

Blair Cluster Testimony on FY2011-2016 Capital Improvements Program
Before the Board of Education
November 10, 2010

Speaking for Cluster:
Susan Fleck, Cluster Co-Coordinator

(Note, Sligo Creek ES and Silver Spring International MS have split articulation between
Blair and Northwood clusters)

East Silver Spring Elementary * Montgomery Knolls Elementary * New Hampshire Estates Elementary *
Oak View Elementary * Piney Branch Elementary * Pine Crest Elementary * Rolling Terrace Elementary *
Sligo Creek Elementary * Takoma Park Elementary
Eastern Middle * Silver Spring International Middle * Takoma Park Middle
Montgomery Blair High School

Blair Cluster Testimony to BOE on FY2012 Capital Budget

Dear President O'Neill and Vice president Barclay,

My name is Susan Fleck, and Amber Khan and I are the cluster coordinators representing 13 schools in the Blair Cluster. Two of those schools have split articulation with the Northwood cluster.

The Blair cluster consists of 13 schools – the largest high school in the county, three middle schools with about 800 students each, and 9 elementary schools, with a little over 400 students in each. Because all but 2 of our schools split their articulation, each elementary school group represents 700 to 900 elementary school students.

First, I'd like to say THANK YOU for your support in expanding elementary school capacity at East Silver Spring and Takoma Park Elementary Schools this school year. The construction dust settled enough at the two schools - despite a few last minute missing items like telephones and trees - so that the young students were able to start school in expanded facilities this past August. Thanks to the MCPS staff who kept the construction to the tight timeline. The challenges of changes to boundaries will continue through August 2012, and we will be keeping an eye on how the articulation affects our enrollment in middle schools.

Thanks too for finally tackling the problem of crowding at Montgomery Knolls, where 60 pre-K tots and 400 Kindergarten to second grade students are popping out of 13 portables. These students, their teacher, and their families will be happy to have construction completed next year on their additional classrooms and gym. We implore you to move up the restroom renovation from FY14 to FY12, as well. The school has been 100 students over capacity for MORE THAN A DECADE and is now 170 students over capacity. Imagine the toll that this over capacity has taken on the little toilets these children use. Toilet stalls are rusty, doors don't close, and some are falling apart.

We appreciate Superintendent Weast's reinstatement of the budget that will keep maintenance, HVAC, and PLAR spending on track. We urge the Board to strengthen the language in the Renewal and Modernization Policy draft to define 'good working condition' in the context of a cost/benefit analysis so that maintenance does not come at a greater cost than replacement – as could be with the case of the Takoma Park Elementary School HVAC requests – more than 120 work orders over the past 3 years with the air conditioning. A cost-benefit analysis may not easily measure how much 3,000 sweaty teens gain as they collegially play basketball in the non-air-conditioned Blair high school gym, but if modernization could include a measure of the 'bang for the buck', installing a few air ducts into the gym to increase the Blair students comfort level could definitely be one way to measure 'good working condition'.

The Blair Cluster of PTAs, along with our colleagues in the rest of the MCCPTA, appreciate the openness that MCPS has shown in developing the revised FACT criteria and the time provided for another round of comments. I would only add one comment for the many schools in our cluster that are on small footprints and have been overcapacity

for a number of years – **consider the intensity of use in FACT scoring.** Such normalized measures could include number of students per square foot of classrooms, number of students per square foot of playground, and number of toilets per student per year. Under an intensity of use criterion, the 750-student Rolling Terrace ES – with its relatively small footprint, large community use, and added traffic due to the community health center would surely be a candidate for modernization. **Please consider adding Rolling Terrace to the modernization list and include intensity of use as an additional FACT criteria.**

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak with you tonight. The economic recovery is weak and money has not begun (and is unlikely to) grow on trees as it did only 3 years ago. However, the DC area is in an advantageous position, with a growing population and relatively low unemployment. Constant investment in infrastructure creates jobs and maintains communities. Please support the budget that Dr. Weast has presented to you tonight.