

Montgomery Blair Cluster

East Silver Spring Elementary * Montgomery Knolls Elementary * New Hampshire Estates Elementary *
Oakview Elementary * Piney Branch Elementary * Pinecrest Elementary * Rolling Terrace Elementary *
Sligo Creek Elementary * Takoma Park Elementary
Eastern Middle * Silver Spring International Middle * Takoma Park Middle
Montgomery Blair High School

**Testimony on FY2010 Capital Budget
and Amendments to the FY 2009-2014 CIP
Board of Education
Carver Educational Services Center
Rockville, MD**

November 12, 2008

Written testimony submitted by:

- Blair Cluster Coordinators
- Montgomery Blair High School PTSA
- Silver Spring International Middle School PTSA
- Montgomery Knolls/Pine Crest Elementary Schools PTA
 - Takoma Park Elementary School PTA
 - Rolling Terrace Elementary School PTA

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Blair Cluster Testimony on FY2010 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2009-2014 CIP Before the Board of Education, November 12, 2008

Good evening President Navarro and Members of the Board,

My name is Susan Fleck, and Bladimiro Duenas and I are the cluster coordinators for MCPS, representing the 13 schools that comprise the Blair Cluster. The 13 schools that feed into Montgomery Blair High School represent 7% of MCPS's Kindergarten thru 12th grade students.

Before I begin, I would like to ask for a short silence to honor the memory of Blair freshman Tai Lam, an honors student at Blair who was fatally shot last weekend in a senseless act of violence.

Thank you to MCPS officials for supporting the Lam family and the Blair HS community in this difficult time. Thank you also to police officers who apprehended the suspect and are holding him without bail. Parents and students in the community are concerned about the safety and security of our children – we need to work together to find solutions.

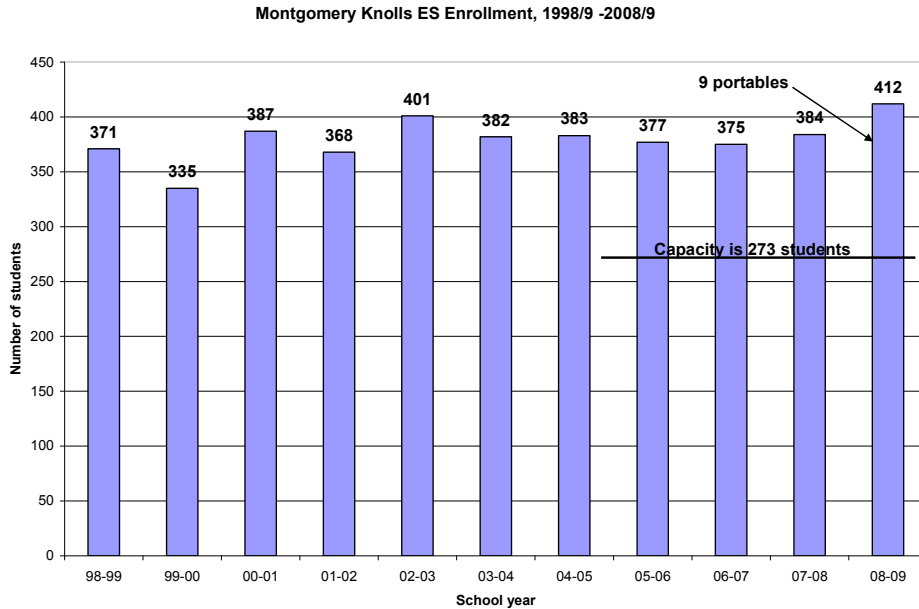
The FY2010 CIP states that there is a bump-up in enrollment across the county. The Blair Cluster is not surprised by this trend. Our area schools have consistently grown or barely shrunk enrollment over the past 10 years. Only recently has Blair high school overcrowding been alleviated with the opening of Northwood High School and the creation of high school choice among the 5 downcounty consortium clusters. Thank you to MCPS, the BOE, and the county for supporting the improvements to Northwood – **it remains important that the quality of Northwood's school parallel that of the other 4 downcounty high schools, to maintain balanced high school enrollment.**

Issues related to overcrowding at the elementary school level are also important. **We support the superintendent's recommendation to begin construction at Takoma Park and East Silver Spring Elementary Schools** - thank you for the approval of the contract for construction at Takoma Park ES next fiscal year. These two programs must be accomplished in tandem to address overcrowding issues that spill into Sligo Creek and Piney Branch Elementary Schools. They also require timely completion before school begins in 2010. **We support the superintendent's recommendation for the boundary study of the 4 elementary schools this coming Spring, and the additional recommendation to include the two middle schools that will be impacted by the change in enrollment patterns - Silver Spring International and Takoma Park Middle Schools.**

We appreciate and support the superintendent's very recent suggestion to expand the number of classrooms at Montgomery Knolls kindergarten thru 2nd grade Elementary School from 10 to 15. Montgomery Knolls already uses 9 portable

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classrooms for its tiny tots and, as can be seen in the accompanying chart, has been over capacity ever since full-day kindergarten and reduced class sizes took effect.



We urge the Board to consider keeping the Montgomery Knolls classroom and gym additions on track to be completed in August 2011, rather than January 2012.

Architectural plans appear flexible enough to address the additional classroom requirements, and the continued growth of the school could lead to no other option but to place 1st grade students in portable classrooms – a security risk for students and serious concern for parents. Furthermore, the proposed gym addition has been on the books for 10 years. The school community agreed to delay its construction from FY2010 to FY2011 to be planned with the classroom construction - but the superintendent’s recommendation delays it even further. Please support Montgomery Knolls needs.

Furthermore, Rolling Terrace Elementary School’s enrollment is on the rise again, and safety needs related to portables being added must be addressed.

Regarding maintenance and safety issues, we ask that you consider Silver Spring International Middle School’s request for a gym partition to protect students from harm, and appreciate your recent consideration of Sligo Creek Elementary School’s HVAC repairs. Please note Blair High School’s request for the need of air conditioning in the gym. There are other more detailed requests related to maintenance in each school’s letter.

In light of our support for the county PTA’s testimony to maintain maintenance of our schools’ infrastructure, I have these closing words – the chiller for Oakview Elementary

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School. We are aware of the Board of Education's support for this project, but we are not aware of any funding commitment to get this purchased and installed. To heed the advice of Aesop, we can not be like the grasshopper who plays the fiddle as winter approaches, We must be like the industrious ant who lays aside provisions to prepare for the hard days ahead. Our hard days have arrived. Let us tend to our provisions so that we survive the winter.



***Montgomery Blair
High School PTSA***
**51 University Blvd. East
Silver Spring, Md. 20901**

November 9, 2008

Montgomery Blair High School PTSA would like to express our appreciation for the successful technology modernization that took place over the summer. Our staff, students and the community at large is particularly excited about the installation of the new Promethean Boards in many of our classrooms.

We understand that in these difficult fiscal times, we need to make do with less. However, we would like to raise several health and safety issues that should be addressed sooner rather than later.

1. **Install stairs and walkways on the hill at each rear exit of the building to enable efficient evacuation.** Currently, the evacuation doors lead to sidewalks that run along side of the building, while the evacuation route should run down the hills away from the building. The hills have no safe pathways and are overgrown with weeds.
2. **Parking lot modifications to improve traffic and pedestrian safety.** We need to redesign and modify parking lot curbing to improve traffic flow and create a safe drop off point for students on the University Boulevard side of the building. In addition, we would like to install fencing between the student parking lot and the bus lot on University Boulevard side of building to keep students on the sidewalks and keep them from crossing into the bus area.
3. **HVAC Issues.** The gymnasium which is not currently air conditioned must have air conditioning installed. The air handling equipment at the school has 50,000 tons of excess capacity, but there is currently no means by which to funnel this capacity to the gym. We believe this is merely an issue of install the appropriate ductwork.
4. **Athletic Fields.** The practice fields, including the JV Softball field need to be renovated. These fields are heavily used for PE classes, athletic teams, and the community. Their condition has deteriorated to become dangerous. When Blair was built, the fields were not

properly installed and have deteriorated quickly and significantly. Park and Planning estimates that a full renovation would cost \$150,000. In addition, Park and Planning has approved installation of artificial turf on the stadium field and we request MCPS support for this project.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the MBHS PTSA,

Jeanne Philbin
Blair Cluster Representative

Robert Gillette
Co-President
Montgomery Blair High School

Pete Lafen
Co-President
Montgomery Blair High School

PTSA
SILVER SPRING INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL
313 Wayne Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Date: November 11, 2008

SUBJECT: STATEMENT OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT NEEDS

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Silver Spring International Middle School (SSIMS) PTSA, we would like to thank the Board of Education and Montgomery County Public Schools for their assistance in improving the facilities at our school. Among the completed projects that you have kindly supported are repairs to the school entranceway and improvements to the outside of our fieldhouse/physical education facility. We are also very pleased that MCPS has agreed to fund the feasibility study for the renovation of the Old Blair Auditorium, a project that, once completed, will be of great value, not only to SSIMS but to the broader community that it services.

As one of the school system's oldest facilities, SSIMS has received some cosmetic upgrades since its reopening but has never really undergone comprehensive modernization. As a result, the school has many outstanding physical resource problems that affect student safety, accessibility, and learning. As concerned PTSA members, we therefore hope you will give full consideration to the following important requests as you prepare the next Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

The SSIMS **gym needs a partition** for reasons of efficiency and safety. The SSIMS gym was built for a high school, not a middle school, and during inclement weather, the gym cannot accommodate as many teaching stations as required for a middle school program. A partition will allow PE instructors to prevent injuries caused by students from different classes colliding on the gym floor. We have had dozens of such injuries, some of them requiring the nurse's or emergency room care. The partition can consist of something as simple as a heavy, roll-up net that drops down from the ceiling. Our understanding is that many other school gyms have these partitions, and we believe our gym should have one, too. It is also our understanding that MCPS has referred this request to the Director of Facilities Management for prioritization. We hope that it will be assigned high priority and that subsequent action will come soon.

The school is in desperate need of **renovations to the walkway** that leads from the main building to the gym. All SSIMS students must use this very long walkway, which extends the length of the school, to get to gym class in the field house. With no overhanging protection from the elements, it gets very slippery in wet weather and can freeze over when it snows, making it quite treacherous. Keeping it clean of debris and salted in wet winter weather is also a time-consuming challenge to the maintenance staff, which is already stretched thin. We therefore think it is imperative that the walkway surface be replaced, covered with an awning structure, and supplemented with handrails

along the long flat stretches between the walkway's steps. As far as we know, the Board of Education and MCPS has only given consideration to repaving the walkway, which is slated for inclusion in the CIP for FY14. We hope that the requested project be considered in its entirety for the safety of all students going to and from the gym.

The SSIMS facility continues to be difficult terrain for handicapped students. We feel we must therefore repeat longstanding capital improvement requests to **ensure ADA compliance**. Our understanding is that MCPS has referred the following requests to the Director of Facilities Management for prioritization:

- a handicap ramp at the front entrance that gives direct access to the building instead of indirect access through a side door into the condemned auditorium. The current setup is not handicapped-user-friendly. It also creates a security issue with the school having another entrance/door that has to be unlocked all the time.
- handicap access from the main building to the gym. Currently, a long set of stairs outside the building leads from the main building to the gym.

While we are grateful that these projects have been forwarded for prioritization, we intend to keep urging for their completion because of their importance to our disabled community. We would also like to repeat our request for handicap access from the main floor of the building to the cafeteria on the lower level. As far as we know, MCPS has yet to give any consideration to this important ADA compliance need.

SSIMS also has some routine facilities improvement needs that must be addressed to avoid deterioration of the building and to make sure that students can learn in a comfortable physical environment. We refer specifically to the following building modification and program improvement needs:

- **HVAC Replacements.** SSIMS has requested that the HVAC system units for the lower, main, and second floor be replaced due to uneven heating and cooling and frequent malfunctions.
- **Restroom Renovations.** SSIMS requests that all bathrooms be modernized. In the interim, the school hopes that paper towel dispensers be replaced with electric hand dryers and that all mirrors be replaced.
- **Roof Replacement.** SSIMS requests a roof replacement at the front entrance of Old Blair High School (now boarded up entrance). This roof has persistent leaks.
- **School Security Systems.** Security Cameras at SSIMS need to be updated with the same specifications and number of cameras that other middle schools are having installed. We currently have 23 cameras and need 4 more.

MCPS has informed us that these requests have all been referred to the Director of Facilities Management for prioritization. We would like to continue to remind the school

system of the importance of these projects for the well being of the facility and the community that occupies it.

Implementing the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IB MYP) has generated special facilities needs at SSIMS. As you know, the IB MYP is a whole school magnet program, serving all of our students and not just a select few. We hope that you will consider the following two requests, which we consider vital to accommodating IB MYP performing arts and technology education requirements:

- **a performing arts space with a stage.** In the future, this need may be met by the completion of the Old Blair Auditorium Project (OBAP). However, while the fate of the OBAP remains uncertain, our students are left without a stage. We urge MCPS to continue with the OBAP facilities planning process and to include funding for the project in the CIP.
- **computer lab space and 32 additional computers.** Having instituted the program at the school, we feel that it is important that we provide the computers the program calls for in order to succeed. The 32 computers would be enough to accommodate SSIMS' largest classes.

We understand that budgets are tight and that the short-term fiscal outlook is far from bright. Nevertheless, we urge you to do what you can to meet these real and pressing needs at our school. We thank you for your continued dedication to the school children of Montgomery County and we look forward to further cooperation in serving their educational needs.

Sincerely,

Lisa Gabriel and Jeanne Atkinson
Co-Presidents of the SSIMS PTSA

Joseph Lipten
Blair Cluster Representative for SSIMS

**Montgomery County Board of Education Hearing on Capital Improvements FY2010
November 2008
Montgomery Knolls/Pine Crest PTA, 807 Daleview Drive, Silver Spring, MD 20901**

Dear Board of Education Officials,

The Montgomery Knolls Pine Crest PTA would like to thank the Superintendent for his commitment to improving our facilities and for providing funding for Montgomery Knolls Elementary School to begin planning for the addition of a gymnasium and a 10-classroom addition. We understand that the budgetary situation is increasingly challenging and appreciate the Superintendent's efforts to ensure that progress continues on this important project.

Montgomery Knolls has been struggling with inadequate facilities for many years. The K-2 school, articulated with Pine Crest, currently has an enrollment of 424 students, approximately 45 more students than a year ago when the school was operating at capacity. The school currently has a total of 9 portables, all of which are used as regular classrooms. The plans for the gymnasium have been delayed multiple times over several years due to funding technicalities. The school is located in an area of the county that is sorely in need of additional opportunities for youth and the planned gymnasium will fill an important need in the community in addition to modernizing the school for student use.

We are pleased that the superintendent included Montgomery Knolls in its FY 2010-2015 CIP to replace our portable classrooms with permanent classrooms. We agree with the Superintendent's view that recent enrollment trends support the design of an additional 5 classrooms beyond the original 10. This will allow the school room to grow and will prevent the school from having to resort to using portables again immediately after completion of construction. We have also been pleased with the planning process to date, including the plans developed by the architects and efforts to ensure student safety during construction. We urge the board to keep the school, the PTA, and the cluster informed of any new developments as the project moves forward.

Given the current 18-month planning phase of the project, we believe we have sufficient time to incorporate the additional classrooms into existing plans. We are concerned about a possible 6-month delay in the construction phase. We urge the Board to maintain the support for an 18-month architectural design phase followed by an 18-month construction phase to be completed in time for the school year to start in August 2011, rather than wait 6 months as advised by the Superintendent. We believe this plan would be the most economical and would best meet the needs of the school and the community.

Thank you for supporting ours and other cluster schools' expansion needs. Improvements at Montgomery Knolls have been delayed and should be addressed for our nearly half-thousand tiny students.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these important facility issues for our school community.

Submitted by Kim Hutchins, MKPC President and Kathy Larin, MKPC PTA Cluster Representative



Takoma Park Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association
7511 Holly Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland 20912

From: Takoma Park Elementary School PTA
To: Board of Education
RE: Comments on the Capitol Improvement Plan
Date: November 10, 2008

A1: Additions

The Parent Teacher Association of Takoma Park Elementary School would like **to thank MCPS, the Board of Education, and the County Council for funding the expansion and renovation of Takoma Park Elementary School (TPES)**. TPES has over 400 students and has been well beyond its capacity for years. An addition and renovations are critical to enable our school to accommodate substantial ongoing growth in our student population and to recover playground space now occupied by ten portables. We appreciate the response to our concerns during the planning phase by adding meetings to meet the needs of the community. We also appreciate the incredible response and input from the community on the TPES expansion project.

We anticipate that the Board and the MCPS transportation division will work with the Takoma Park Elementary School community to ensure that our relocation to Grosvenor holding school causes as few problems as possible. We have been assured that we will have a dedicated bus fleet and that there is flexibility in start and end times of the school day to minimize the time that our K-2 students spend on the buses every day. **We know that everything possible will be done to finish the construction in a timely manner to minimize the impact on our children.** We look forward to a continued open discussion on these issues as we move forward in the process.

During the transition to the Grosvenor holding school, there is a chance of us losing students for that year. We would appreciate funding to maintain our staffing allocation for the 2010-2011 year so that we do not lose teachers during this critical time. Our kindergarten enrollment is up significantly for the 2008-2009 school year and we anticipate continued growth at TPES.

We appreciate the difficulties in scheduling with the TPES addition's success dependant upon the East Silver Spring Elementary School addition and conversion to a pre-K through 5th grade school. These projects are interdependent and **will alleviate overcrowding and portables at Takoma Park Elementary School, East Silver Spring Elementary School, Sligo Creek Elementary School and Piney Branch Elementary School.**

When the additions are complete and boundary changes are made, we anticipate that the Board will make decisions based on what is best for the children and communities involved.

There is apprehension in our community over how the county's diminishing fiscal base will be reflected in these TPES plans. Our highest priority is that we have open communication and ensure the well-being of our children. Our concerns include such issues as contingency policies for cost overruns and delays in construction. We look forward to continued conversations to ensure that our TPES community is aware of the County's plans.

cc: Nina Garfield and Shmuel Shoham , TPES PTA Co-Presidents



Rolling Terrace Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association
705 Bayfield Street, Takoma Park, Maryland 20912

From: Rolling Terrace Elementary School PTA
To: Blair Cluster; MCPS; Board of Education; County Council
RE: Comments on the Capitol Improvement Plan
Date: November, 2008

The Parent Teacher Association of Takoma Rolling Terrace Elementary School would like to thank the MCPS Board of Education for the opportunity to provide our portion of the Blair Cluster testimony tonight. I speak for our whole organization when I thank the board for their continuing support of our school, and it is in that spirit that we ask for that support to continue in the form of some crucial capital improvements

All of our capital improvement needs tie directly into student safety.

- Our biggest concern at Rolling Terrace continues to be our portables. We are scheduled to get one, and perhaps two, additional portables next year due to increasing enrollment. This highlights a dangerous situation: the wood walkways and porches surrounding the portables and the entrances to the portables are falling in. Adding to this problem is the lack of any gutters and downspouts.
- The fence also needs to be replaced along the perimeter of schoolyard.
- Additionally, the concrete along the front entrance to the school needs re-facing

While we realize the difficult financial situation our county faces, we hope that the above requests will be seen as reasonable. Again, we wish to thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Tom Jacobson
Blair Cluster Representative

cc: Anissa Green RTES PTA Presidents
Jennifer Connors., TPES Principal
Tim Johnson and LaTonya Abrams, RTES PTA Co-Vice Presidents