

Wheaton Cluster CIP Testimony

November 15, 2007

From last year: The students (and staff) at Weller Road ES are thrilled with the new wing of their old, tired building, and very pleased to be OUT OF THE PORTABLES! The students (and staff) at Parkland MS love their new building, and are very pleased to be back in the neighborhood.

Now, for the Superintendent's Recommended CIP Budget: There is much for us to like here. Wheaton HS is very pleased that MCPS has decided to back the programmatic needs of our Academy programs with CIP funding for a Biomedical Lab and a Digital Art/Music Lab. Brookhaven ES and Harmony Hills ES have had feasibility studies for much needed additions moved up to 2008, and Viers Mill ES has a similar feasibility study scheduled for 2009. Brookhaven is getting its gym built, as we speak.

While not exactly complaining about these proposals, we do wonder, with Jane de Winter, how our CIP projects are prioritized. Why are Brookhaven and Harmony Hills, two of the newest buildings in the cluster, prioritized for additions ahead of the much older Viers Mill, not to mention Wheaton Woods (which still has a large and dangerous crack running across the main blacktop area closest to the school)? True, Wheaton Woods only has 5 portables and Brookhaven, Harmony Hills, and Viers Mill all have at least ten (10), but the Wheaton Woods facility is much older, and the parents at Wheaton Woods are very concerned about the security of the portables they have, due to placement issues. Why is the renovation of the 50-year-old part of Weller Road prioritized behind additions to the already sparkling new facilities at Harmony Hills and Brookhaven? We'd just like to know -- better yet, to be engaged in some discussion on the topic. It is much easier to support what we understand.

Lastly, you know I have to talk about the need to coordinate and commit CIP funds to support successful programmatic changes. This is what is happening with the Biomedical and Digital Music/Arts Labs at Wheaton HS. Money *should* follow success. The academic successes of the Middle School Magnet Consortium (MSMC) are unquestionable (more about that later, during the Operating Budget testimony -- all three schools made AYP this past year!). This is why we need to commit to fund the CIP needs of Loiederman MS.

Loiederman is THRILLED that there is funding in the building modifications and program improvements (BMPI) project to renovate the bathrooms near the gym and to replace the hallway lockers. These are two physical features (original to the building) that were grossly overlooked during the re-opening project.

Other features (original to the building) that were also grossly overlooked are the theatre classroom and performing space. Loiederman currently runs eight (8) sections of theatre in a room that was designed to be a Home Economics classroom, and the theatre students mount productions on a stage that was clearly an afterthought to the main gymnasium (come see the newly renovated Parkland's stage, and you'll see the difference). Loiederman also runs ten (10) sections of dance with a single dance studio. Both the dance and theatre programs have grown in the past two years and are projected to grow larger still next year. Please help us to find the money for a real performance space, such as a Black Box theatre, and another dance studio. It is essential to have teaching and performing spaces that allow a school for the creative and performing arts to be a school for the creative and performing arts.

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