

**Montgomery County Board of Education
2009-2010 Operating Budget Testimony
John F. Kennedy Cluster
January 21, 2009**

Good evening. My name is Ricky Ford; I serve as the Cluster Coordinator for the John F. Kennedy Cluster of schools. On behalf of the Kennedy Cluster, thank you for allowing me to speak about the MCPS 2009-2010 Recommended Operating Budget.

We understand the difficult times that we face as a county, state, and country. Everyone is making sacrifices and everyone has to share the burden, even though the demand for services and resources is increasing. MCPS and the Board understand the issues that we face in the Kennedy Cluster (ESOL, high FARMs and mobility rates, the achievement gap, etc) and has always been supportive in trying to address these issues. We would like to thank MCPS and the Board for their past support. We know that all of the issues that we face will be factored into any modifications that must be made to ensure that the budget issues are being addressed along with the educational issues of our children.

As mentioned by Kay Romero, MCCPTA President, during her testimony: we agree with the underlying principle behind the 2009-2010 Recommended Operating Budget of minimizing the impact of cuts in the classroom. We would like to ensure that this budget maintains the progress made in recent years, which is evidenced by the improved performance in the elementary schools, middle schools and at Kennedy High School.

The overwhelming concern within our community is the potential loss of academic intervention staff and resources for at-risk students. This ranges from the loss of positions at signature and magnet programs to reductions in academic intervention teachers, alternative teachers, and high school literacy coaches.

The personnel cuts could also result in losing some, or all, of our accelerated instruction staff. This staff supports the students in accelerated reading and math, which allow the classroom teachers to provide more concentrated instruction to students at, or below, grade level. This could have a ripple effect in the change of instruction at the foundational level.

Some of our schools are NOT Title I, but almost qualify. They can't really afford to lose additional positions. If we lose too many discretionary positions, our ability to intervene with struggling students and push high achieving students will be severely limited. Intervening with kids with these out-of-classroom positions has made it possible for us

to make the gains that we have made. This allows us to address the achievement gap as well as provide rigor.

We are aware that Staff Development positions may also be cut. This will negatively affect building preferred teacher capacity. Without staff development, we will not be able to address the variety of instructional practices that our teachers need to address the unique challenges of our community. The best way to address the achievement gap and build rigor into the classroom is to make good teachers better.

We are concerned about the lack of funding for the MSMC. In the current budget, Argyle will lose a number of staff positions and not be able to have an 8 period master schedule. This will result in the loss of an elective course for students and the period of professional development for teachers. The additional elective course has been a major component in attracting students. The data has shown the whole school magnet is working for both in and out of consortium students. Argyle has made significant academic gains as a result of this program and we would like to maintain the level of performance that has been achieved. We remember where Argyle was before the MSMC was started.

In summary, we must ensure that our children are not the ones that suffer. The goals and benchmarks for our children, or schools, are not going to change. Our schools will have to achieve the same results, but with fewer resources and it's going to be challenging.

We know that MCPS and the Board have always been sensitive to the issues that we face in the Kennedy Cluster. We trust that you will continue to do so in this budget as well.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.