

**Westbrook Elementary School PTA
Testimony Before the Board of Education
November 11, 2009**

Good Evening, President Brandeman and Members of the Board of Education. My name is JoAnne Scribner and I am testifying on behalf of Bethesda's Westbrook Elementary School PTA.

We are here to request funding for a school addition and gym. Both are vitally needed to relieve overcrowding and to address related instructional, health, and safety challenges -- challenges that will only increase in future years.

Westbrook is creative and forward-thinking in meeting the needs of its diverse student population, however, the growing enrollment numbers threaten its capacity to lead with high test scores, star teachers and programs like the nationally recognized Model Program for Students with Emotional Disabilities.

Westbrook is situated near the Friendship Heights metro and blocks from Washington, DC. Because of this location and other economic factors, the student population of Westbrook has been growing rapidly and that growth is expected to continue. We began this school year with 393 students. That's 46% above our existing building's capacity of 269. Within the next five years, the county's demographer has projected our enrollment at 485 -- 80% above capacity! Based on these numbers, the need for an addition is compelling and clear.

The over enrollment of the school is putting our children at risk.

First, we are compromising our students' physical and mental health because the available space for physical activity is desperately lacking. Portables cover our only blacktop and the athletic field has insufficient drainage, leaving it unusable much of the year. The indoor space is even more limited because the all-purpose room serves as the cafeteria, the assembly area, and the sole indoor space for physical education.

Second, we are compromising our students' health and safety with overused, inadequate and inconveniently located bathroom facilities. Students in portables must go outside, unsupervised by an adult, during varying weather conditions, to access the school bathrooms. Furthermore, our youngest students, the kindergarteners, do not have bathrooms near their classrooms.

Finally, we are compromising our students' safety because of the congestion around the building during drop-off and dismissal. In fact, the increase in school traffic combined with the lack of school parking clogs residential roads and creates a hazardous pedestrian environment.

Our situation is critical and the time to act is now! We urge you to address these challenges by fully funding the planning, design, and construction phases of the Westbrook addition and gym. We look forward to working with you to secure and sustain Westbrook's outstanding educational environment. Thank you for your consideration.