

**Testimony on FY2013 Operating Budget
For Montgomery County Public Schools
Prepared for the Montgomery County
Board of Education
January 18, 2012**

**Includes testimony from:
Blair Cluster Coordinators
Blair HS PTSA
Eastern MS PTSA
Montgomery Knolls/Pine Crest ES PTA
New Hampshire Estates/Oak View ES PTA
Rolling Terrace ES PTA
Sligo Creek ES PTA**

**East Silver Spring Elementary * Montgomery Knolls Elementary * New Hampshire Estates Elementary *
Oak View Elementary * Piney Branch Elementary * Pine Crest Elementary * Rolling Terrace Elementary *
Sligo Creek Elementary * Takoma Park Elementary
Eastern Middle * Silver Spring International Middle * Takoma Park Middle
Montgomery Blair High School**

East Silver Spring Elementary * Montgomery Knolls Elementary * New Hampshire Estates Elementary *
Oak View Elementary * Piney Branch Elementary * Pine Crest Elementary * Rolling Terrace Elementary *
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Montgomery Blair High School

Blair Cluster Testimony on FY2013 Operating Budget Before the Board of Education, January 18, 2012

Buenas noches President Brandman and Members of the Board,

My name is Susan Fleck. Shruti Bhatnagar, and Bladimir Duenas and I are the cluster coordinators for MCPS' Blair Cluster, representing 13 schools, about 7 percent of our county's public school students.

I have a dream, J'ai un reve, Tengo un sueño, that this November, immigrant children will be able to sit as equals at public universities in Maryland alongside children of immigrants, whose forebearers came freely and by force, and who have made America. Immigrant children are America's children, immigrant children are Maryland's children, and we must support them in their desire to achieve. Les ruego que apoyen el Dream Act – I fervently ask you to vote yes on the Dream Act in this November's election to allow the immigrant children of our neighbors and friends to pay instate tuition at Maryland's universities.

PTA leaders attempt to support and welcome our immigrant parents and students. However, the devil is in the details. Report cards and information on the high school curriculum in Spanish and other non-English languages – have somehow disappeared from the website!! All but two of the links from this page on educational attainment <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/languages/spanish/education.shtm> are dead or direct you to English language documents only. Please **support** staff time for translation services for the basics of school success. This may be the tip of the iceberg, as there are other dead links across the website that provide important information to parents and the community. (For example, see the Office of Shared Accountability Navigator accessible from <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/regulatoryaccountability/glance/>, link to OSA Navigator is dead, see <http://sharedaccountability.mcpsprimetime.org/reports/list.php>).

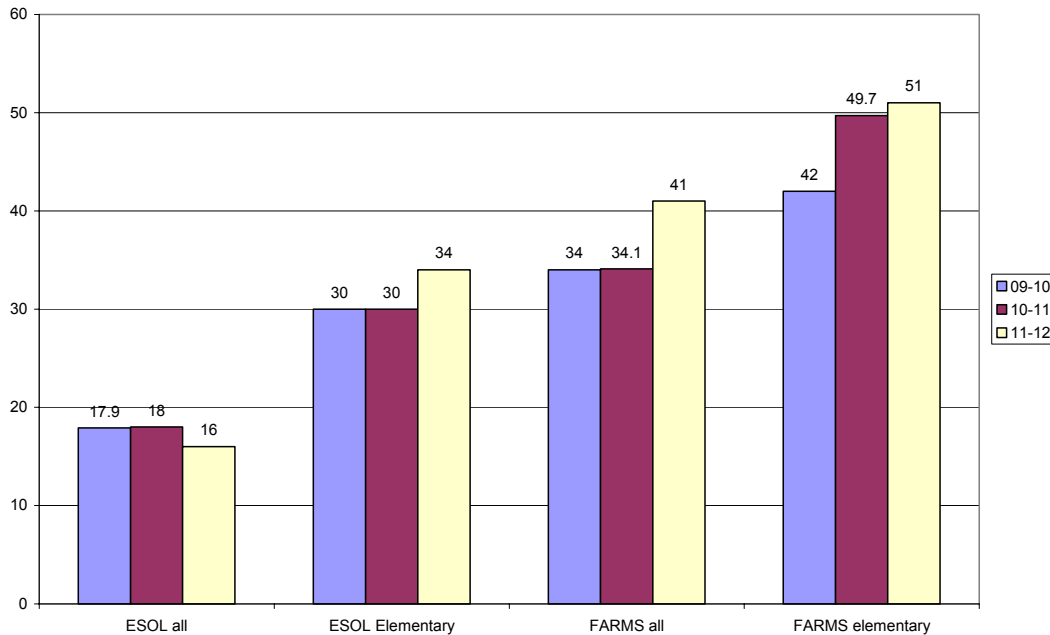
Our 13 schools appreciate all you do to support our children. We have some special concerns this year, however, that we want to bring to your attention, in our shared goals of [ensuring success for every student](#) and [providing an effective instructional program](#) as we continue our belt tightening in the face of economic austerity.

Thank you, Dr. Starr, for proposing a maintenance of effort budget – we must invest in our future, our children.

Our cluster of 13 schools of 9,970 students grew at **twice** the pace as the previous year, adding 470 students to our rolls - we comprise 6.6% of MCPS students, but a greater share of ESOL and FARMS students. Our elementary schools are especially impacted. More than one third of our elementary students require ESOL services, and fully one half of our students are poor.

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Blair cluster trends in ESOL and FARMS



Stay the line

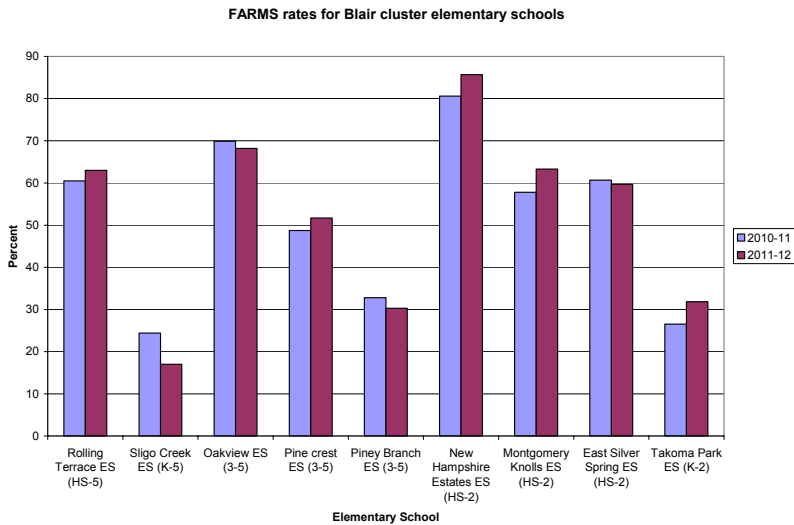
We support Dr. Starr’s budget. There is only so far we can go before there are no holes left in the buckle we have tightened every year. For example, accelerated learning programs and academies have been significantly weakened, staff are overburdened, especially in the three schools that lost title 1 funding this year, and at Blair High School, where for a second year running, ONE counselor processes transcripts for hundreds of Blair HS seniors. Rolling Terrace ES has only ONE counselor for 760 students, a number of whom suffer poverty.

Revamp Title 1

As more schools have more students living in poverty, the FARMS rate to be considered Title 1 is continuously raised. The pie is shrinking while poverty rates are rising, so fewer schools, even those that have hundreds of students suffering poverty, are supported by Title 1. Please listen to the Title 1 principals who suggest that **summer learning** moneys be plowed into the classroom during the year.

Three of our elementary schools lost Title 1 status this year – Rolling Terrace Montgomery Knolls and East Silver Spring. How can that be? when all had poverty rates as measured by free and reduced lunches at or above 60%. The loss of staff, from paraeducators to parent liaisons, has been devastating for their programs. Being a Focus school is simply not enough.

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New Hampshire Estates and Oak View still qualify for Title 1, and Academic Intervention staff who were reinstated last year have allowed the school to assure that students are reading at grade level, but the decline in per pupil spending continues to hamper the delivery of services to students.

The fact that all 9 elementary schools made Adequate Yearly Progress last year, despite these serious constraints, is reason to applaud principals, teachers, and countless parent volunteers who make up the difference. We are glad that MCPS has focused on the classroom, but with our high need students, we don't know how long we can last as stretched as we are. We ask you to consider expanding staffing requirements for Focus schools or for reconsidering Title 1 criteria. For example, **Pine Crest**, which lost Title 1 standing a few years ago, has only .6 FTE Focus and .8 FTE academic intervention for 450 students. **Rolling Terrace ES** has had to put the math content coach - teacher who received the 2010 national Presidential Award in Math – back in a regular classroom, unable to support the 755 K-5th grade students.

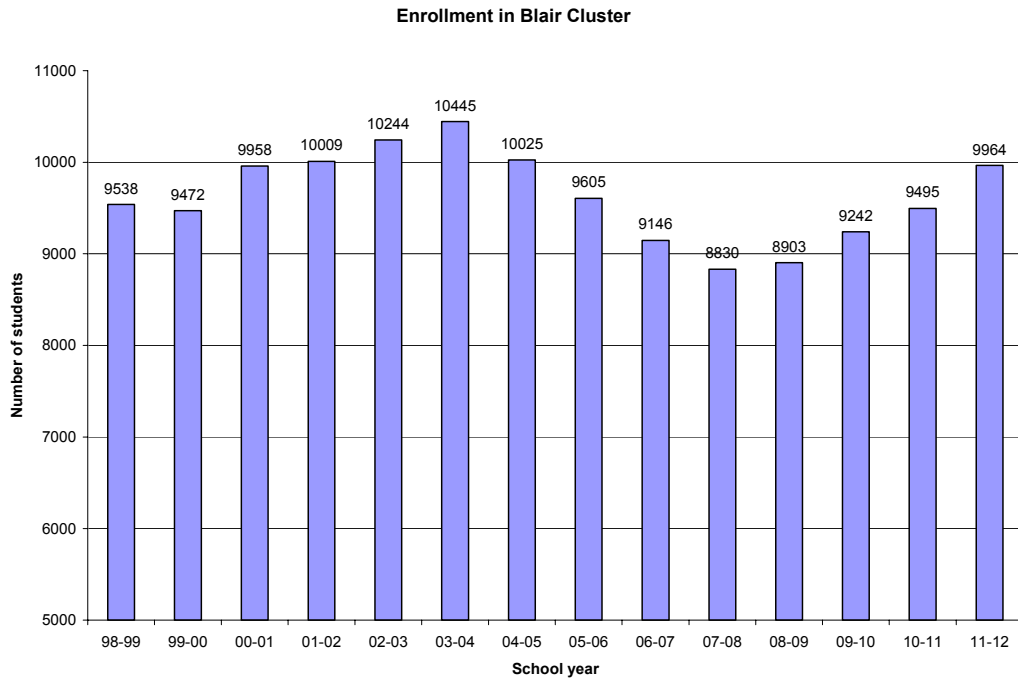
- **Avoid further increases in class size.** We agreed to increase class size in the past, but we are at a tipping point. Our cluster experienced an increased enrollment of 470 students this past year – double that of the year before! The increase in class sizes has strained our teaching staff. **Sligo Creek ES** has only 1.5 staff positions for each of two mixed classes of first and second graders. The Focus school formula keeps class sizes lower in K-2nd grade, but then class size expands in 4th grade. **Please consider reducing class size in higher grades in Focus schools.**
- **Allow for more flexible staffing in schools with high turnover.** Many of our schools with high turnover begin the year with insufficient number of teachers – because many students enroll at the last minute. This has been a serious problem at **Takoma Park ES** given the changes in the boundary that has increased the mobility

rate at the school. All teachers now work in the classroom, and the school depends on parent volunteers for academic intervention. *If there were a way to develop a staffing formula to cushion schools with high turnover from losing staff at the end of the year, when in September they need more staff, this would go a long way to alleviate chronic staffing issues that begin a couple of weeks into the school year.*

- **Provide staff training for curriculum changes.** Our second graders are on the cusp of the **curriculum 2.0**, and there are serious needs for teacher training that are not being adequately addressed because essentially all teachers have been assigned a classroom. Teacher training is essential in reaching our high needs students - 1,050 of our students are in kindergarten through 2nd grade. While we prefer teachers to technology, technology is an important complement that, if money is spent in this area, should be distributed equitably.
- I'd like to give a **shout out** to our cluster principals. Last year, all of our elementary schools met AYP, including the 5 that faced local action the year before. Great job with scarce resources! However, [Eastern](#) and [Silver Spring International](#) Middle Schools did not meet AYP for a couple of student groups, and [Blair](#) HS did not make the mark with nonnative English speakers reading scores. With 850, 830, and 2,950 students respectively, balanced staffing based on the number of students and not just on a per school basis will help these schools turn around.
- Please give more autonomy to our principals as a group in our cluster. More heads are better than one, and 13 amazing principals can surely come to the table and identify the areas where they can take a long view of preparing students from kindergarten thru high school. When **one third of our Hispanic students** flunked out of 10th grade at **Blair HS** last year, and **one fourth of our African and African American students** did the same, something has to be done to reach our most vulnerable families as well as to our families of color. Our principals can surely consider a staffing formula that recognizes the educational load in the most highly impacted secondary schools.
- **We support the maintenance of effort budget.** Take a stand for our children and our future. If any reductions need to be made, do not make them in the classroom.
- **We do not support Gov. O'Malley's** strategy to push down pension costs to the counties. His plan raises costs for fund management and decreases the clout of the investor, just to establish a better bond rating.
- **We support transportation**, especially for schools with split articulation, so students can participate in afterschool programs who do not live close to their schools can participate in after school activities, especially **Oak View** and **New Hampshire Estates** and **Pinecrest and Montgomery Knolls**.

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- **Support transportation for magnet and special programs.** The loss of bus service would affect the students who need it most.
- Thank you for all you do.



Montgomery Blair High School PTSA

51 University Blvd. East
Silver Spring, MD 20901

January 18, 2012

President Brandman, Dr. Starr, distinguished board members,

Good Evening. My name is Tom Jacobson, Montgomery Blair High School PTSA Blair Cluster Representative. Thank you for this opportunity to address this year's operating budget issues.

Maintenance of Effort

The Blair PTSA strongly supports the superintendent's maintenance of effort budget. Our high school continues to be stretched very thin – any cuts would greatly jeopardize the education of our students. Our average class size is 34 students, with many classes exceeding that number in order to provide a smaller class size for English language learners and struggling students. Blair is unable to offer some of the rigorous classes available at other high schools (including some AP classes) because of the minimum class size requirements. Any additional cuts to professional staff would be devastating to the education of the students. Finally, inadequate staffing of support staff positions is highlighted below. We are barely able to meet the needs of our students despite the fact that staff work extra uncompensated hours, and parents volunteer thousands of hours each year.

Inadequate Staffing Jeopardizes a Quality Education

Montgomery Blair is the largest high school in the county with over 2,800 students and over 285 school personnel. Despite the size of the student body, many positions are inadequately staffed at the same level as smaller middle schools (please see Table 1 below). Staffing must be increased to reflect the size of the student body in order to keep staff morale high and respond to the needs of the student body and their parents.

Over the last few years, Blair has sustained serious cuts to support staff positions that are critical to operation of the school and education of students including: Media Specialist staff, supporting services, Registrar's Office, Main Office secretary and Career Center positions. The current staffing formula does not adequately account for the size of Blair. Additionally, Blair parents are surprised at the lack of staffing for these positions. Staffing for these positions

must take into consideration size of the school and the needs of students and staff at the school.

School	No. Students	Alternative Teacher	ITSS Position	Media Specialist	Attendance Secretary	Registrar
Montgomery Blair HS	2800	1	1	1	1	1
Paint Branch HS	1800	1	1	1	1	1
Rockville HS	1500	1	1	1	1	1
Takoma Park MS	825	1	1	1	1	1

There are several examples of how the current staffing is inadequate. The one Attendance Secretary takes over 150 calls each day, enters attendance notes for 200 students and verifies early dismissals. The workload of an attendance secretary at a smaller school is 50% – 75% less than Blair. The Registrar processes over 600 current senior transcripts, former student transcripts, registers new students and meets the daily needs of students. Customer service at Blair High School is at an all-time low – parents often complain that they are on hold for long periods of time or that they do not receive an email response in a timely manner.

As a PTSA, we continue to be concerned with the impact of the above staffing levels on Blair’s ability to close the achievement gap among our students. This is brought in to stark clarity as we see levels of non-promotion rates for Hispanic 10th graders of thirty percent and African American 10th graders of twenty-seven percent.

We hope that this testimony can aid in support of his budget proposal, while keeping Blair on the radar for remediation of our situation.

Thank you for your consideration.
 Respectfully Submitted,
 Tom Jacobson, Blair Cluster Representative
 Cathy Sarri, Blair Cluster Representative

Cc:
 Sheri Verdonk, Blair PTSA president
 Ms. Renay Johnson, Principal

Eastern Middle School PTSA
300 University Boulevard, East
Silver Spring, MD 20901

January 13, 2012

Carver Educational Services Center, Room 123
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Board of Education Members:

The Eastern Middle School PTSA recognizes the many challenges in crafting a sustainable Operating Budget during a prolonged economic downturn. The “easy” cuts have long since been made, and the sacrifices and reductions made in recent years are being endured. The EMS PTSA believes that MCPS budget priorities should focus on the schoolhouse and classroom, and we appreciate that Dr Starr’s proposed FY2013 Operating Budget does not include further cuts in classroom resources.

We ask the Board of Education to consider the following points important to Eastern Middle School (EMS) while reviewing the Operating Budget.

Avoid further increases in class size

Last year another across the board increase in class size was implemented in MCPS. The result is that some of the classes at EMS now have 38 students. For many academic classes, this size limits the amount of individual attention teachers can give at-risk students. *We prefer a reduction in class size, but if this not possible, we cannot sustain any additional increase in class size.*

Consider educational load and at-risk populations

Consider a staffing formula that recognizes the educational load in the most highly impacted secondary schools. Maintaining equitable staffing across all middle schools based on need and educational load is essential if we are to ensure that every school is able to meet the needs of all its students. *Equity does not mean treating every school the same; it requires recognizing and addressing the huge gaps in preparedness among students entering middle school.*

Eastern Middle School has a diverse student population. Forty eight percent (48%) of our students qualify for FARM, 7.5% require ESOL instruction, and 9% of our students require Special Education services. These indices have increased from last year and are among the highest in the county. Students arrive at our school with a wide range of academic preparation, from new immigrants with limited prior education in their home countries (METS) to highly skilled learners ready for advanced classes and the Humanities and Communication Magnet. The educational load on our teachers and support staff is high, and they work tirelessly to meet the varied needs of all of our students.

At-risk students require additional supports to meet their targeted academic goals. Academic intervention teachers work directly with individuals or small groups of students to address specific gaps in reading and math, helping the most needy and vulnerable of our students. High impact schools like EMS cannot make AYP and continue to support at-risk populations with ever-shrinking resources. *Please maintain the current formula for hours-based staffing for Special Education, and increase the ESOL staffing to meet the increasing needs in our school.*

Maintain support for the Humanities and Communications Magnet

Eastern hosts the Humanities and Communications Magnet, which attracts students from a wide geographical area. This program is vital to the diversity of our school, and the carry-over effect of the program is essential to the success of all students at EMS. The staffing for this program is absorbed into the general staffing. Thus, the impact of the magnet is felt across the board, not just in the magnet. In the past, the magnet support positions were reduced to 1.5 FTEs. Further reductions could weaken the program, make it less attractive to applicants, less rigorous and rewarding for enrollees, and diminish the positive impact of the program on the school as a whole. *We ask you to maintain the current level of support for the Humanities and Communications Magnet program.*

Continue afterschool academic, athletic and extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular activities are an essential complement to a child's education. In response to the change from block to seven-period scheduling several years ago, EMS offers afterschool for-credit foreign language and instrumental music classes. This provides EMS students elective opportunities similar to those available to other middle school students in MCPS. Athletic and cultural arts afterschool programs keep students engaged and active and allow for increased shared experiences between the Magnet and Comprehensive students. A reduction in the stipends for these

programs would limit the activities that could be offered, and an increase in fees to offset such reductions would severely limit participation from students whose families have limited means. *We ask you to continue to support the afterschool academic, athletic and extra-curricular activities at the middle school level.*

Maintain magnet and activity bus transportation

Elimination of bus transportation to students attending a magnet program places the greatest burden on those students whose families are least able to provide transportation themselves. It could also discourage a large population of students from even applying to the magnet. Additionally, given the wide geographical area served by EMS, there could be no afterschool programs without after school activity buses. *We request that magnet and after-school activity buses be maintained.*

The Eastern Middle School PTSA urges the Board of Education to approve the proposed FY2013 Operating Budget as submitted by Dr. Starr and continue programs and services at current levels.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the EMS PTSA,

Lisa Harris
EMS PTSA President

Linda Krimm
EMS Blair Cluster Representative

Montgomery Knolls-Pine Crest PTA
201 Woodmoor Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20901

January 18, 2012

To the Board of Education:

Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest Elementary Schools would like to thank the Board for its continued support, particularly during this prolonged period of austerity. We would like to express our support of the MCCPTA Operating Budget Priorities for FY 2013 as approved by the delegates in October and the proposed budget.

We appreciate the Board's continued recognition of the special challenges faced by schools serving lower-income families and its support for programs that serve all of our students. For example, we appreciate the Board's decision to designate Montgomery Knolls a focus school after the school lost its Title I status. The full time academic intervention teacher and focus teachers we have been able to retain have been critical to our ability to meet the needs of our students. We also appreciate the Board's responsiveness to increases in enrollment and the need to keep our classes small. We urge the Board to continue the same level of staffing for Montgomery Knolls in the coming year.

The importance of maintaining current staffing levels is particularly critical at Pine Crest. Over the past three years, Pine Crest first lost its status as a locally funded Title I school and has sustained additional cuts to focus and academic intervention staff despite increasing enrollment. Additionally, Pine Crest took a staffing reduction to part-time media specialists for 2011-2012 at the request of the school system as a small school. These cuts have had a significant impact on our school especially given the fact that we serve a high needs population in one of the lowest-income areas of the county. While we retain a .6 focus teacher and a .8 academic intervention teacher, the lack of full-time non-classroom staff has limited our ability to meet the academic intervention needs of our students on a consistent basis for both reading and math. Furthermore, the lack of full-time non-classroom staff has had an adverse impact on the safety and security of our school, as part-time non-classroom staff cannot be counted on to support the students during emergency preparedness and response situations. We urge the board to support the maintenance of current staffing levels at Pine Crest to meet student needs.

In addition, as the Board considers difficult trade-offs and decisions this year, we urge the Board to continue programs that have had the greatest impact on student achievement. These include:

- Small class sizes
- Professional development training at the system and school based level which impacts student achievement and teacher/administrative quality, including providing sufficient release time to allow teachers to take part in training;
- Full-time art, music and PE teachers in all schools;
- Extended learning opportunities through ELO and the George B. Thomas Sr. Learning Academy (Saturday school);
- County-based cultural arts field trips by grade levels for all students; and

- Administrative support at the elementary level.
- Academic intervention teachers at schools serving low-income students.
- After-school programs (many of our students do not have access to any other enrichment activities outside of school.)

We urge MCPS to continue funding for all of these initiatives and programs.

Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest would like to encourage the Board to support maintenance of effort funding for our schools as recommended by Superintendent Starr. To the extent that schools are asked to absorb any reductions in funding, we urge the Board to take a balanced and equitable approach that recognizes the sacrifices schools have already made and spares schools that have sustained cuts in recent years.

Finally, the MKPC PTA appreciates the sacrifices that county teachers have made to forgo cost-of-living increases for three consecutive years and hopes that the Board will consider ways to retain staff, including by maintaining health insurance coverage for MCPS staff and allowing for salary increases.

We would like to thank the Board for all of its hard work. We know that we continue to face severe budget constraints and we need to allocate money as efficiently as possible. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the budget and would like to support the Board in advocating for additional funding from the state to ensure that programs and positions that are particularly important to at-risk students are preserved. We appreciate the strong support MCPS has shown for all of our programs and look forward to continuing to work together to make the best decisions for our students and our communities.

Julie Stillwell and Jennifer Gunnelfsen
PTA Co-Presidents
Montgomery Knolls-Pine Crest PTA



New Hampshire Estates and Oak View Elementary Schools Parent Teacher Association



8720 Carroll Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20903

400 East Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20901

January 13, 2012

Carver Educational Services Center, Room 123
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Board of Education Members:

The New Hampshire Estates and Oak View Elementary School (NHE/OV) PTA recognizes the many challenges in crafting a sustainable Operating Budget during a prolonged economic downturn. The “easy” cuts have been made, and the sacrifices and reductions made in recent years are being endured. The NHE/OV PTA believes that MCPS budget priorities should focus on the schoolhouse and classroom, and we appreciate that Dr Starr’s proposed FY2013 does not include further cuts in classroom resources.

The NHE/OV PTA asked parents to share their experiences with MCPS, to tell you their children’s stories of challenges and successes. Many parents are surprised to learn that the Board of Education reads their letters and cares about what they had to say. What follows is a summary of the issues that came out of our discussions with parents and represent the most relevant issues to the NHE/OV community. We ask you to use these as a guide when you are making final operating budget decisions.

Reinstate full time Media Specialists at NHE and OV

Last year the schools were given a choice to cut Staff Development, Reading Specialist, or Media Specialist positions to half time. With the rollout of the integrated curriculum, the Staff Development positions are more essential than ever and need to be retained at any school undergoing this curricular change. The Reading Specialist serves 100% of the children at NHE and OV – from the children struggling with literacy to the advanced readers in the William and Mary program. The schools cannot sustain any reduction in the Reading Specialist without a devastating effect on children’s literacy and the school’s ability to meet AYP. Given no other option, the Media Specialist position was cut to half time at both schools last year. With this reduction, our children have reduced access to the Media Center, which is an essential provider of books to those who may not have extensive home libraries, and access to computers for students whose parents cannot afford to have one in their home. The current population at NHE is 482 (projected to be 494 next year) students. We feel this warrants a full time Media Specialist, especially when you consider the demographics of the population our schools serve. High impact schools like New Hampshire Estates and Oak View, struggling to meet AYP, should not be expected to bear the burden of reduced staff positions that have a direct link to literacy.

Consider educational load and at-risk populations

Consider a staffing formula that recognizes the educational load in the most highly impacted elementary schools. Maintaining equitable staffing based on need and educational load is essential if we are to ensure that every school is able to meet the needs of all its students. Equity does not mean treating every school the same, it requires recognizing and addressing the huge gaps in preparedness among students entering school.

New Hampshire Estates and Oak View are paired elementary schools. The schools have FARM rates in excess of twice the county average – NHE 90% (434 students), OV 72% (235 students). The ESOL rate at NHE is 74% (356 students) and 38% (124 students) at OV. Eleven percent (53

students) at NHE and 14% (46 students) at OV receive Special Education services. Students arrive at our schools with a wide range of academic preparation, from new immigrants who do not speak English and with limited prior education in their home countries to students ready for the advanced curriculum of the Highly Gifted Center. Some beginning kindergarten students do not know their colors or alphabet, have never held a pair of scissors or gone to a museum; others are doing multiplication and reading on a 4th grade level. The educational load on our teachers and staff is high, and they work tirelessly to meet the varied needs of all of our students.

ESOL and Special Education Staffing

We ask that ESOL staffing be maintained to meet the increasing language needs of our students and we urge you to maintain the current formula for hours-based staffing for Special Education.

Academic Intervention

At-risk students require additional supports in order to meet their targeted academic goals. The Academic Intervention position at OV has been reduced in past years, and then partially reinstated. This teacher works with 15-20 students who no longer qualify for ESOL or Special Ed support. Their MAP-R and Informal Reading Inventory testing results have exceeded expectations. With the added intervention and support, these children may read on grade level for the first time. Thank you for recognizing this need and maintaining sufficient staffing to support the success of these students.

Title I

High impact schools cannot make AYP and continue to support at-risk populations with ever-shrinking resources. Both NHE and OV meet Federal Title I criteria, and the Title I per-pupil allocation has been reduced by approximately \$2000 over the past six years. Additional cuts in Federal dollars are expected again this year. Neither school can sustain these losses and be able to meet the needs of the county's most vulnerable students. We suggest that MCPS reduce central administrative costs within the Title I program and keep the per-pupil allocation at its current level.

Paraeducators

The paraeducators at NHE and OV support the classroom teachers in numerous ways. They provide individual and small group reinforcement to students struggling in math and reading. They provide lunch and recess coverage, assist special education students in meeting their IEP goals, and many assist with Level 1 and 2 ESOL students and communicate with their parents. These positions have been cut in recent years, and further cuts would undermine the schools' ability to meet the educational goals of all the students.

Address inequitable distribution of technology

The NHE/OV PTA believes that teachers in the classroom, not technology, make the biggest difference to a student's education. However the technology for supporting the teaching has changed and the students, even in the primary grades, are ready to use it. A smart board does not teach a child to read, a teacher does, but NHE has no technology in the classrooms except for computers. We ask that you address the inequitable distribution of technology throughout the county and provide not only sufficient staffing, but also the technology to support them.

Avoid further increases in class size

Last year another across the board increase in class size was implemented in MCPS. Due to high mobility rates, staffing is difficult to predict at both NHE and OV. At the beginning of each year the schools either scramble to fill classroom teaching positions required by a last-minute burst of enrollment, or they settle for classes larger than the Title I standards recommend. For the population served by our schools, we would prefer a reduction in class size, but if this is not possible, we request that no additional increases be implemented.

Support afterschool extra-curricular activities and reinstate activity buses

Extra-curricular activities are an essential part of education and development at every age. They provide stimulation and positive recreation for children who would otherwise not have access to these activities. The afterschool offerings at NHE and OV are limited by availability of the activity buses. Having a paired configuration, half the students at each school are bused from one catchment area to the other. NHE and OV are 1.5 miles apart, do not share a common border, and require crossing busy intersections on University Boulevard and Piney Branch Road. This is not a walkable commute. Many of our families do not have cars and rely on public transportation. Without activity buses, only those students who live within walking distance from a school could participate in afterschool activities at that school. Funding for activity buses was eliminated in past years, and the PTA was able to cover part of the cost for partial year's bus service this year. Afterschool clubs stop in February due to the lack of funding for activity buses. We believe that MCPS should recognize the needs and challenges of a paired school configuration, and support our schools in a way that does not place our children at a disadvantage to other children in the county.

Support funding for the Arts

For most of our students, the only opportunity they have to play a musical instrument, sing in a choir or take an art class is at school. With recent reductions in staffing for these positions, the music and art offerings have been reduced during the day. While some classes have been transitioned to afterschool clubs, without activity buses, our students have limited access to them.

Maintain magnet bus transportation

The Highly Gifted Center program was expanded to Oak View in 2007-08 to relieve the excessive wait list for the program at Pine Crest and to create parity between up county offerings. If bus transportation to students attending this program from outside his or her attendance area were eliminated, it would undermine the Center program at Oak View and all elementary schools with similar programs. Fewer students would apply, and the academic needs of the students served by these programs would not be met. Elimination of bus transportation places the greatest burden on those students whose families are least able to provide it themselves.

Consider suspending summer ELO

Summer Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) programs currently are available to all students. We ask you to consider the plan submitted this year by the Title I principals to suspend summer ELO and reallocate the \$3.5 million savings back to the ten-month school budget for the academic year instruction.

We urge the Board of Education to approve the proposed FY2013 Operating Budget as submitted by Dr. Starr and continue programs and services that support the needs of all MCPS students.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the New Hampshire Estates and Oak View Elementary School PTA,

Katherine Ralston
NHE/OV PTA President

Linda Krimm
NHE/OV PTA Cluster Representative

Rolling Terrace Elementary School

705 Bayfield Street, Takoma Park, Maryland 20912

Voice: 301-431-7600



Fax: 301-431-7643

January 18th, 2012

Dear MCPS Board of Education Members,

On behalf of the Rolling Terrace Elementary School PTA, we want to thank you for this opportunity to share what we think are some of the major issues affecting our school this year. We understand that you have tough decisions to make about the FY2013 operating budget, and we appreciate your commitment to exploring ways in which you can support the needs of our school community.

Restore Title 1 funding for Rolling Terrace

As you know from our testimony last week, we have faced enormous challenges this year due to our lack of Title 1 funding. Our parent volunteers have tried to fill in the gaps, but with nearly 500 of our students on free and reduced lunch, 350 children in ESOL, and a highly mobile, non-English speaking immigrant community, we cannot provide the support needed to ensure the academic success of every student. We need our parent community coordinator back to work with families who need extra help navigating the school system and whose children need more support. We also need our summer ELO program back for our at-risk children, our gifted and talented specialist, our math content coach, and our extra Para educator hours that support small group instruction, to mention a few of the key interventions that we lost with our Title 1 status. Rolling Terrace currently has 65% of its families on FARMS, but if you take into account that 20% of our students come from other parts of the county to participate in our Spanish Immersion program, that number is not a true reflection of our neighborhood community. As we mentioned last week, we are asking the Board of Education to reevaluate our situation and **restore Title 1 funding at Rolling Terrace by not increasing the Title 1 FARMS cutoff this Spring.**

Lower the class sizes in the Spanish Immersion Program and in the upper grades

Another major change at Rolling Terrace this year was that our Spanish Immersion class sizes went up significantly in order to meet the "standard" class sizes in other MCPS Immersion programs. This change increased the Kindergarten class size from 19 to 25 students, the First Grade class size from 20 to 27 students, and so on. The increase in class size has placed significant strain on our Immersion teachers and has directly impacted the amount of support our Immersion students receive when learning the new language. Our administration has been creative in trying to support these larger classrooms, and parents have also stepped up to help, but in the long term, this cannot replace the lower teacher to student ratio needed for the program to thrive.

Rolling Terrace is now a Focus School (since we lost Title 1), which has helped keep class sizes smaller in the lower grades, but this status did not provide any relief to the upper grades, nor did it apply to the Spanish Immersion classrooms. Some 3rd Grade teachers have 31 students, many of which are still in ESOL, and minimal Para educator support. Our FARMS and ESOL students in the upper grades need just as much support as our students in the lower grades! Our neighborhood children on FARMS who are part of the Spanish Immersion Program also need that extra support, and with fewer Para educators this year, it is a great challenge for our school. **We ask that you reduce the class size in the upper grades and in the Spanish Immersion classrooms, so the entire school can have comparable class sizes.**

Maintain funding for our full-time counselor, and add hours for a second counselor

We are a school of 760 students and growing, with many needy families that have multiple socio-economic-and emotional issues. Having the Judy Center and Linkages to Learning in-house certainly helps, but it cannot replace the role of the school counselor, and 1 person is simply not enough for such a large community. In addition, with our parent community coordinator position gone, our school counselor has been on much higher demand by our families, and she needs more support. **Please continue to fund our full time counselor, and consider adding more hours to adequately serve our growing student body.**

Support funding for a math content coach at Rolling Terrace

Our math content coach supported Rolling Terrace math teachers last year by providing leadership and guidance, and introducing new strategies for teaching math that she thought would be more effective with our student population. Not having the support of a math content coach this year has been especially hard on teachers who are also dealing with growing class sizes and the challenges of differentiation. The math content coach at Rolling Terrace last year was so qualified in her field that she received the Presidential Award in Math from President Obama last Spring – a great honor not only for Rolling Terrace, but also for MCPS! **We ask that you reinstate funding for a math content coach position at Rolling Terrace next year, so we can continue to support the success of all our students in math.**

Address inequitable distribution of Technology

With the emergence of Curriculum 2.0, we ask that you provide Rolling Terrace the sufficient technology to support many of the new teaching strategies recommended in the new curriculum. There is an array of tools that can help teachers and students in the classroom, but **we challenge the school system to develop a transparent and systematic way of evaluating the technological needs of each school, and to implement an equitable distribution of resources.**

Strongly Urge the County Council to open and fund our School Based Health Center

The construction of the Rolling Terrace School Based Health Center was completed in August 2011, and although the structure has been ready for 6 months, the Health Center has not yet opened due to lack of funding. We urge the County Council to approve funding to operate this project, which was born out of a need for more accessible health care services in our community. We have one of the smallest campuses in MCPS, combined with a very large student population. We gave up part of our field and blacktop so this clinic could meet a different need for our families – but we need the Health Center to open! **Please support our Rolling Terrace community by urging the County Council to approve funding to open our School Based Health Center.**

We support Dr. Starr’s proposed FY2013 Operating Budget as well as the state’s Maintenance of Effort funding for every student. We urge the BOE to approve the budget and continue to support programs and services that address the needs of all MCPS students.

Thank you,

Margarita Sol
RT PTA President

David Cueva
RT PTA Vice-President



*Sligo Creek Elementary School Parent Teacher Ass'n
Sligo Creek Elementary School
500 Schuyler Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910*

January 15, 2012

Montgomery County Board of Education Members
Carver Educational Services Center
850 Hungerford Drive, Room 123
Rockville, Maryland 20850
E-mail: boe@mcpsmd.org

Members:

Shirley Brandman, President
Christopher S. Barclay, Vice-President
Philip Kauffman
Judith Docca
Laura Berthiaume
Patricia O'Neill
Alan Xie, Student Member

Dear Board Members:

In this difficult budget year, Sligo Creek Elementary School (SCES) asks that the Board of Education refuse to make any further cuts to the "classroom." The Board should refuse to cut any additional teachers or paraeducator positions; it should reduce classroom maximums to the levels from 2 years ago; retain funding for academic intervention positions; and ensure that the teachers have sufficient professional development in the new curriculum.

Class-Sizes and Teaching Allocations

We urge you to opt for continued staffing versus increased educational materials or technology. Teachers in the classroom, not technology, make the biggest difference to students. Any cuts in school programs or services should have minimal impact on classroom instruction. We urge the Board to reverse the class size increases of two years ago, so that our students are taught in smaller classes, where teachers are more able to conduct small group instruction on an as needed basis.

In our school's case, the increase in class size, and the Board's decision to return to staffing for combination classes, meant that for the first time in our school's history, we had two Academy grades (1st and 2nd grade) with only 1.5 classes each, the .5 coming from a 1st/2nd combination class. While the Board's staffing and class size decisions undoubtedly affected all

MCPS schools, they dramatically affected our school, and our teachers have had to instruct our 1st and 2nd graders (with the new curriculum) at a very low staffing level.

We also ask that the Board increase support for academic intervention teachers; these teachers make such a difference to the students who need additional help. In addition, as an elementary school, next year, four of our grades will be using the new curriculum. While our parents and staff excited about the new curriculum, and the new directions it will take out children, we want to be sure that our teachers have sufficient time to prepare for the new curriculum. This is particularly a concern of the current 2nd graders at our school, who are, and will continue to be, the “guinea pig” class for the new curriculum, as they progress through MCPS up until 12th grade. We ask the Board to ensure that there are sufficient resources in place for staff development to learn the ins and outs of Curriculum 2.0.

Sincerely

Diane Kelleher
President, Sligo Creek E.S. PTA

Cc: Diantha Swift, Sligo Creek ES,
Principal