

THE NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM

A Consortium of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook Clusters

Comments on the FY 2011 Capital Budget and the FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvements Program

On behalf of The NEC High Schools

November 12, 2009

Blake High School
Paint Branch High School
Springbrook High School

Good evening Superintendent Weast, Mrs. Brandman, and members of the Board. My name is Patti Twigg and I am the Paint Branch Cluster Coordinator. I am here tonight to speak on behalf of the CIP needs of the three high schools in our Northeast Consortium — Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook.

The Northeast Consortium fully supports the MCCPTA Resolution on the FY 2011 Capital Improvement Program Budget and FY2011-2016 CIP and the MCCPTA Resolution on the Restroom Renovation Project in the FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvement Program. We also fully support the MCCPTA testimony given last night by President Kay Romero.

We all know the realities of the budget and economy. We know that we live in tight budgetary times. But, by aggressively pursuing bids for upcoming projects, we can take maximum advantage of the economic climate and secure large cost savings for years to come. We think it makes sense for MCPS to prepare as many projects as possible for bid in the next year. At a minimum, we fully support the modernization and addition projects in the Superintendent's Recommendation. Concurrently, we urge prudence, encouraging you to seek out and modify or eliminate programs that may not be cost effective, in order to realize greater savings.

As we work for continuous improvement in our schools, for reaching benchmarks, for raising test scores and student achievement, we need to be mindful that to accomplish these goals, our children need the proper resources. Our number one priority should be to provide each student with a safe, secure and modern facility that is conducive to learning. This is all about the children! We must fully fund the projects in the CIP.

As an example of the costs and problems associated with not fully funding the CIP projects, let us remember the case of Blake HS. The cautionary lesson to be learned from them is that when the school was built, they scaled back its size, including the core capacity, and no matter how many classroom additions are built the gym will always be too small. That is very expensive, and thus practically impossible, to fix. That is the danger of not fully funding the CIP projects. Please don't let this happen to Paint Branch or any other school.

Our community is anxiously awaiting the results of the bidding process to see exactly how much money will be saved by moving forward with the modernization of Paint Branch HS. The estimates of cost savings have been extremely heartening. Students currently in 6th grade will be starting at the new Paint Branch HS in 2012, the year it will open under the current schedule. Just this past Friday night, the football team played its last game in the existing stadium due to the imminent commencement of the site work, and they now embark on a three-year journey of all games being played on other fields. The entire NEC community is eagerly anticipating the completion of this project, and stands fully behind its completion on schedule.

High schools behind Paint Branch on the modernization schedule, Gaithersburg, Wheaton, Seneca Valley, are also eagerly waiting their turns to see their schools transformed into the gems of their communities, and we strongly support them in seeing their projects completed on time and as planned. In addition, we would like to see modernizations be given **at least** equal priority to additions when planning the budget. We feel that both are critical to student achievement, health and safety.

We are very pleased to see the tripling of funding for HVAC projects. We would like to have more information provided, however, as to the anticipated replacement or rehabilitation of HVAC systems. What is their current expected lifetime? Indeed, we also fully support the continuation and expansion of other countywide projects, but in the same vein, would like more information about exactly what projects are included under the BMPI line item, perhaps in the form of a list. There has been confusion in the past about what belongs in that category, and having a list of typical projects will help us communicate clearly with our local schools. Another important program is the PLAR program, and we would like to see some of what we consider routine upkeep included in this, such as painting projects. Springbrook High School was painted 13 years ago and needs a complete new exterior paint job.

Programs that could also benefit from continued expansion are the Roof Replacement and School Security programs. While it is not currently an issue, over the last few years, Paint Branch has had some significant roof leaks, resulting in damaged equipment. And, because our high schools are large, outdoor cameras are particularly important for the protection of our buildings. Blake has a 93 acre campus, making the issue of outdoor security that much more complex. More security cameras are needed. We continue to request that MCPS help fund the addition of security cameras at Blake HS.

We would like to see a full examination of the process for evaluating schools and assigning FACT scores. We think it is important to gather input from all stakeholders towards this process, in order to address the long range planning and capital needs of our schools. Schools that do not currently have FACT scores are eagerly awaiting them, and more transparency in the process would benefit everyone. We would also like to see the development of a standardized set of designs for schools at each level, which can then be evaluated and customized for each individual project, the ultimate goal being to reduce the design phase of a school as it approaches its modernization, or for the construction of a new school.

While maintenance is an Operating Budget item, we feel it is important to mention that it really is a critical issue for our aging buildings, and it would make sense to link it to the CIP Budget. Maintenance plays an important role with the issues focused on by MCCPTA advocacy. We need well defined preventative maintenance programs for our schools that lessen the need for costly repairs and remediation.

Related to this issue is the recent stance by the MCCPTA Delgates who voted to support a resolution placing the importance of maintenance above the current restroom renovation program. Springbrook HS needs their bathrooms renovated. This has been a request for several years now. Springbrook has all metal stall dividers, which have been etched in and are repainted daily. Painting these over and over has become a real problem. Springbrook needs nonabsorbent stall dividers, which allow for quicker/easier clean up. Many of the fixtures are so old that replacement parts are no longer available. Their first floor bathrooms, which need to accommodate not only students but most visitors, are so unappealing as to reflect poorly on the school. However, they are not on the current list for the restroom renovation program, which goes out through 2016. If we adhere to the restroom renovation program as it stands, Springbrook HS will be waiting a minimum of seven years for much needed repairs. We feel it is clearly more cost effective and realistic to instead put the money into maintenance and repair of the restrooms in our schools.

At Blake HS, there continues to be an issue with cracked and separating floor tile throughout the building. The floor tile was never installed properly on the first level when the school was built eleven years ago. There are gaps between the tiles throughout the hallways. This is a safety as well as a health issue, because curled tiles are a tripping hazard, and mold growth under curled up sections present respiratory health hazards. This has been an ongoing problem at the school, with one area being repaired, only to have the problem recur somewhere else.

Unfortunately, the staff parking lot at Blake HS, which has been repaired a number of times, has not weathered its repairs, and the holes have again sunk, leaving the parking lot riddled with potholes and puddles. This is a safety issue, making driving and walking in the lot hazardous. Blake is also requesting more storage space for equipment. The need is especially critical in the auditorium area for the storage of props, costumes and supplies.

Energy efficiency is important in our schools, and older buildings that cannot be as green as new schools still deserve assistance in trying to keep energy costs down. Springbrook HS needs solar shades for the main hallway skylights and Media Center. The lobby/hallway and library have huge skylights. These skylights create a hot greenhouse effect in these areas. The intense sun fades the many flags that are hanging in the hallway, which then need to be periodically replaced which is very expensive. Thousands of dollars are spent unnecessarily during warm weather for air conditioning. Solar shades are needed to deflect this intense heat. The shades would roll down for the warm months, and then be rolled up in October.

In the 21st Century, can we really afford to deny our students the technology they need to achieve to their fullest potential? Springbrook High School needs their TV Studio to be modernized. They are offering a state-of-the-art technology education to their students. However, the TV Studio is outdated. They need to replace the outdated equipment with new equipment including a

new switcher and an updated recording system. Given that Springbrook houses the Technology Signature Program, it seems only logical that its equipment remain state-of-the-art and functional.

We very much appreciate your giving us the opportunity to speak on behalf of our high schools tonight. Thank you for your time and your consideration of these requests.

Respectfully,

The Northeast Consortium Cluster Coordinators

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