

**County Council Testimony: FY10 Operating Budget
Northwood Cluster
April 16, 2009**

Good evening. My name is Jennifer Chambers. I am one of the Northwood Cluster coordinators representing six elementary, three middle schools, and Northwood High School in the DCC. Thank you for this opportunity to share the cluster's feedback regarding the FY10 Operating Budget. The cluster is appreciative of the work and time involved in generating this budget under difficult economic times.

Since January, the Northwood Cluster has disagreed with the cuts in academic intervention (AI) teachers proposed because it places an undue burden on classroom teachers expected to meet AYP in schools with high mobility and a high number of students who receive FARMS, special education, and ESOL services. We recognize that some AI positions will be restored with federal stimulus money but not all 33.8 positions. Academic intervention teachers are essential to the schools in the cluster because they provide enrichment to excelling students and individualized and direct instruction to underperforming students. With the proposed cuts, students at Sligo Creek ES risk losing either their Signature science and/or math enrichment program which has already been cut in half in the last two years. Due to a reduction of AI positions at Lee Middle School, .8 at Forest Knolls ES, and 2.5 at Highland View ES, teachers at each school will add an extra demand to their work load to provide interventions to children reading and performing math below grade level. With a loss of .5 AI teachers at Northwood High School, coordination of AVID, AP classes, and SAT preparation will require teachers to spend more time to be responsible for these activities. Superintendent Weast simply stated to the MC State Delegation in November, "The teachers do not have one more minute to give" and yet we asking them too. The staff in our schools is the bedrock; one in which receives increasing demand on their time and money. We recognize and thank them for all they do including sacrificing their COLA.

With the most academic intervention teachers to lose in the cluster under the proposed cuts, Highland View Elementary parents wrote over 40 personal e-mails to the BOE and produced a video to advocate for the purposeful need of academic intervention teachers in our county schools. You all have been e-mailed a link to view this video and if you haven't yet watched it, I encourage you to do so at www.hvespta.com.

MCPS engages in meaningful partnerships with community organizations that provide valuable services to children in the school system, many who come from low income families. These organizations and programs, such as Rec Extra and the Wellness Centers, receive funding from the county. With a complete cut in Rec Extra, Silver Spring International Middle School will lose tremendous opportunities to provide quality after school programs for its students. With a FARMS rate of 63% (students now or have in the past received), Silver Spring International believes it is important to give all students equal opportunity to participate in after school clubs and activities and therefore, offers all activities free of cost.

Similarly, the Wellness Center at Northwood High School, which opened a year ago, offers case management services to students and families, health screenings, and an after school program entitled Positive Youth Development. While the case management services and

health screenings will not be impacted by budget cuts, the after school programming will with \$61,500 in cuts across all Wellness Centers. These cuts will affect the programming provided to 209 plus Northwood students who positively engage in productive activities like hiking and service learning; opportunities they don't often get to experience.

Before and after the death of Tai Lam, you all and the citizens of this county have had many conversations about how to positively engage youth and prevent at-risk behaviors, like gang membership. Collectively, we need to take these constructive dialogs, put them into action, and at the same time not nickel and dime the effective youth programming that currently exists such as Rec Extra and the Positive Youth Development program at the Northwood Wellness Center. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Thank you for your time and attention.