

Kennedy Cluster Testimony to Montgomery County – County Council

John F. Kennedy High School
Col. E. Brooke Lee Middle School
Argyle Middle School

Bel Pre Elementary School
Strathmore Elementary School
Georgian Forest Elementary School
Glenallan Elementary School

Submitted by: Frances Frost, MCCPTA Kennedy Cluster Coordinator
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School: an organization that provides instruction: as *a* : an institution for the teaching of children *b* : a school building

Community: a unified body of individuals: as *a* : state, commonwealth *b* : the people with common interests living in a particular area; *broadly* : the area itself <the problems of a large *community*> *c* : an interacting population of various kinds of individuals (as species) in a common location

When we look at school construction, we are building more than brick and mortar structures for educating children; we are building our communities. The architect and design team will draw in classrooms, gymnasiums, and media centers. The construction company will build conference rooms, bathrooms, and cafeterias. And students will learn in buildings that are bright and spacious, boast the latest in modern educational amenities, ergonomically fit to their size, and environmentally friendly. Our children will enter the brand new doors and sit at the desks 184 days of the year to prepare for their future, the future of our county.

President Valerie Ervin, Vice-President: Roger Berliner, Members of the County Council, thank you for this opportunity to speak on the proposed Capital Improvement Budget for FY 2011-2016. I am Frances Frost, the MCCPTA Cluster Coordinator representing the 4541 students, their parents and teachers of the Kennedy High School Cluster. We support Superintendent Weast's and the Board of Education's Recommended FY 2012 Capital Budget, its accompanying Amendments for the FY2011-2016 Budget, and the proposed Capital Improvements Program for renovations, improvements, and maintenance of our public schools; including countywide projects on HVAC, Roof Replacements, School Security upgrades, PLAR and BMPI (science labs and performance spaces).

In particular, the Kennedy Cluster looks forward to the proposed modernizations and renovations within our school community.

- Glenallan Elementary School is excitedly preparing for their modernization with completion in August 2013. The staff and students will return to a beautiful 3 story building, ready to hold over 600 students, more than doubling their current capacity of less than 300, allowing for expected growth, particularly the new families moving into the Poplar Run community (Indian Springs development).
- Renovations and additions at Georgian Forest Elementary School will improve the bathroom facilities and increase capacity from 304 to 570 in FY2013; and
- The modernization of Bel Pre Elementary School will increase capacity from 366 to 587, with completion in FY2014, eliminating the use of eight (8) portable classrooms;

The new schools will not only be places of academic learning for children from age 5 to 18. In those new schools, parent volunteers will meet and plan their activities to support their schools. The nurse in the health suite will make sure that children are well; for some students, that school nurse serves as their primary medical professional. Adults will return to the schools in the evenings to study for their GED and prepare for a better job. Parents will come to take classes in English so they can better help their children. Linkages to Learning will have an office and there will be daycare space to meet the social and logistical needs of our families. Community groups will reserve space to hold meetings. Sports teams will practice and play in the gymnasiums. In our schools, our communities will be able to come together and grow.

Between now and 2016, county population is projected to increase by almost 40,000 people, with about a quarter of that growth being school-age children. That growth projection is twice the size of the current student population of our Cluster alone. Our public schools must be expanded to accommodate for that growth.

As in the growth projections, it is currently estimated that only 25% of county residents have children in the school system. This statistic has been batted around during recent budget discussions as if to justify or explain less support of public education. But I assert that 100% of the county benefits from quality schools. Montgomery County residents want educated young people graduating from our schools. We want the value of well-maintained schools and academic excellence that is reflected in our property values. We want the high tech companies and medical facilities that provide employment,

attracted to the county by its public schools. A quality school system does not only affect the 144,064 students in the seats, but each and every person in our community.

We acknowledge the task you have of balancing capital improvement in all areas of the county, the debt service of the county budget, and maintaining a AAA bond rating. At the same time, county population growth is a certainty and over-crowded schools is a reality. In your considerations of the CIP budget for FY2011-2016, we encourage the Council to fully fund the Board of Education's submitted recommendations to ensure that the approved modernizations, renovations, and maintenance occur for a better learning environment for our children and a place of growth for our communities.