

BEFORE THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 6, 2006
TESTIMONY OF MCCPTA ROCKVILLE CLUSTER

The Rockville Cluster is comprised of Rockville High School, Earle B. Wood Middle School, Lucy V. Barnsley Elementary School, Flower Valley Elementary School, Maryvale Elementary School, Meadow Hall Elementary School, and Rock Creek Valley Elementary School. Not only is our cluster situated geographically in the middle of the County, the demographic characteristics of our schools are uniquely representative of the County as a whole. At our five elementary schools, there is an average of 17.5% African-American students, 12.5% Asian-American, 26.1% Hispanic, and 43.5% White. In addition, 27.1% of our cluster elementary students receive FARMS and 14.3% receive ESOL services. Our cluster also is home to a recently credentialed International Baccalaureate program, a Highly Gifted Magnet program, a large Deaf and Hard of Hearing program, an Autistic program, and other Special Education programs.

Our schools have fared well in the past thirteen years in the CIP process. Rockville High School and Earle B. Wood Middle School both have been modernized within the past six years, and four of our five elementary schools have been modernized since 1994. Moreover, a gymnasium is scheduled to be completed at Meadow Hall Elementary School in August 2008. Our cluster, however, does have two significant needs.

According to the Superintendent, “[p]rojections indicate that enrollment at Lucy V. Barnsley Elementary School will exceed capacity by four classrooms or more by the end of the six-year [CIP] period.” Although modernized in 1998, Barnsley is operating at 91 students over capacity this year, and that number is expected to increase into the future. There are four relocatable classrooms in use this year at Barnsley. Accordingly, the Superintendent programmed FY 2010 expenditures for facility planning to determine the feasibility, scope, and cost for a classroom addition for Barnsley. This was included in the CIP submitted by the Board of Education. Unfortunately, the County Executive’s recommendation to fund the FY 2010 CIP at \$25 Million less than requested by the Board of Education could endanger this project.

Maryvale is another situation altogether. The Superintendent’s proposed CIP says the following about Maryvale:

A modernization project is scheduled for this school with a completion date of January 2018. FY 2013 expenditures are programmed for facility planning to conduct a feasibility study to determine the feasibility, scope, and cost of the modernization project. In order for this modernization to be completed on schedule, county and state funding must be provided at the levels recommended in this CIP.

The building housing Maryvale Elementary School was a former middle school; consequently, it is relatively large for an elementary school. It is for that reason that the school modernization was placed on the back burner. The Facilities Assessments with Criteria and Testing (FACT) process was developed by the Board of Education in 1992 as an objective assessment process to rank schools in priority order for modernization. Because classroom capacity factors significantly into the FACT score, Maryvale has been unintentionally prejudiced by this process,

BEFORE THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 6, 2006
TESTIMONY OF MCCPTA ROCKVILLE CLUSTER

because as a former middle school, capacity is not an issue. Maryvale, however, was opened in 1969. The building is old and in disrepair. For this reason, we had asked the Board of Education to remove Maryvale from the FACT process and evaluate its need for renovation on the merits without consideration of classroom capacity. The Board chose not to do so, and the students of Maryvale will suffer as a result, but at least a future generation of Maryvale students may get the opportunity to attend a safe, secure, healthy, and modern school beginning in 2018, if the CIP is fully funded and kept on track.

The MCCPTA and many of the clusters are requesting that the Council increase the Spending Affordability Guidelines and finance the increase through bonds in order to fully fund the CIP requested by the Board of Education. That is certainly one solution that we would endorse. If, however, you decide not to increase the Spending Affordability Guidelines, we would urge you to look elsewhere in the County Executive's FY09 Recommended Capital Budget and FY09-14 Capital Improvement's Program (CIP) for opportunities to reallocate funds from lower priority projects to the County school system. Certainly, we would not ask you to take money away from safety, security, and sanitation programs, nor would we suggest that you lower funding for revitalization and transportation projects that could increase the tax base and, thereby, generate revenue for the County that could help close the budget shortfall. However, our schools need to be a high priority, and if there are funds allocated to other programs that could be shifted to the school system, we urge you to do so.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony.

Amy Hartley
Michael I. Joseph
MCCPTA Cluster Coordinators – Rockville Cluster