

Churchill Cluster Testimony
**Regarding the Superintendent's Recommended
FY 2011 Operating Budget**

Winston Churchill Cluster

*Winston Churchill High School
Herbert Hoover Middle School
Beverly Farms Elementary School
Seven Locks Elementary School*

*Cabin John Middle School
Bells Mill Elementary School
Potomac Elementary School
Wayside Elementary School*

**Board of Education Public Hearing
Carver Education Services Center
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Good Evening President O'Neill, members of the Board of Education and Dr. Weast. My name is Laura Siegel. I am one of the three MCCPTA Cluster Coordinators who represent the Churchill Cluster. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to stand before you this evening, most likely for the last time, to present our testimony, which will express the Churchill Cluster's concerns regarding the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2011 Operating Budget.

We are well aware of the dire fiscal situation affecting the county and state budgets as well as the uncertainty surrounding negotiations with the Unions (MCEA, MCAAP/MCBOA, SEIU), "Maintenance of Effort" requirements for the current year and fines from last year, fiscal responsibility for teacher pensions, "GCEI" and the yet to be determined level of funding from both the state and the county. Due to the variables at this time, we support the Superintendent's Maintenance of Effort budget request although we want MCPS to refocus spending on resources that directly benefit our students and schools.

Our first priority is to advocate against an increase in class size in our cluster schools. Secondly, we are opposed to any cuts that will adversely impact students. Reductions to classroom services and/or extra-curricular activities and sports will change the entire framework of our current educational model. **Thirdly, we want MCPS to reallocate Operating Budget dollars toward local school operations.** MCPS must evaluate programs, initiatives, and dollars spent to determine if we are achieving a maximum return on investment.

The Churchill Cluster schools already operate with a much lower expenditure per pupil and a minimal number of staff (See Table 1) as compared to other schools in the county. According to the *FY 2007 MCPS Schools at a Glance* (which is the last year that includes complete operating budget figures) the expenditure per pupil at Potomac Elementary School was \$7,348, this is **less than half** of the per pupil expenditure at Broad Acres Elementary School which equaled \$14,786.

The disparity in staffing and per pupil expenditure in our cluster schools clearly illustrates that our schools are operating with minimal support and are stretched to the limit.

Table 1 Increase in Student Enrollment vs Increase in Staffing

School	Student Enrollment ¹			Total # of Staff ¹		
	FY 2001	FY 2009	% Change	FY 2001	FY 2009	% Change
Churchill High School	1773	2110	19.0	166	196	18.0
Wheaton High School	1306	1320	1.1	143	169	18.0

Note that the enrollment at Churchill HS increased by 19% but the number of staff only increased by 18%; Wheaton HS enrollment increased only 1.1% over the same time period, but the staff increased 18%.

The current “bare-bones” level of staffing and funding for our cluster schools cannot afford any further cuts. The current level of student achievement in the Churchill Cluster is becoming increasingly difficult to uphold and will become impossible with budget reductions.

CLASS SIZE MUST NOT BE INCREASED

Any increase in class size will have the following negative repercussions:

- Less staff in our schools due to larger class size
- Less opportunities for enrichment
- Decrease in the number of course offerings
- Less support for special education students - especially for students who are mainstreamed or those who are being forced out of special schools/programs which have specially trained staff who were able to support students with extreme special needs
- Lack of support for our Cluster’s most at-risk students who currently do not benefit from supports found in other areas of the county

¹ MCPS FY 2001 and 2009 Schools at a Glance

- Increase in workload for teachers and staff - workloads have already increased due to an increase in the number of assessments, requirements of NCLB and MDSDE
- Decrease in staff morale - caused by increase in workload.

Our parents, teachers and principals feel strongly that class size is a top priority. It is imperative that the figures reported in the Superintendent's Recommended Operating Budget for FY 2011 properly reflect the situation in our schools. The average class sizes listed in "Schools at a Glance" for each of our schools does not accurately represent the actual class sizes in our cluster schools either. The math in the Superintendent's FY 2011 budget recommendations does not add up (Chapter 1-24):

- *"The projected average class size for High School classes for FY 2011 is 25.7*
- *Class sizes for high school English classes are listed at 28 students and other classes are listed as 32 students."*
- How can these figures average out to a much lower number of 25.7 students?
- Approximately 80% of the classes at Churchill High School will have more than 26 students next semester. Of the approximately 300 Honors and AP courses almost all have the maximum number of students.
- When special education class sizes are averaged with the regular education classes, a deceptively low overall average class size is reported.

The projected average class size is extremely misleading and certainly does not paint an accurate picture of class sizes at Churchill High School. Averages in general, do not accurately represent the facts.

Furthermore it is equally critical that the enrollment figures projected in the CIP are accurate in order to ensure that teachers, support staff, instructional materials and other school-related resources are properly and adequately allocated to our cluster schools,

prior to the start of the academic year. Anticipated enrollment projections at Bells Mill were not changed to match the actual number of registered students. The newly renovated Bells Mill Elementary School opened in August with 47 students over the CIP projection.

BUDGET CUTS MUST NOT ADVERSELY IMPACT STUDENTS

If the requested budget is not fully funded, then many of the proposed cuts suggested by Dr. Weast will adversely impact our students resulting in:

- **Increase in mental health issues experienced by students** - due to less time teachers will have to devote to individual students; the increase in the number of assessments is also a major concern as it relates to our students' mental health
- **Loss of Signature Programs and enrichment opportunities for our students** - Churchill High School students in the Signature Programs have already been impacted by cuts implemented in FY 2010 which we testified at great length about last year; Gifted and Talented (GT) instruction must continue to be offered at our elementary and middle schools
- **Decline in enrollment of enrichment programs at magnet schools** - if transportation is cut, which will lead to the overall demise of these programs
- **Less opportunity for students to connect with a significant adult at school** - which is an important factor in ensuring success especially for vulnerable students
- **Less than adequate maintenance of buildings and portables** - five of our eight schools are awaiting modernization and need continued maintenance to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff; proper maintenance of MCPS holding schools is also essential
- **Lack of supplies and instructional materials** - the loss of curricular fees this year has further hampered our schools' abilities to provide all of the materials necessary to support the curriculum. Students in Churchill's AP Spanish class only have textbooks that can be used in school, because there are not enough for each student. The increased push for more students to enroll in AP courses must be met with an appropriate increase in textbooks and supplies for these courses.

- **Lack of after school activities/sports leading to lack of supervision -** providing opportunity for students to find trouble, and lose role models.

We are adamantly opposed to any cuts to Reading Initiative Teachers, Staff Development Teachers (SDT) or Counselors. These staff members provide vital support to our students and teachers; therefore these positions must remain intact. If Staff Development Teachers are required to teach one period per day (as proposed as a potential cut in the budget) conflicts will arise. Examples of conflicts:

- Some teachers ask for support during specific periods if there are discipline problems, management issues, concerns with a specific student, etc. If the SDT teaches that specific period during the day then the SDT can never observe or help a teacher with that class period.
- Teaching a period would make the SDT a member of an academic department. The Resource Teacher (RT) would be responsible for observing and contributing to the SDT's evaluation. RTs can also receive support from the SDT for instruction and department matters. It would be a conflict of interest for the SDT to support the RT and have the RT contribute to the SDT's evaluation.
- Teaching in a department and on a course team of teachers would create another conflict of interest. SDTs are integral parts of underperforming teachers' growth plans. If the SDT is a teacher on the team with a teacher on a growth plan, the underperforming teacher may not feel comfortable having the team member/SDT involved. If this were to occur, then the underperforming teacher would not be able to receive any non-evaluative support.

REALLOCATE MCPS OPERATING BUDGET TO INCREASE FUNDS FOR LOCAL SCHOOL EXPENDITURES

Dollar for dollar, excellent classroom teachers will be more effective at having a positive influence on students versus most any other MCPS expenditure. MCPS must increase this budget category while reducing funding for other categories. MCPS risks losing our best teachers due to a decrease in job satisfaction caused by increasing workloads.

Much of the increase in teachers' workloads is due to the number of assessments given to students that must be administered, then graded and in many instances bundled up for storage at central office. Resource teachers have had their workload increased also since they now required to teach four classes per day instead of three, as well as the above-mentioned responsibilities. They cannot properly supervise their departments, assist new teachers while also being expected to successfully teach many more students, usually in the more advanced courses.

MCPS also risks losing new teachers because the salary differential between our counties and others in the area is decreasing, while the cost of living in Montgomery County is among the highest in the area.

While comparing figures of the FY 2011 Recommended Operating Budget to prior years we discovered certain expenditures, which have increased disproportionately with the increase in student enrollment.

Table 2 below compares components of the FY 2003 Recommended Operating Budget with the FY 2011 Recommended Operating Budget. Student enrollment has only increased 3.25% over this time period, while the Operating Budget has increased by 59%. The number of classroom teachers has only increased by 11.7%, which is minimal when one recognizes that the initiatives for all-day kindergarten and class size reduction were added over the course of these years. The overall number of staff increased by 12.75%. There is an extremely large disparity between the increase in the number classroom teachers compared with the increase in the number of MCPS Executives, Administrators, and Other Support Personnel from FY 2003 to FY 2011.

MCPS must refocus their efforts on increasing the number of staff who have direct contact with students. More teachers are needed at the local school level, while at the same time reducing personnel that do not have contact with students.

Operating Budget dollars must be reallocated to provide direct support to students. Where is the accountability? Have the benefits exceeded the costs? What

evaluations have been completed to determine if there has been a return on this investment? For example, the budget for Communications and Family Outreach has increased over 2800%, to almost \$11 million dollars. It is difficult to comprehend how classes offered through the Parent Academy that take parents on tours of MCPS bus depots and the food service preparation facility, help to improve student achievement or close the achievement gap in MCPS.

Table 2 Comparison of Operating Budget Components FY 2003 v FY 2011

Selected MCPS Budget Components	FY 2003 Superintendent's Recommended Operating Budget	FY 2011 Superintendent's Recommended Operating Budget	% Increase
Total Student Enrollment #	138,794	143,309	3.25
Number of Teacher Positions	9,473	10,580	11.70
Total Number of MCPS Staff Positions	18,792	21,188	12.75
Total Projected Operating Budget \$	\$1,398,594,671	\$2,226,134,843	59.17
Number of Positions MCPS Executives, Administrators and Other Support Personnel	88	540	513.6
Communications and Family Outreach Budget \$	\$370,109	\$10,954,407	2860.0

During these lean budget times it is fiscally responsible for MCPS to evaluate and re-evaluate the effectiveness of programs, initiatives, and dollars spent on them. If it is necessary to spend thousands more dollars per pupil at the focus schools vs. non-focus schools, then prove that you are getting the bang for your buck. The Promise Academy in Harlem has been able achieve great success among its students. It may be worthwhile to evaluate their educational model in order to identify strategies that will produce similar success while maximizing tax dollars.

Increasing class size in the Churchill Cluster is not the solution to the budget crisis. Our

students will not continue to achieve in the manner in which Dr. Weast and others are proud to publicize if the minimal number of staff and expenditure per pupil are reduced any further.

Thank you again for providing the Churchill Cluster with an opportunity to testify before you this evening.