

Northwest Cluster

Northwest High School

Kingsview Middle School

Lakelands Park Middle School

Roberto Clemente Middle School

Clopper Mill Elementary School

Darnestown Elementary School

Diamond Elementary School

Germantown Elementary School

Great Seneca Creek Elementary School

Ronald McNair Elementary School

Spark M. Matsunaga Elementary School

FY 2013-2018 CIP Testimony to the Board of Education November 14, 2011

Good evening Dr. Starr, President Barclay and Members of the Board. My name is Beth Kennington and I am one of the Northwest Cluster Coordinators.

Our cluster understands the fiscal challenges we share as a public school system and would like to reiterate its message shared with you in previous years, which is that we cannot afford to fall behind. As such, we support some of the Superintendent's recommendations in the CIP for our cluster, but cannot support others such as systemic delays of modernizations and addition projects.

Our cluster greatly appreciates the recommendations to address overcrowding, especially considering that we are now and are projected to continue to be the cluster with the greatest number of students in Montgomery County.

One of Dr. Starr's initial observations of our schools was the high rate of variability and the need for equitable distribution of resources. The desire to differentiate teaching and learning in Curriculum 2.0 is admirable, but is faced with many challenges in this fiscal climate.

In order for you to better understand the themes in our testimony this evening, I would like to offer a few statistics about our Cluster. The Northwest Cluster has:

- The highest projected ES and MS enrollment for the County in 2016;
- The largest elementary school and two of the smallest and oldest elementary schools in the County;
- The 2nd highest projected HS enrollment in the County for 2016; and
- The highest number of relocatable classrooms in use in one cluster (34) at an unsustainable cost to the taxpayers of \$2.38M per year

The Northwest Cluster urges the Board of Education to help us to achieve these three goals at a minimum:

1. To reduce overutilization of our cluster elementary schools and, therefore, avoid or eliminate residential moratoria in the affected communities.

Economic development is hindered by moratoria, therefore, it's critical to keep up with the pace of growth in the County by keeping CIP projects on track in order to better manage our human and capital resources.

Delay of additions at Darnestown and Diamond, could economically injure those communities and would fail to provide safe, secure and adequate learning facilities – one of MCCPTA's top CIP priorities.

2. Amend TechMod to include all educationally needed technology equipment for all schools.

TechMod currently involves upgrading just computers, but other equipment is needed in all schools, such as ELMOs and Prometheans. It shouldn't just be the new or modernized schools that receive new technology equipment, especially when our curriculum relies so heavily on technology in Curriculum 2.0.

TechMod funding should be shared equitably across the county, focusing on all schools including those which haven't been modernized or whose PTAs have not been able to fund new technology purchases for their schools. Wouldn't it be better to share technology funds with all schools that need it instead of fully outfitting selected schools entirely with technology equipment?

Technology equipment can no longer be considered a luxury; today it is, indeed, a necessity.

The Cluster supports the school system's application for grants to purchase this equipment while contemporaneously using its CIP funds in order to remain *academically competitive* and to reduce the variability of performance around the County when employing Curriculum 2.0.

3. To continue prioritizing funds for HVAC, PLAR and BMPI projects so that schools waiting for modernization or reconstruction do not experience disruptions in the teaching and learning processes.

Specific needs at Northwest cluster schools include:

Darnestown ES

As evidenced by repeated septic backups, including one a few weeks ago, Darnestown can no longer afford the disruptions to teaching and learning caused while awaiting installation of a new septic field. This project must be completed as soon as practical.

Darnestown is 33% over capacity and we **urge the Board to keep Darnestown's addition project on schedule**. The challenges faced by having 6 relocatable classrooms while preparing for the addition make it important to this community to maintain the schedule in order to regain use of its outdoor space. Failure to complete this project will result in the school's inability to use its outdoor play and P.E. space, not

to mention the continued impact on Darnestown Presbyterian Church which has been so gracious throughout the planning and pre-construction phases.

Diamond ES

Diamond was built in 1975 and has never been modernized. The previous CIP recommended modernization of the school somewhere between 2021 and 2025, however the new CIP delays modernization until approximately 2031 when the school will be 56 years old.

This project should not be delayed. Challenges and building inefficiencies can be felt by the Diamond community due to the school's overutilization, open floor plan, aging HVAC, electrical and plumbing.

While waiting for modernization, efficiencies can only be achieved through systemic HVAC and PLAR projects, however, those would still not address challenges of Diamond's open floor plan, entrance security and lack of storage, pull-out spaces, and core facility.

The cluster urges the Board to keep Diamond's addition on track. Failure to address overcrowding issues at Diamond will keep the community in residential building moratorium and will require the addition of a 4th portable classroom (cost of \$280,000 annually).

Germantown ES

Germantown ES is the 3rd oldest ES and 6th oldest of all schools in the County. It was last modernized 33 years ago in 1978 and needs to be modernized now. Germantown supports the Superintendent's recommendation to build Northwest ES #8 to relieve overcrowding in neighboring schools.

A new form of differentiation occurs within our cluster, technologically speaking. Great Seneca Creek ES opened in 2006 and is a technological model for all MCPS elementaries. Germantown opened in 1935, was modernized in 1978 and has little technology equipment, aside from computers and 4 ELMO projectors. Teachers and students at Great Seneca Creek enjoy use of Prometheans and ELMO projectors, while teachers and students at Germantown must share 4 ELMO projectors among all of the classes, placing students at each school and their paces of learning at differing stages.

The school's TechMod is slated for this year, however, only computers will be updated. Germantown students in K-2 are experiencing Curriculum 2.0 now. Any teacher or student in a class without an ELMO or a Promethean is unable to fully experience the new curriculum without the technology in the classroom to support it.

TechMod needs to include those items now and in the future to ensure our schools remain academically competitive with other schools in the system. The age of a school building should have nothing to do with the age of its teaching amenities and furnishings.

Great Seneca Creek ES

“The Creek” opened 5 years ago and has already overflowed its banks by 18%!

In the future, the Great Seneca Creek community believes a 4-classroom addition will be necessary to provide additional capacity. While an addition is not imperative now and if CIP resources need to be made available where a greater short-term need exists in our cluster, the greater need should be met.

Ronald McNair ES

McNair opened 21 years ago and is currently at 121% utilization.

The HVAC has never been touched and is seriously inadequate and inefficient. The in-class HVAC units are original and are ineffective at controlling room temperature. It is common for them to open windows in order to regulate the class temperature than for the HVAC unit. McNair’s A/C chiller often breaks down and the boiler is similarly inadequate to serve the heating needs of the building. McNair and the Cluster request that it be considered for HVAC renewal in this CIP cycle.

This may be a maintenance item, but it needs mentioning that uneven sidewalks due to tree root growth on school property is causing a safety hazard; maintenance requests to mill-down the elevated sidewalk sections have gone unanswered and need to be addressed as soon as possible.

Spark Matsunaga ES

As the Board considers options for the Northwest Cluster, including building Northwest Elementary #8, the Matsunaga PTA expressed its desire to be excluded from the overcrowding relief suggested in the current CIP. The PTA will offer its detailed position through testimony later this evening.

In conclusion, our Cluster understands the challenges faced in the current fiscal climate. We need adequate technology in order to fully implement and experience Curriculum 2.0 and to level the technological playing field in all of our schools. We sincerely appreciate all that MCPS is prepared to do within the CIP budget to modernize, add-on and build anew to address overcrowding in our schools. Please do what you can to keep us on track!

Thank you sincerely for all of the hard work that you do and for the difficult choices you must make for the education of our children.

Beth Kennington and Sarah Kessler
2011-2012 Northwest Cluster Coordinators