

Quince Orchard Cluster of the Montgomery County Council of PTAs January 11, 2007

Testimony before the Montgomery County Board of Education
Regarding the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2008 Operating Budget

Dear President Navarro, Superintendent Weast, and Members of the Board,

On behalf of the students attending Montgomery County public schools in the Quince Orchard cluster, and their parents, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of the Superintendent's Proposed FY2008 Operating Budget.

We do appreciate your efforts in making Montgomery County one of the best school systems in the nation.

We would like to express our support for the initiative to provide additional Elementary School Assistant principals. Elementary Assistant principals in the Quince Orchard cluster contribute in no small measure to the success of our students, and we would wish every county elementary school to have their benefit.

We support the additional allocation for Middle School counselors, recognizing a need for guidance at this level that will contribute to the success of students in later years.

We commend MCPS for its efforts to reduce class size throughout the county and adequately staff them with professional, well trained teachers.

We would like to express our support for the continuation of the rollout of the Poolesville Magnet program. We feel this will have benefits for our entire quad-cluster Area, and urge the Board to press MCPS to refine its vision for services this magnet will offer.

We are encouraged by the continued extensions to the ED line facility. Parents are pleased by the capability it gives them to participate in their children's education. However, more than a few parents are disappointed by its inconsistent use. We urge the Board to implement measures to encourage MCPS staff to embrace this system and use it in a timely manner.

We would like to second a call that has been made to provide dedicated coordinators for complicated capital improvement projects. We do have good things to note about the conduct of MCPS staff in communicating progress of the Fields Road Elementary addition and a new gym at Thurgood Marshall Elementary, as well as the conduct of the design process for the Ridgeview Middle School modifications. We are pleased with the quality of communication thus far in their processes. However, large projects, such as the Ridgeview redesign, do generate a considerable need for communication between administration, parents, students, staff, and site contractors. Where everybody is shuffled temporarily from place to place to accommodate construction, as administration and parents strive to absorb day to day change, we feel that dedicated coordinators would be better able to focus on the concerns that an entire community brings to projects of this scope.

In our cluster, as in most others, the realignments in the FY2008 Operating Budget relating to Special Education are cause for concern. In Quince Orchard, there are many examples of successful students in Least Restrictive Environments among the general population, but the effective involvement of administrators and appropriately trained staff is evident in every one of these successes. Our cluster is concerned that these changes be implemented with a careful eye to the increased burden that is to be levied on administrators and staff. Considering the scope and timing of these changes we are reluctant to offer support for these realignments until a more considered discussion covers these concerns.

Finally, we would like to state that our cluster supports MCCPTA President Jane De Winter's testimony on the FY2008 Operating Budget, the MCCPTA FY2008 Operating Budget compact, and the MCCPTA resolution on Operating Budget priorities.

It is our hope that MCPS, the Board of Education, and MCCPTA and its members all recognize the extent to which they share responsibility that keeps Montgomery County Public Schools one of the best school systems in the nation. We would like to assert that we enjoy this success because, and not in spite of, the traditions of MCCPTA and parent involvement.

Thank you for all that you do for our children's education, and for the opportunity to comment on the proposed operating budget. We look forward to working with you to secure the funds necessary to continue the tradition of excellence in Montgomery County education.