

THE NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM
A Consortium of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook Clusters

Comments on the FY 2009 Capital Budget

On behalf of The NEC High Schools

November 14, 2007

Blake High School
Paint Branch High School
Springbrook High School

Good evening Superintendent Weast, Mrs. Navarro, 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 exceptional high schools in our Consortium — Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook.

Our community strongly supports MCPS actively pursuing an open communication process with parents. In particular, we feel that the **Special Education Community** should be informed of, and participate in, discussions and decisions concerning their children and should be involved in any process of moving or closing any program.

Your attention to some of the critical needs in the NEC over the past few years has been greatly appreciated by our community. Even the smallest of these changes makes a marked difference in the quality of our schools. Despite these improvements however, our high schools continue to suffer several critical needs.

Springbrook High School requests that it be one of the *first* schools considered for installation of artificial turf on its upper field should MCPS initiate this program. Please see the attached letter for more information on this issue.

Springbrook High School needs their TV Studio to be modernized. They are offering a state-of-the-art technology education to our students. However, the TV Studio is becoming outdated. They need to replace the outdated equipment with new equipment such as a new switcher and an updated recording system.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.

Springbrook High School needs outdoor security cameras – they have none. The 1994 renovation plans for Springbrook did not call for *any* security cameras. In addition, the total number of indoor cameras at Springbrook is inadequate. It is *imperative* that this be resolved.

Springbrook's bathrooms are in desperate need of renovation. 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.

Springbrook requests complete painting for the exterior of the building. The building was last painted 13 years ago and really needs a complete new exterior paint project.

Springbrook seeks solar shades for the skylights in its main hallway and Media Center, which were never installed as part of its 1994 renovation plan. The heat generated through these skylights not only creates an uncomfortable school environment, but causes significant energy costs and wear on the computers.

Blake High School is proud to celebrate its 10th Anniversary this year. Blake thanks the Board for the new flooring in the outer lobbies and the patching of its staff parking area. However, they request that the school system continue its resolution to their athletic stadium, outdoor lighting, and outdoor security camera problems.

A relocation of their football stadium has been suggested as a solution to the snake problem **Blake** is experiencing in the wooded area behind the goal posts and we fully support this action as soon as possible.

Blake is in a wooded and secluded area and the front entrance lighting remains a safety and security issue, with barely enough light to see beyond the front walkway in the dark.

Blake is a large campus, comprised of 93 acres, which is three times the size of most high school campuses, and the addition of outdoor security cameras remains a top priority.

Blake is concerned about the maximization of its facility capacity and the further hardship that area development will place on its program. Blake requests to be put on the CIP schedule to initiate a feasibility study for an addition to Blake and for an expansion of its gymnasium - which was less than capacity when it was originally built.

Further, **Blake** still needs the make-shift science lab completed with lab stations. New carpeting is needed in the main office and media center, and there still remains an issue with cracked and separating floor tile throughout the building. Unfortunately, the newly patched staff parking lot has not weathered its repair, and the holes have again sunk leaving the parking lot puddled and potted.

Paint Branch High School thanks the Board for the hallway floor tile replacement and parking lot re-painting done over the summer.

While the **Paint Branch High School** Community is at the very least shocked and disappointed with the Superintendent's recommendation to delay the modernization of our high school by one year, our hope is that we can find a way to keep the project moving forward. Our community recognizes the great needs within our county, understands that the BOE needs to consider and prioritize all needs, and realizes that funds are not limitless, but we have been delayed before, partially reinstated, and now this new delay puts us only one year earlier than the original 3 year delay.

Our Consortium is based on the concept of Choice, and in order for it to function to its full potential, we must have a level playing field. While all three high schools offer rigorous, comprehensive programs, from a facilities standpoint, Paint Branch is behind the eight ball. Blake was opened in 1998, Springbrook was renovated in 1994. Paint Branch was opened in 1969, with an

addition constructed in 1987. Despite the fact that Paint Branch has a highly dedicated, hard working staff, eager students and the strong support of its highly diverse community, we are still the ugly duckling of the Consortium, awaiting our transformation into the beautiful swan we deserve to be.

Aging facilities such as **Paint Branch** present many challenges, among which is the difficulty recently experienced in obtaining replacement parts for critical systems. In the almost 40 years since the school was built, the company who originally provided the system has since gone out of business. This fact is delaying the repair. It is not an unreasonable leap of logic to assume that problems such as this will continue to crop up.

Considering how the modernization date has historically been a moving target, how can the **Paint Branch** Community be anything but fearful of further delays, especially in light of the fact that projections for funding for future years is increasingly dire? In addition, how can we be anything but fearful that our project could be scaled back, which is what happened when Blake HS was built, so that their gym and auditorium are inadequate for a school of their present size? We are all painfully aware of the fact that with each year delay the cost of a modernized school rises, as does the likelihood of delays for high schools behind us in the modernization queue. What does not change is the need for Montgomery County students of all ages to be housed in safe, healthy, adequately sized school buildings.

With this in mind, **Paint Branch High School** is requesting that their total appropriation for the construction project be maintained in future budgets, and that a small amount be allocated in FY09 to begin site work on this project. We feel that doing so is in the best interest of Paint Branch and all other high school modernizations scheduled in future years.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of these requests.

Respectfully,

The Northeast Consortium Cluster Coordinators

Area Vice President

Ellen Salins

Springbrook

Pamela Johnson

Naghma Husain

Paint Branch

Patti Twigg

Blake

Dawn Dolan

Lee Ann Doerflinger

We respectfully request the urgent attention of the Board of Education to the deteriorating field situation at Springbrook High School. We request that the County investigate the feasibility of installing synthetic turf on Springbrook's multi-purpose upper field.

We want to go on record with a request that Springbrook and Bethesda-Chevy Chase high schools, with the smallest footprints among high schools in the county, be given priority consideration for the installation of synthetic turf. Because of the limited space, (they are the only high schools with only two fields), the physical education and athletic programs at these two schools operate at significant disadvantage.

MCPS undertakes extensive long term planning to assure high quality academic programs are available to all students. In this age of rampant obesity, we ask you to consider an important long-term investment in our students' *physical health*.

The installation of artificial turf on Springbrook's all-purpose upper field would be a smart investment—for reasons of safety, space requirements and finances. It would also contribute to greater resource equity among high schools in the Northeast Consortium.

1. **Safety:** We call your attention to serious safety concerns, as each day up to 100 athletes are forced to leave campus for practices and games. Field hockey, soccer and lacrosse teams walk or drive across busy New Hampshire Avenue or walk through wooded areas to reach these off-campus sites.
2. **Risk of Injury:** Field conditions pose an increased risk of injury due to constant overuse. During each school day, around 450 students share one woefully inadequate field for physical education. After school, an additional 120 athletes in the Fall and 60 in the Spring use the field for football and baseball practices. The County Recreation Department would like to add a Sports Academy to share the *same* field. Despite nearly heroic efforts by school staff to maintain these overused fields, the conditions pose serious risks of injury.
3. **Financial:** While other schools enjoy games at home with entry gate revenues, Springbrook must *pay* \$80/game to Park and Rec. for 'home games' on its fields, with no gate revenues allowed (ouch!); these games also see fewer spectators who are willing and able to walk or drive to the games.

We ask that the BOE consider the installation of artificial turf at Springbrook HS and at BCC HS as soon as possible.

At Springbrook, artificial turf on the upper all purpose field will produce several immediate benefits:

- Physical education classes will have access to quality turf, unencumbered by variations in the weather.
- The school will have continuous use for all practices and other after-school fitness activities daily from 2 to 9 pm.

- Our students (both athletes and spectators) could enjoy school sports in the safe environment of our high school grounds.
- In a reversal, the school could lease the fields to Park and Recreation for summer programs, benefiting the whole community.
- Beginning with the all-purpose field at Springbrook and the football field at BCC would provide some balance in the County, and an opportunity for the BOE to assess the costs-benefits, while providing needed relief to these two schools. Our neighboring counties have already understood the wisdom of such an investment: Arlington County has six school fields, with four more on line; Howard County, with three, has plans for several more.

We recognize that this is a large investment, but believe it is a wise long-term investment that will allow *more* students to be *more* active without leaving the *safety* of school grounds.

James H. Blake High School PTSA

**300 Norwood Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20905**

November 14, 2007

Dr. Jerry Weast, Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Dr. Weast:

Blake is celebrating its 10th Anniversary this year. We are immensely proud of Blake and are grateful for the many state-of-the-art features it was endowed with. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Superintendent and all of MCPS for the ongoing support you have given to Blake and to the success of its Signature Program.

However, we have all become painfully aware of the importance of a comprehensive maintenance plan that needs to ensure our newer schools are operating in prime condition and will not reach the somber state of many of our older schools. While Blake's needs are not extensive, they are critical to the ongoing Safety of its students, staff, and community; as well as to the Success of its Core Signature Programs.

Blake is particularly concerned about the status of the Athletic Stadium, Outdoor Lighting and Outdoor Security Cameras. These are detailed in the attachment to this letter, but we cannot emphasize enough the priority we give these areas of concern.

Additionally, the Blake community would like to see MCPS use a long-term policy approach when evaluating the priorities in its addition/modernization scheduling. When Blake was initially conceived and built, the geographic base area was considered rural — however, the onset of major development will drastically change the face of this community.

We believe it would be prudent to initiate a feasibility study for an addition to Blake. While the timetable is not "locked-in," an anticipated surge in base area population will certainly occur in the near future. Blake believes this change could compromise the integrity of the Choice process for Consortium students. We do not want to see a quality, successful academic process suffer in hindsight.

We look forward to a successful year for MCPS and thank you for all your work on behalf of our schools and our students.

Sincerely,

Jack Goble, PTSA President

A. REQUEST FOR INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

- **Additions and Modernizations**

The NEC's Preferred Choice Program has been an attractive and successful academic model. After Paint Branch High School's modernization and addition are completed, Blake will have the smallest capacity between the three high schools. Capacity needs must be addressed equally among the three schools in the Northeast Consortium. With anticipated growth in Blake's base population area, its facility will be strained to accommodate the Choice Process to its best realization. We strongly request that a feasibility study for an addition to Blake be funded as soon as possible.

- **Core/Signature Improvements**

Blake is currently using every available science lab and yet the space to accommodate everyone is still unavailable. While there has been some modification made to one of room, it did not include lab stations or plumbing for an effective laboratory space. We are asking that immediate attention be given to upgrade this converted room to a full science lab.

B. REQUEST FOR COUNTYWIDE PROJECTS

- **Improved (Safe) Access to Schools**

Resurfacing Parking Lots

Although the parking lot was repaired this past Spring, the parking lots at Blake are again in need of resurfacing. The parking surface has withstood 10 years of heavy use and there are dangerous potholes, particularly in the staff parking area. Although these potholes were filled in, they sunk once again creating a potted and puddled parking area.

- **Planned Life Cycle Asset Replacement (PLAR)**

Floor Tiling

While both foyers to Blake's main entrances had their tile replaced with a rubber-like flooring, the remainder of the building is in disrepair. Tiles are cracked, separated, and moldy causing a Safety as well as a Health Hazard. Replacement tiles are no longer available in the same color. We strongly urge the repair of this flooring, before an accident occurs.

- **School Gymnasiums**

When Blake High School was built, the capacity for the gymnasium was severely underestimated at 948. Adding parents and teachers causes this gymnasium capacity to be grossly insufficient. At some sporting events, potential attendees must be turned away. This not only causes a certain loss of goodwill, *but also translates into a loss of*

school revenue. We are requesting that the Blake gymnasium be enlarged to full capacity to match the need of the population at Blake.

- **School Security Systems**

- a. School Security Cameras**

- As always, security is an utmost priority at Blake High School. Blake has a 93 acre campus, making the issue of outdoor security that much more complex. We continue to request that MCPS help fund the addition of cameras throughout the high school. Blake has made some of these purchases from within its own monies.

- b. Outside Lighting of the School**

- Outdoor lighting at Blake is woefully inadequate, especially at its front entrance. There is a real safety concern for Blake students, staff, and community. Blake High School is in a relatively secluded and wooded location. The lights are dim enough to make it difficult to see one's way through the parking lot and to deprive students of a secure area after events while awaiting transportation.

- C. OTHER**

- 1. Media Center & Main Office Carpeting**

- After 10 years the carpet in the Media Center is badly worn. We are pleased that the Media Center is so highly used, however the carpet now warrants complete replacement. The Main Office carpeting is also greatly in need of replacement.

- 2. Athletic Field Netting**

- Blake has consistently noted the deficiencies in the design of the football stadium since its opening. After having expressed concerns about the lack of netting and the dangers presented to both spectators and players, a student athlete from a neighboring team was finally bitten by a snake when rescuing a stray ball.

- MCPS staff proposed a resolution to this by suggesting a relocation of our football field. In fact, this was the location sited in the original plans for the school. We fully support this action to take place as soon as possible.

- 3. Additional Lockers**

- There continues to be a need for additional lockers. While the school has come up with a temporary solution for sharing lockers, at some point an additional number would be appreciated.

- 4. Additional Storage Capacity**

- Blake greatly needs increased storage capacity at its facility. Especially with an Arts & Music Signature Program, current storage availability is at a premium and cannot accommodate the breadth of the school's needs.