

## **MCPS Operating Budget Northwood Cluster**

Good evening. I am Jennifer Chambers, one of three cluster coordinators for the Northwood Cluster. We appreciate this opportunity to be able to provide you feedback regarding the FY2009 MCPS Operating Budget.

In a difficult budget year, the Northwood Cluster is satisfied that MCPS showed restraint but made good decisions with limited funds. We are pleased that more money is invested in Middle School Reform, enhanced programming for Silver Spring International and E. Brooke Lee Middle Schools, and additional parent outreach coordinators.

### **Middle School Reform**

The Northwood Cluster continues its support for Middle School Reform. Under the Board of Education budget, we are glad ten additional schools, three of them in the DCC, Silver Spring International, Sligo, and Newport Mills, will receive money to implement initiatives to engage student learning and increase student achievement. These funds are essential to closing the achievement gap in our DCC Middle Schools.

Part of Middle School Reform is adding math specialists to each school to provide teacher training and support to those who teach high school math. This is particularly important with MCPS's goal of having 80% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders taking Algebra by 2010.

We are pleased MCPS and the BOE listened to our community and will invest money for new course offerings in the middle schools such as Silver Spring International and E. Brook Lee that are not part of the Middle Schools Magnet Consortium. This will put these schools on par with the MSMC schools and will prevent the negative impact that the MSMC has had on student enrollment. We are, however, dissatisfied with MCPS's lack of assessment and evaluation of its initiatives and pilot programs, such as MSMC. It is vital, particularly in tight budget years, to develop criteria and goals and then assess and evaluate them for effectiveness.

Montgomery County has invested much in elementary school reform and initiatives with outcomes of increased parent involvement and student achievement for all populations. The Northwood Cluster wants this success for our middle school; therefore, Middle School Reform is our highest priority.

### **Hiring and Retaining Highly Qualified Staff**

The Northwood Cluster is glad that MCPS continues to place its highest priority in its most important asset, its teaching staff. However, we are disappointed to see that MCPS has not developed new initiatives to increasing the pool of highly qualified teachers, particularly in Math and Science, and retaining those highly qualified in the DCC. We would like to see MCPS take a step forward and be innovative in their approach of hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers in the DCC.

### **Parent Outreach Coordinators**

The Northwood Cluster and DCC are pleased with the addition of six Parent Outreach Coordinators to the FY 2009 budget. Many of the schools in the cluster don't have them; therefore, the need is great in our communities to have the same successes that Kemp Mill Elementary School has had with theirs. Kemp Mill has a full time Parent Outreach Coordinator. Her office is a welcome and resource center for parents at the school. She provides bilingual services and communication to parents to increase student and parent accountability, help breakdown language and cultural barriers in the school, and provide educational workshops on topics important to all parents. As a result, Kemp Mill has witnessed an increase in Hispanic parents volunteering in school and at functions. Studies have shown that parent involvement increases student achievement and well being.

The Northwood Cluster supports the Board of Education budget with it highest priority to fund and continue the success of Middle School Reform and increase the number of Parent Outreach Coordinators in our schools.

Thank you.

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Northwood Cluster Coordinators