

**Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher
Associations
D a m a s c u s C l u s t e r**

November 11, 2009

Damascus Cluster Testimony before the Montgomery County Board of Education, Facilities Hearing

Dr. Weast and Members of the Board:

I would first like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Damascus cluster. While the Damascus cluster is small in comparison, it has many of the characteristics of the County as a whole. Within the Damascus cluster, you can find children who come from extremely wealthy households and those who depend on government assistance, children who live on farms to those that live in apartments, families that have been in the community for generations to recent immigrants from around the world. As PTA President, I was amazed to learn how the needs of such a diverse population all center around the same basic necessities- facilities that foster a positive learning environment and the tools to face the challenges of tomorrow.

While the current economic downturn has proved to be painful for many of us, we should not overlook the opportunities it presents. As we all learned in the recent housing bubble, a booming economy and growth cause inflated construction and renovation costs to which no entity is exempt, including MCPS. The economic downturn, however, has brought construction costs back to a reasonable level. Now is the time to invest in the renovation and construction of our educational facilities. The Damascus cluster would like to remind the Board of the following projects - some pending that need to be kept on track, and others that are new and necessary to keep our Upcounty children in a fabulous learning environment.

1. ADA Compliance

- Damascus Elementary School- The installation of an elevator to the lower level kindergarten classrooms.
- Damascus Elementary School- The installation of a handicap ramp for the special needs classroom fire escape.

2. HVAC Replacement

- Damascus High School- Total System Replacement - This job includes the need for pipe re-wrapping to stop condensation leaks.

These sweating pipes cause water damage in the ceiling tiles; wet ceiling tiles cause mold; mold is an air quality and health concern. In some areas of the building, ceiling tiles are being replaced monthly

- Damascus High- Air Handling Unit and Rooftop Dehumidification Unit for Media Center needs continuing support.
- Damascus High – Install HVAC system to serve the computer labs, to extend the life of the valuable computer equipment and create a more comfortable learning environment
- Baker Middle School- Total System Replacement
- Cedar Grove- Replacement of HVAC system that services four of the classrooms, often not working or is not sufficient to cover area.

3. Planned Life Cycle Asset Replacement

- Damascus High School
 - Additional Stadium Bleachers
 - Updating of Auditorium Lighting System This was scheduled for FY '10 but has not happened yet.
 - Replacement of Auditorium Stage Floor
 - Artificial turf for stadium. Damascus is the only high school that utilizes its field for graduation – the field must be re-sod every year at a cost of \$14,000 as soon as spring sports are completed, in preparation for the graduation ceremony. The field undergoes heavy use from school and community sports. Go Hornets!!!!!!!!!!!!
 - Update kitchen used by LFI/SCB classrooms. There is no hood or venting system, so the oven was disconnected a few years back. Students who are Learning for Independence are only able to cook on the stovetop or microwave.
- Clearspring Elementary- Resurface playground blacktop and bus lane
- Woodfield Elementary- Resurface blacktop

4. Roof Replacement

- Damascus Elementary- the roof was repaired but I was advised that it still leaks

5. School Gymnasiums

- Woodfield Elementary- Replace Gym Floor
- Clearspring- Replace Gym Floor

We are grateful for the restroom renovations and new roof the Damascus Cluster received over the summer! Thank you for taking the our cluster's recommendations into consideration. I would also like to thank everyone on the Board for their service during such a difficult and critical time.

Dawn E. Lee
Damascus Cluster Coordinator