

Northwest Cluster

NORTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL

Kingsview Middle School

Lakelands Park Middle School (shared)

Roberto Clemente Middle School (shared)

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 2011-2016 CIP Testimony

to the Board of Education

November 12, 2009

Good evening Dr. Weast, President Brandman, Board Members. My name is Susan Burkinshaw and I am one of the Northwest Cluster Coordinators.

In the Northwest Cluster, we understand that we continue to exist in a very tight fiscal climate, but we want to reiterate the message from last year that we cannot afford to fall behind. As such, we support the Superintendent's recommendations for this 2011-2016 CIP.

The Northwest Cluster has several schools that are mentioned in the plan, all of which should to be addressed as recommended.

In particular, I want to remind you about the conditions at Darnestown Elementary. This school is one of the smallest elementary schools in the county and one of the oldest in our cluster. Although the Darnestown ES facility only holds about 385 students, it has six portable classrooms and exceeds its core capacity by OVER 41%.

As we testified last year, the core educational facility of Darnestown Elementary School was built in 1954 and has not been updated in over 27 years. This building is in desperate need of not only additional space, but also renovation.

The feasibility study performed since we last testified recommends the following:

- A safe, secure and ADA-compliant front entrance
- 7 additional classrooms, with appropriate kindergarten classrooms
- Art and music rooms
- Numerous staff offices and pull-out spaces

**Northwest Cluster Testimony
November 12, 2009 (cont'd)**

Unfortunately the addition will not address the operating inefficiencies of the original structure, but hopefully a modernization of that part of the facility can be performed during less challenging fiscal times. Without modernization, among other issues, wind will continue to blow through windows in the building, pulling precious heat out of the building in the winter and cooled air in the warm weather months. Nonetheless, the addition is CRITICAL now.

Additionally, it was determined last year that the school's aging septic system had been chronically strained by an almost 150% capacity load; it had been scheduled for replacement in conjunction with the installation of low-flow toilets earlier this year with emergency funding, but to date, that has not occurred.

In regard to Germantown Elementary school, we are excited to see the Superintendent's recommendation for the feasibility study of rebuilding at a larger capacity to alleviate overcrowding at the other schools in our cluster. Doing so would eliminate a predicament in years to come, similar to that we face with the aging Darnestown facility, even though the Germantown ES facility was modernized recently - in 1978!

Using "green" technologies in new construction, as we have seen at Great Seneca Creek Elementary School with their LEED Gold Certification, would increase the operating efficiencies of the facility and also give the students at Germantown Elementary the same modern technological advantages as the students have at newer schools in our cluster.

As a point of reference, Great Seneca Creek Elementary School costs about 18% less to operate per year than an average non-green school, with a combined water and energy savings of about \$27,000 annually over a comparably sized facility. This is proof that if repairs and renovations are performed responsibly, we can actually see returns on the investments that will help pay it forward for other facilities in our school system.

Matsunaga Elementary School has presented a third option for you to consider (detailed below) which includes replacement of their current 13 portable classrooms with new and improved, semi-permanent modular structures deemed to be "green buildings." These structures would connect directly to their existing facility, providing improved student safety and bathroom access so that students do not have to travel to the main building. The possibility of being the first to offer this prototype would be a challenge they would be privileged to accept.

Finally, Ronald McNair Elementary School was not mentioned in the CIP recommendation; however they should not be ignored. Although they would prefer to be considered for a classroom addition in the near future, they recognize that is not practical in this fiscal climate. However, they would like it noted that their portable classrooms are very old and show considerable wear.

**Northwest Cluster Testimony
November 12, 2009 (cont'd)**

Furthermore, McNair has not been scheduled for restroom renovations, which may be in order at this time.

Thank you for your consideration and for all you do for our kids.

*Respectfully submitted by:
Susan Burkinshaw, Beth Kennington and Bob Murphy
2009-10 Northwest Cluster Coordinators*

**Northwest Cluster Testimony
November 12, 2009 (cont'd)**

Spark M. Matsunaga Option for Superintendent's 2010 CIP Recommendation

Historically, Spark M. Matsunaga has exceeded capacity of its facility. Being a big school is familiar to the community and we have continued to consistently and successfully educate our large number of students. This is reflected in Matsunaga's high test scores, low teacher turnover and widespread community support.

As the largest elementary school in Montgomery County, we offer an ideal and diverse population to pilot innovative computer technologies and new MCPS procedures and programs. Because we are always interested in advancing options for the county and its students, we would like to propose a third option to the Superintendent's recent CIP recommendation for the Northwest Cluster. That option would be to replace our current 13 portable classrooms with a new and improved semi-permanent modular structures deemed to be "green buildings." This structure would connect directly to our existing facility, providing improved student safety and bathroom access so that students do not have to travel to the main building. The possibility of being the first to offer this prototype would be a challenge we would be privileged to accept.

Our preliminary research suggests that this option is fiscally sound -- costing significantly less over a 10 year period than the existing portables used in the county. In addition, semi-permanent structures could easily be removed or relocated to other schools as student populations fluctuate. Finally, this option would eliminate the need for a boundary study and reduce emotional strain on our community by allowing our strong Matsunaga family to remain intact. We would like to remind the Board that our community went through a recent boundary study in 2004-2005 when Great Seneca Creek Elementary School was built.

We respectfully request that in the plan to relieve overutilization in the Northwest Cluster elementary schools in FY 2011 appropriation, that Matsunaga's recommendation be included as a viable third option for facility planning.