



Churchill Cluster Testimony

**Regarding the Superintendent's Recommended
FY 2013 Operating Budget**

Winston Churchill Cluster

*Winston Churchill High School
Herbert Hoover Middle School
Beverly Farms Elementary School
Seven Locks Elementary School*

*Cabin John Middle School
Bells Mill Elementary School
Potomac Elementary School
Wayside Elementary School*

**Board of Education Public Hearing
Carver Education Services Center
January 18, 2012**

**Submitted by: Melanie JS Twomey
Churchill Cluster Coordinator**

Thank you once again to the Board of Education and Dr. Starr for the opportunity to speak to you this evening on behalf of the approximately 6,600 students and their families in the Churchill Cluster. My name is Melanie Twomey and my family moved from Hawaii to the D.C. area in 2005. We looked for a community that would best suit our family's needs and afford the best education we could provide our children. We chose Montgomery County. My family is not unique. Why do our families choose to live in Montgomery County? Many of us live here because of the stellar education that is offered our children through the Montgomery County Public Schools. Congratulations on the EPE Research Report released by Education Week January 12th ranking **Maryland as the number one performer in the nation for the fourth year in a row.** This has taken a collaborative effort to reach and maintain. Bravo on a job well done!

The Churchill Cluster wants to maintain this standing and we know that during these harsh financial times, the decisions that are made must be carefully considered to keep this level of excellence. We wish to maintain this level by supporting the reduction of the funding floor for the Maintenance Of Effort and avoiding penalties that will further reduce dollars that can be spent to maintain education. In light of the MOE recommendation, we must make sure our deficits do not effect our cluster's three major concerns.

Our first concern centers around the implementation of the new Curriculum 2.0. Not just proper training needs to be provided but, **proper planning and preparation time is essential for the teachers to effectively execute the curriculum.** In the past, teachers have been trained for K-2 and have been expected to plan with only one week of time ahead of implementation. Some additional prep time has been given this spring for the implementation of the third grade portion of the curriculum. This will give faculty planning time for a semester block which will give the faculty a broader picture of what is expected as instructional leaders and students a sense of what they must do. To keep the momentum and maintain the implementation of Curriculum 2.0, teachers must continue to get this necessary training and additional planning time.

Secondly, **adequate staffing is a concern.** Some classrooms in the cluster are at the brim of capacity. For example, the 5th grade at Bells Mill Elementary School rose from 26 students per class last year to 29 students per class this year. The fourth grade is not close behind at 28 students per class this year. Although these numbers are within legal limits, this is not the best environment for those children that need extra attention or enrichment. In addition to high numbers in the classroom, we are concerned with combination classes. Curriculum 2.0 requires each instructional class to be kept at their level. In a combination 1-2 class, for example, it is very difficult for one teacher to meet all the requirements for both levels at the same time. We request that staffing not be cut to allow for better facilitation in the classroom.

Lastly, we all know stellar learning in the classroom boils down to the quality of the faculty member. We were very pleased to see the 3.1 percent increase in Employee Benefits. Keeping our high quality staff is important to the stellar level of education our students receive. It is important to keep up the benefits so that our teachers do not leave for other options. **We must keep our quality faculty members.**

In conclusion, the Churchill Cluster is proud of our quality school system and together we can keep up the quality education that Montgomery County Public Schools hold by not cutting staffing and integrating more planning time for the new curriculum.

Thank you for the opportunity to relay the Churchill Cluster's concerns and thank you for your commitment and dedication to our children and the Montgomery County Public Schools.