of outside air per student in each classroom. The designs must accommodate a minimum of 45 students in each 900 sq. ft. room unless an alternative lower occupant load is proven by statistical data. However, the MCPS design guidance document (January 1997) requires that their contractor design "be based on an actual average occupancy of 25 persons at 15 cfm per occupant." This statement is in violation of current building codes, and would result in an inadequate design for occupant levels commonly found in current MCPS classrooms. All indoor air environments should meet minimum fresh-air ventilation requirements such that the levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the classrooms remain under 1000 ppm (the threshold level identified by NIOSH over which occupants often complain of headaches, fatigue, stuffiness, and upper respiratory tract irritations).” (1998 Final Report of MCPS Indoor Air Quality Process Action Team)

“Preventive maintenance is provided to ensure that a building component or item of equipment will achieve its expected useful life. This effort begins when the item is new and continues until it is replaced or modernized....Schools and users are not expected to request preventive maintenance services. The program is staffed and funded through the operating budget by the Division of Maintenance.” (MCPS Policy FKB)