

Watkins Mill Cluster

Watkins Mill High School.
Montgomery Village Middle School; Neelsville Middle School
South Lake Elementary School; Stedwick Elementary School; Watkins Mill Elementary School;
Whetstone Elementary School

FY2010 Operating Budget Testimony

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Testimony presented by:
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Watkins Mill High School has an International Baccalaureate (IB) program. It offers an exceptional opportunity for a world-class education to our students. So, who are the students who take on this daunting challenge, this exceptional rigor?

So far, the program has had 87 candidates for the IB diploma, in all. 20 percent of those students are African American; 26 percent are Hispanic; 25 percent are white, and 29 percent are Asian. As you can see, our IB program is just as diverse as our school, more closely parallel to the school's racial demographics than any other IB program in this county.

And these students are not just participating; *they are performing*. I refer you to the attached table for detailed data.

And, unlike *every other* existing IB program in the county during those years, our students achieved these heights without the benefit of an IB Middle Years Program in our cluster to prepare them for the rigors of IB coursework. Just imagine what our students could accomplish if they had the same advantage as other IB clusters!

Now, here's something we are not so happy about. Our program is significantly under capacity; both the program and the school as a whole can accommodate many more students than we currently serve.

So, with apologies to David Letterman, here are The Top 10 Excellent Reasons to Make WMHS an Upcounty IB Magnet:

10. Our program has a proven track record with students of all demographic backgrounds, something which we value very much in this county, but which is not typical in IB programs as a whole.
9. Our IB program can accommodate many more students than it currently serves.
8. The IB magnet at Richard Montgomery HS turns away 80 percent of its applicants.

7. There are twelve high schools with no access to IB programs (other than the RMHS magnet). Eight of those twelve are in the upcounty area.
6. Three of the four downcounty schools with no IB access are on the *Newsweek* list of the top 100 schools in the nation. So let's assume they are doing pretty well.
5. There is a clear precedent for having a magnet of each type for both the upcounty and downcounty areas: Blair is the downcounty math/science and humanities magnet, and now Poolesville is its upcounty twin. Eastern and Takoma Park Middle Schools house the downcounty Highly Gifted magnets, and now Roberto Clemente is their upcounty...triplet.
4. We even have a line with an official name to designate these upcounty/downcounty pairings: the Middle School/High School Catchment Boundary Line.
3. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the rigor of a student's high school curriculum "counts more than anything else in predicting whether a college freshman will persist and earn a bachelor's degree."¹
2. In this time of extremely tight budgets, transitioning the WMHS IB to magnet status offers a nearly cost-neutral way to greatly expand student access to rigorous instruction.
1. The need is there, the capacity is there, and the precedent is there. MCPS needs an upcounty IB magnet. Watkins Mill HS is centrally located and ready to open its doors.

¹ From Dr. Weast's message in the Winter, 2008 issue of *Parent Connection*