

January 16, 2008

The Northeast Consortium

A consortium of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook cluster schools

Testimony Regarding the MCPS FY2009 Recommended Operating Budget

Middle Schools

Benjamin Banneker, Briggs Chaney, Francis Scott Key, Farquhar, and White Oak

Good evening Superintendent Weast, Mrs. Navarro, and members of the Board. My name is Naghma Husain and I am one of the Springbrook Cluster Coordinator. This testimony speaks to the 5 middle schools that compose our cluster.

We are pleased that the proposed Operating Budget is aligned with the developing needs of our cluster. The Superintendent's budget strongly advocates for programs and initiatives that serve to raise the achievement and success rates for our middle school students.

The NEC cluster supports the continuation of funds needed to implement **Middle School Reform**. The **Middle School Reform Initiative** is crucial. Appropriate funding must be in place to support its implementation on every level — curricula, staffing and training, materials, etc.

The FY2009 budget also retains prior years' initiatives to increase the number of secondary school counselors. We would like to see that increase continue.

In addition, we offer the following general priorities for all of our middle schools.

- Additional special education teachers and paraeducators to support more hours-based special education instruction.
- Higher level of security at the middle school level.
- Shifting focus to preventative maintenance rather than repair. Proactive maintenance is more cost effective than reactive maintenance.
- More attention to discipline problems.
- Thorough assessment of new programs and curricula before and after implementation. We would also like to see the evaluation of data for new programs that are implemented.
- Adequate teacher training before rollout of new programs.
- We support the continuation of additional parent outreach coordinators.
- We support the identification of focus schools for reduced class sizes in k-2.
- We would like to see the expansion of middle school magnet programs to more middle schools. What is currently available is not enough. Only a small number of deserving and qualified students are given this challenging opportunity.

- All middle school teachers teaching HS courses should be certified.
- Reduction of class sizes throughout the county.
- We request an expansion of usable activity buses. Many students are unable to participate in after school activities due to inadequate activity buses.

Specifically, **Farquar Middle School** requests to be one of the next set of middle schools chosen under the MS reform program. They are also waiting to hear if they will be one of the middle schools to benefit from an increase in hours-based staffing.

Thank you for your time and continued efforts to support the success of our students.