

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster
Bethesda-Chevy Chase HS
Westland MS
Bethesda ES*Chevy Chase ES*North Chevy Chase ES
Rock Creek Forest ES*Rosemary Hills PS
Somerset ES*Westbrook ES

Testimony on the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2010 Operating Budget
January 21, 2009

Good evening, President Brandman, Superintendent Weast and members of the Board of Education. I am Joy White, co-coordinator, with Craig Brown and Jack Hayes, of the Bethesda Chevy Chase Cluster, and I am pleased to be here tonight testifying on the 2010 Operating Budget for Montgomery County Public Schools. I would also like to thank our cluster principals and members of our community who have come here tonight. The B-CC Cluster supports the MCCPTA Operating Budget Compact, as well as the testimony you have already heard from MCCPTA, and that of our quad cluster.

I would like to affirm that the BCC Cluster supports the FY 2010 Operating Budget submitted by the Superintendent. We recognize that both the MCPS Central Office and teachers and support staff themselves have made sacrifices to reduce staffing and to forego salary increases next year. We know that you all will have to make very difficult choices regarding which cuts to make in the FY 2010 Budget.

Parents in the BCC Cluster have three priorities for the FY 2010 Budget: 1) to maintain current class sizes, 2) to ensure the regular maintenance and repair of our school buildings, and 3) to maintain support to our teachers through the Middle School Reform initiative and other staff development efforts.

BCC Cluster parents support the Superintendent's goal to minimize negative impacts on classroom instruction in FY 2010. Our top priority is to maintain current class sizes next year. We see that enrollment projections for FY 2010 are greater than planned for in past years. We expect that the great success MCPS has shown in educating our children, combined with the difficult economic conditions in our area, cause some families to flee private schools in favor of neighborhood public schools. We view this as a positive development in our community and we want MCPS to be ready to handle the additional students while still offering students the best education possible. Increases in enrollment at all levels will put extra pressure on the school system during tough budgetary times, but we implore the Board to avoid budget cuts that will result in larger class sizes.

We see that the FY 2010 Budget cuts building services staff, and this concerns us. Greater numbers of students coursing through our school buildings will cause greater wear and tear to our facilities. Bethesda Elementary School, Westbrook Elementary School, North Chevy Chase Elementary School, Chevy Chase Elementary School, Bethesda Chevy Chase High School, Westland Middle School, Rosemary Hills Primary

School and Rock Creek Forest are all over capacity now. Somerset Elementary School will be short of classroom space next year. Most of our schools use relocatable classrooms to provide additional instructional space. Some of these relocatables require additional maintenance to ensure healthy air quality and temperature control. Therefore, we encourage the Board ensure that the conditions in our school buildings and relocatable facilities are maintained school buildings. For many years, we have raised issues of air quality and personal security in relocatable classrooms, and regular repair and maintenance of aging school buildings. At the beginning of FY 2008, MCPS made major repairs to Rock Creek Forest Elementary school, which is over 60 years old. These repairs, paid for with Operating Funds, remedied a leaking roof, and resulting mold problem, eliminated a rodent infestation and remove broken glass and other hazardous construction debris from the playground. We strongly urge the Board to ensure that our schools are properly maintained to provide safe and secure learning environments for our children.

Finally, we are strongly in favor of retaining funding for the implementation of middle school reform, and we hope that the budget will continue to fund the activities. Middle school years are so important to the intellectual and emotional development of our children. Now that success on HSAs is a graduation requirement, MCPS must ensure that our students are adequately prepared to handle the challenges of the curriculum and the HSA requirement. Westland Middle School was not among the group of pilot schools in when the initiative was started, but we hope to take advantage of the benefits of the program in future years.

As we have testified before, PTAs, teachers and school administrators of the BCC Cluster have worked together to provide supplemental support to promote the success of all of our students. We have and will continue to support such activities as arts assemblies, homework clubs, supplemental after school activities and transportation, as well as summer school support for students who need it. However, support to students must be balanced with support to our teachers and administrators, especially those at the middle school level. With larger numbers of students to educate in the coming years, we want to ensure that our educators are prepared to deliver a more challenging and rigorous curriculum at the elementary and middle school levels so that students are prepared for our excellent high schools.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We know that you will have to make some hard choices in the coming months, and ask you will do your best to ensure that class sizes are not increased, that school facilities are adequately maintained and that staff development support continues for the middle school reform initiative and other activities. We look forward to working with the Board, and with our county and state legislators, to support the budget for our schools.