

David Dennison Testimony to the Board of Education Concerning the Superintendents Recommended 2009-2014 CIP Thursday, November 15, 2007

Good Evening Esteemed Board Members and Dr. Weast

My name is David Dennison and I am the Sequoyah Elementary School PTA President, but I am **not** here tonight speaking on the behalf of our great PTA but I am here as a single widowed parent of three 9 year olds. I believe you all know the facts in the Redland Middle School case so I will not give you more facts as to why this school deserves a complete renovation over another school.

This is about choices. When I moved to Derwood, I made a choice to live in a area where there were not a lot of communities but houses on fairly large lots of land. A rural environment amidst the urban sprawl. The communities were in the schools and this is where you meet your friends and developed relationships with neighbors. Our houses, for most of us, are to far away to walk to and borrow that cup of sugar. I made a choice based on the fact that all of the schools in this cluster were strong academically and that the facilities were in great shape or being phased into the construction schedule for major upgrades. My wife and I made a choice to have children and as you can see here and we did it in a bigger way then most people.

But as in life there are times where you do not have a choice. I did not have a choice when cancer took my wife from us. I do **not** have a choice to send my children to another school because; private school for 3 - 9 year olds is financially out of my reach, the chances of me getting all 3 of my children into a magnet program are slightly less then 1 % and I can not move as today's market does not offer me the value that my land holds. So I do **not** have a choice but to send my children to a school that has a learning environment that as Ms. Oneil has stated is

a mess. All 3 of my girls are quite bright and have done quite well on all of the tests and curriculum that is taught to them every day. Dr. Weast has made the teachers of our schools teach with many of his accelerated programs. This is a great thing for our children. But say you have a child that has a bit of a focus problem and they are a great student. Redland is not the place for a child that has any slight focus issues. I have one of those children, slight distractions are an issue.

The learning environment has to change at Redland as this is unacceptable for many reasons. I have a clear choice though in all of this. To fight hard for my children and other children so they have the right for the learning environment. You all also have a choice and that is either to recommend that this school be brought up to par, not necessarily make it the crown jewel in MCPS **or** you can make a choice and spend what Dr. Weast is recommending and make our school a 6.5 million dollar piece of junk. That type of money will not fix the issue and based on the 40 – 60 million dollar maintenance issues that MCPS faces I suspect a lot of these so called maintenance issues that Mr. Song says, “can be fixed fairly quickly” will not be fixed fairly quickly.

Thank you for your time tonight and I so hope that our community has been heard.