

Spark Matsunaga Elementary and Longview School CIP Testimony for FY 2013
November 14, 2011

Thank you Dr. Starr and Members of the Board of Education.

I am Kim Penn, the PTA President of Spark Matsunaga and Longview School and am honored to have the opportunity tonight to speak on behalf of our school community. I follow in the footsteps of our past PTA Presidents to say THANK YOU for all the support you have given to Spark Matsunaga and Longview School over our past eleven years.

As we all constantly remind you, Matsunaga is a historically large school. We continue to successfully and consistently educate our students. This is reflected in Matsunaga's high test scores, low teacher turnover and widespread community support. The community supporting Matsunaga is thrilled with the level of education our children are receiving. As a high performing school, we are a clear reflection that the practices and policies of Montgomery County's Board of Educations bring results.

Most recently, in the summer of 2010, we received our 15 new, green portables, which exceed our expectations. As stated in our previous CIP testimony, we hoped that this portable option would benefit our students as well as allow the Board of Education to eliminate the need for a costly boundary study at our school. The portables have done just that...our staff and students are thrilled -- the portables provide a clean, safe and esthetically pleasing learning environment for our students to grow.

As the Board considers options for our Northwest Cluster, including building Northwest Elementary #8, I ask one thing tonight on behalf of our Matsunaga parents. We respectfully request that our school boundaries remain intact, thus maintaining our diverse population and strong Matsunaga family. Here is why:

- Even though our school has a large population, it draws from a compact geographic area, creating what is truly our community school. As a young school community, our community experienced redistricting when students were split to fill both Matsunaga and Great Seneca Creek Elementary School in 2006. We would like to protect our community from having to undergo another divide. As a 41 year resident of Montgomery County and a student of the MCPS school system, I have personally felt, first-hand, the disruption that redistricting can cause students and a close knit community when my high school, Charles W. Woodward, closed and merged with Walter Johnson.

- In addition, the option to leave Matsunaga intact is fiscally responsible -- allowing the Board of Education and our school to fully maximize the County's investment of 15 new portables on our school site. Relocating current Matsunaga students and underutilizing those portables before their time is unnecessary.

- Finally, projected enrollment numbers are inconclusive. Reviewing the Projected Enrollment and Space Availability Chart as submitted in the FY 2013 Capital Budget

and Capital Improvements Program, total enrollment for Spark M. Matsunaga ES increases until 2014 and then begins to sharply decline. In addition, our total student population for Matsunaga in 2011-2012 is already 30 students less than was forecasted for this year -- enrollment numbers for this year were 1069; however, our actual enrollment for this year is only 1036. These forecasted numbers need to be fully considered before conducting a boundary study.

If a boundary study must be conducted for a new Northwest Elementary #8, we ask that the Board include all over-enrolled schools in our cluster to ensure that any solution addresses the full scope of the problem.

We respectfully submit this testimony to the Superintendent for consideration in the FY 2013 CIP recommendation. In conclusion, we request that as you move forward in planning to alleviate overcrowding in the Northwest cluster you retain current Matsunaga boundaries. This will permit us to continue to successfully educate our students, leave our diverse community intact, and maximize the use of our new portables.

In our tight budgetary times, we hope that the Board will continue to prioritize projects in MCPS that are most sorely needed and leave alone those that are working well.