

## **Einstein Cluster Operating Budget Testimony 2012**

My name is Jean Claude Zenklusen and I am a MCCPTA Cluster Coordinator for the Einstein HS Cluster.

At our cluster, we understand that the financial hardships the County is facing are not easy to solve, that the situation is dire for many programs, and that the work you have to do in order to equilibrate the budget is not trivial. Nevertheless, as tough choices will have to be made, we request that these cuts be made in a targeted way, and not in an indiscriminate “across the board, to all schools “ manner, preserving the resources needed to maintain a high level of education that all our children deserve.

The necessity of having the cuts occur to the areas and schools that would be least affected from them became very clear to me after reviewing the recent Superintendent memo on AP performance at MCPS. cursory read of the aggregated statistics would suggest that the MCPS system is doing an excellent job, since MCPS percentage of passing grades (3 or higher) was 71.8% compared to 59% and 55.8 percent for Maryland And Nation respectively.

However, when one looks at the same numbers divided by ethnicity, one sees that Black and Latino students severely trail (46.3% and 55%) their White or Asian peers (78.6% and 77.2%), while still outperforming the Maryland/Nation peers. Being that I am a geneticist and knowing that there is no inherent genetic deficit in the different ethnic background, I kept looking at the data in more detail to find the reason for such disparity. And I found it. If one looks at both the number of AP exams as well as the percentages of 3 or higher across all the high schools in MCPS, it becomes clear that schools in the western (more affluent) areas of the county outperform the Easternmost (less affluent) schools by as much as 20 percentage points, irrespective of ethnic group, suggesting that other factors are at play. One obvious one is socioeconomic status: affluent parents might have more education and dedicate time and or resources to support their children either directly or through tutor services; less affluent parent don't have the luxury and many of them are even impaired by language barrier being recent immigrants to the country. Twenty percentage points of difference between schools is not a gap, is as chasm that should not exist in a progressive area such as ours. So, I ask you, that if support positions need to be reduced in the schools, they be taken from the better performing ones that might be able to cope with the blow better, and not out of schools where these positions are essential to the success of their students.

On another note, we would like to request, as part of the Down County Consortium, that the funding for transportation that allows the Choice process to exist be preserved. The DCC has a very mixed population both ethnically and socioeconomically, and the ability of the student to attend a High School of their choosing outside their base area would be severely impacted if these funds were to be stripped, effectively making the DCC disappear. We know that the choice process is supported by the vast majority of parents, as our 2010 survey demonstrates.

Additionally, we would like to request that the Board plans ahead to ensure that operating funds for adequate staffing will be available in FY13, when our newest school (Down

County Consortium ES#29, ex McKinney Hills) will open to alleviate the severe overcrowding conditions at Oakland Terrace and Woodlin ES.

We believe that education funding must be the first priority if we are to keep the area attractive to highly educated professionals, which in turn provide a stable tax base that allows weather economic downturns. This means that we must strive to maintain a level of funding of our school system consistent with Maryland's "maintenance of effort" law, and although it may no be possible to reach it, we request that the Board clearly reiterates that necessity to the County Council and Executive.

In closing, I would like to thank the Board for the attention given to the Einstein cluster as a whole that allows our schools to be adequately staffed, allowing our children to flourish in their schools.