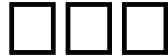


**The Northeast Consortium**  
**A CONSORTIUM OF THE BLAKE, PAINT BRANCH AND SPRINGBROOK**  
**CLUSTER SCHOOLS**



**Testimony Regarding the MCPS FY2009 Recommended Operating Budget**

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:** Broad Acres, Burnt Mills, Burtonsville, Cannon Road, Cloverly, Cresthaven, Dr. Chas. Drew, Fairland, Galway, Greencastle, Jackson Road, Roscoe Nix, Wm. T. Page, Sherwood, Stonegate, and Westover

January 16, 2008

Good Evening President Navarro, Dr. Weast and Members of the Board. My name is Dawn Dolan and I am here tonight to represent the needs of our 16 elementary schools within the Northeast Consortium, made up of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook Clusters.

We would like to share MCCPTA President, Jane DeWinter's gratitude for allowing us to participate in this year's budget process. This represents a significant step toward extending trust in and support for a cooperative educational process. With a dire budget presently facing us, a renewed sense of shared goals is critical for all to achieve a high standard of excellence. We feel that MCPS has brought a budget that tries to deliver educational equity, while attempting to address all of its strategic priorities.

However, there are aspects of this year's budget that we believe need to be noted for both their immediate and long-term impact on our Clusters' schools. The Northeast Consortium schools have specifically expressed their priorities as staffing, curriculum support enhancements, and counselors. We are an extraordinarily diverse community economically, socially, and educationally — and we are proud of the successes our schools have had in meeting their remarkable educational challenges.

Our Consortium schools have a student population that is 81.7% minority and 10 of our 16 elementary schools are overcrowded. Half (or 8) have FARMS rates

of above 40% – up to 85%, 6 elementaries have ESOL rates over 20%, and 8 (or 1/2) have mobility rates of approximately 25% and above.

With this in mind, we are pleased to see the addition of 5 Elementary School Counselors and 1 ESOL Counselor. Galway Elementary hopes it will be one of the recipients of this benefit. Galway parents, in fact, believe that when evaluating their student population of 700 and projected 723 for next year, in addition to a 45% FARMS and over 21% ESOL rate, that a .5 counselor would still be hard-pressed to provide the needed support, and would still petition the Board to consider the placement of a full-time counselor.

While we understand that there needs to be a balanced placement of these counselors across the County, we have several high-need schools that will not receive this benefit due to lesser enrollment numbers. We are grateful that Broad Acres and Greencastle receive many of these supports as a result of housing the Linkages to Learning programs. This bonus extends to further relieve financial pressure from the operating budget in meeting the needs of some of our most challenged schools.

The disposition of staffing for ESOL programming is especially relevant to our NEC schools. We realize the context of the realignment of ESOL teachers at schools with METS programs, but are justifiably disquieted that the needs of these students may not be adequately supported. Both Broad Acres and Cresthaven have METS programs. We also do not believe that the addition of 1 ESOL counselor within the County will be sufficient and places an unfair burden on our schools to compete for this position.

The NEC schools have a genuine concern about the need for proper staffing and materials for special education and inclusion classes. Again, the elementary schools house 37 classes across the spectrum of special education, along with the Home School Model at Sherwood. Thank you for the addition of 10 general ed teaching positions to support the inclusion of special ed students. We believe

that this is movement in the right direction and hope that this not only continues, but that we will also soon see data to support its effectiveness.

In contrast however, we must point out that although this year's budget does not minimize the current programming for special education, it also lacks any new initiatives or expansion for improved staffing ratios or for curriculum & materials. Sherwood Elementary has requested that the BOE pay particular attention to this with respect to the success of its Home School Model. Additionally, Westover would appeal Alpha Smarts for Special Education as part of the Tech Mod they may receive this summer.

The NEC schools have resoundingly asked that we address the need for staffing to attain the rewards seen in trending to smaller class size. Cloverly and Stonegate are both struggling with over-enrollment and with the strain this adds in meeting this goal. Please see the attached letter from Stonegate PTA regarding their request for an additional classroom teacher.

Eleven (11) of our schools are part of the Reduced Class Size Initiative or Focus Schools, and 5 of these receive Title I funding. Without current Schools-At-A-Glance, we are not sure which of our schools, if any, may be included in those 4 that are dropping off – or if any are part of the 3 being added.

Nevertheless, the absolute need to assure appropriate staffing cannot be overstated. We are all invested in the ability of our students to meet higher levels of academic success and with the desire to eliminate the achievement gap. This requires curriculum support in both materials and programs — and the staff development that makes this all possible.

Stonegate has pointed out their need of a Math-Content Coach, along with smaller class sizes in math, to help realize this. We have heard this cry throughout the NEC and across the Clusters for quite some time now. And student success relies upon even simple material requests such as Westover's for new TV's, a laminator to replace their broken one, and more Math A textbooks.

We would be remiss if we did not take this opportunity to thank you for two initiatives that we have been heavily advocating for in the NEC. These are the addition of Parent Community Outreach Coordinators, of which we hope there will be a balance of multi-lingual positions; and for the addition of 16 lunch aides, although we would strongly request some form of training in behavior management and/or anti-bullying skills. We also applaud the expansion of the PBIS program and hope to see its further incorporation over time.

Thank you for allowing us to present the priorities of our community. We know this budget year will be difficult and especially when we have an educational process where the whole is truly greater than the sum of its parts. Thank you for all the work you do on behalf of our students and families.

Respectfully,

The Northeast Consortium Cluster Coordinators

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