Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations
Damascus Cluster

November 15, 2007

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

Dr. Weast and Members of the Board:

We enjoyed meeting with many of you at our cluster leadership meeting last May. We hope that you came away with new insights into the Damascus cluster.

Regarding Superintendent Weast's recent CIP recommendations, we are reassured that MCPS recognizes the growth surrounding Damascus Cluster and is planning for future capacity needs. The Clarksburg Elementary School #8 will alleviate the overcrowding at Cedar Grove Elementary, a school split between Clarksburg and Damascus. Our Baker Middle School population is right where it should be; however, Rocky Hill Middle School, split between Damascus and Clarksburg, is in need of relief. We in Damascus support increasing the capacity at the middle school level through any viable method. Whether the Superintendent's recommended action on building a middle school in the Damascus/Clarksburg clusters is approved or whether the BOE adopts the Watkins Mill Cluster suggestion tonight for expanding Montgomery Village Middle School, the up-county area simply needs capacity relief at the middle school level.

Regarding smaller ticket items, but items no less important to the safety and well-being of our students, Damascus Cluster schools request the BOE give consideration to the following:

- **HVAC Systems**
  Damascus High School recently underwent the AFG Middle State accreditation process. One of the few negatives noted by the AFG representatives was the poor HVAC system within the high school. Baker Middle School, Damascus Elementary, and Clearspring Elementary also experience problems with their systems. As Cedar Grove Elementary is slated for HVAC replacement in 2009, we ask the BOE to please keep the ball rolling on the HVAC replacement program within in our county and particularly for these older schools in our cluster.

- **Bathrooms**
  Baker Middle School, Damascus Elementary and Damascus High are all recommended for bathroom renovations on the CIP. Please ensure this stays on track. (And if you would like to accelerate this program, we would welcome it!)

- **Paving Projects**
  Woodfield Elementary needs a new blacktop. Frequent patching of crumbling pavement is just not doing the job and a complete repaving project is needed.
  Damascus Elementary is in desperate need of having their driveway and parking lots resurfaced and painted. There are a number of potholes, cracks and crevices along the drive where buses and visitors pass daily, such that safety is a growing concern.

- **Gym Floors**
  Woodfield Elementary and Clearspring Elementary both require new gym floors.

Lastly, we wanted to pass on a concern shared by parents of special education students in our community. Please ensure that any changes to special education programs are publicized well in advance, that information is complete, and that parents are given a generous opportunity to provide their input on such changes. We know that some of you have already gone to bat on this issue recently and thank you for your efforts.

In summary, we encourage the BOE to continue to address the growth of the up-county area. We also point out that our older schools in Damascus Cluster are truly showing their age. Our community would like the BOE to support the increased funding for the county-wide systemic projects, to include the Planned Life-cycle Asset Replacement and HVAC Replacement programs, thereby providing for a safe, comfortable environment for our students and staff. As always, thank you for your time and consideration on behalf of the children of Damascus.

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