

Operating Budget Testimony – January 13, 2010

On behalf of Sherwood Cluster

Virginia Twombly – Cluster Coordinator

Good evening, Dr. Weast, Ms. Brandman, Board members, my name is Virginia Twombly and I am the cluster coordinator for Sherwood High School Cluster. Thank you very much for giving you up your time to solicit feedback from the public. Your commitment to be partners with community members is gratefully appreciated even when it seems nothing but criticisms are heard.

Like many of the other speakers here, I attended your forum last week and do understand the realities of the current fiscal situation. All we can do is add our voice urging you to make the best of these difficult decisions. The proposed cuts, if proven necessary, will be very hard for many – particularly our most needy families. A reality which from your comments last week, you are all well aware of.

If cuts have to be made, my cluster hopes cuts to **academic intervention teachers** and the **counseling staff** will be made last. We use academic intervention staffing to ensure that students who fall behind in the fundamentals (reading/math) can get the more individualized attention they need to get back on grade level. As a Sherwood cluster we have also used that staffing to set cluster math goals, analyze data as a cluster and

monitor the cluster's progress in helping student's graduate college ready.

Our counselors are also critical to our overall school program. Counseling staff at Farquhar, Rosa Parks and many of our elementary schools, led the school wide food drives that together provided Olney Help with over 10,000 desperately needed food items. They have worked so hard to create and foster a culture of community service that extends beyond the school walls. Counselors teach critical skills and address important topics with kids such as **problem-solving/conflict resolution, bullying, and anger management. *Being proficient in math and reading will be worthless without these life skills!*** We truly need all of the counselors that we have.

I commend the fairness of the proposed reductions that, while difficult, are shared burdens that do not seem to unduly penalize any concern within MCPS. We do support the MCCPTA Operating Budget Compact and are committed to support MCPS aims with the County Council and at the state level. We support Dr. Weast's Maintenance of Effort level request. As it was explained to me, if the Board of Education doesn't ask for maintenance of effort, the bar is lowered in terms of funding goals from the county.

Thank you again for your sincere efforts in these difficult times.