

FY 2013 Operating Budget Testimony
Poolesville Cluster

Donna Lowell
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January 18, 2012

Good evening. My name is Donna Lowell and tonight I am here to share the Poolesville Cluster's comments and priorities for the FY 2013 Operating Budget.

"If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill, be a scrub in the valley but be the best little scrub on the side of the rill. Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be the sun be a star. It isn't by size that you win or you fail. Be the best at whatever you are. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke those words to students in 1964.

Poolesville schools are the star, the scrub, the trail and we continue to do the best we can even though we are smaller. You have heard me and past Cluster Coordinators talk about the uniqueness of the Poolesville Cluster. Our schools are smaller than most in the county. Thus across the board cuts have profoundly impacted our cluster. We have the same desire as other parents across the county for our children to be given every opportunity to succeed.

I would ask or maybe dare for each of you to come out to a classroom or back out for those that taught and teach for one day. Stand in the shoes of a teacher who has 27 first graders in a classroom meant to hold far less. Who is attempting to make sure they have the tools necessary to compete in today's world. You would look at a group of kids all wanting to learn but not all on the same level. You have multiple reading groups and multiple math groups. Some students are struggling to stay on grade level, some have learning disabilities and some have emotional issues that both take extra time. Tell me how in a days time that a teacher can get to each student and to spend the time

with each group. We can't blame the classroom teacher who deals with the chaos of 27 first graders. We can be amazed that she/he comes back to school every day and works extra hours to figure out what works for a student that is struggling.

The size of the classes has to be decreased or provide more reading specialists and paraeducators . As each school is judged for resources please look at the number of children in a school that are falling below grade level. They have no special needs per se but are struggling. Please give us the number of Reading Specialists and paraeducators to work with our elementary students and staff development teachers to help our teachers with the new curriculum.

We would like to know if we will be able to have a Promethean Board in each of our elementary school classrooms. Will our schools be able to get them or should we find other avenues? We have been patient and understand that these are difficult times but new schools are getting them before us and we are feeling neglected and antiquated. If you have to choose between the extra staff and the technology we will choose the staff. If they are like our current staff that are working with less and still making an impact on the area children we would be overjoyed.

John Poole Middle School has a need for two full time counselors. The 1.5 that we have is not enough to meet the needs of the students. An on-site technology specialist is critical to maintaining the current technology during school hours. The school at the moment is sharing a service provider. This is not functioning well considering the distance we are from the rest of the county.

Poolesville High School needs to make sure that MCPS is committed to continue the funding of Project Lead the Way and the Whole School Magnet Program. PHS has proven itself time and again. It was named the number one high school in the state of Maryland, a set of students won the DC3 Digital Forensics Challenge – first place in the

U.S and the World (11,200 students participated), and we fielded semifinalists in the Siemens Science Competition. The school ranks as a Clark School top 25 Engineering Source School for the 2nd straight year. Think of what the students could do with a first class facility and with adequate staffing.

The classroom teachers and staff at these schools are working with less and still being asked to have the students perform at the same levels as previous years. There will be a point where this level of achievement won't be able to be maintained. This is not the fault of the classroom teacher, the school staff, the parent or the student. We again stress this year that as the budget gets tighter and staff allocations are reconsidered, that the outcome of enrollment-based decisions continue to be scrutinized for smaller schools to ensure that the resulting decision does not unintentionally impact programming unfairly. We must continue to offer the same core curriculum and services to all MCPS students, regardless of school size. We ask that when the time comes to start restoration of cuts please remember the first schools impacted should be the first schools restored.

We remain concerned about the amount of textbook and instructional supply funding especially for our early readers. The current early reader kits are falling apart and there are not enough of them for our increasing enrollment.

The Poolesville Cluster supports the Superintendent's recommended Maintenance of Effort Operating Budget.

We want our children to have the tools necessary by the time they leave high school to do as Emerson stated "Do not go where the path may lead go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." They need the skills, confidence and education to have the ability to carve out their own paths.

We thank all of you for the time and effort to ensure the quality of education of Montgomery County students remains high.

Attachment 1

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Poolesville Cluster FY 2013 Operating Budget Requests

1. Poolesville High School
 - a. Continue funding Project Lead the Way
 - b. Continue funding the Whole School Magnet Program
 - c. Full time Science Aide
2. John Poole Middle School
 - a. Two full time counselors (1.5 current allocation)
 - b. On-site technology specialist (shared service provider)
 - c. Full time Music Teacher (.8 current allocation)
 - d. Additional Staff Development Teacher positions
 - e. Netbooks for all students
3. Moncacy Elementary School
 - a. Full time Reading Specialist
 - b. Full time Staff Development Teacher
 - c. Open out of cluster student transfer policy
4. Poolesville Elementary School
 - a. Full time Staff Development Teacher
 - b. Full time Reading Specialist
 - c. Paraeducators
 - d. Promethean Boards – one per classroom