

WHITMAN CLUSTER

Walt Whitman High School
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School

Bannockburn Elementary School
Bethesda Elementary School (shared)
Bradley Hills Elementary School
Burning Tree Elementary School
Carderock Springs Elementary School
Wood Acres Elementary School

FY '09 Operating Budget Testimony To The County Council April 9, 2008

Good evening, President Knapp and Members of the County Council. I am Paula Robinson and tonight I am speaking on behalf of the Whitman Cluster.

We applaud the Board of Education's commitment to public education. They have presented you with an ambitious budget they deem necessary to provide a quality education for our children. Last year I sat in this very spot and said that a cut of \$20 million would threaten initiatives that our cluster has fought long and hard for. This year there is a \$50 million cut to the proposed budget looming, that if not restored, will have dismal consequences for us all.

If their budget is not fully funded, the Board of Education will have to make significant layoffs, and delay or reduce key reforms and initiatives of the last nine years, all of which, will have an impact on our children. And, as we understand it, every program is vulnerable.

For the record, our highest priorities are to attract, retain, and compensate an excellent work force, and to protect the Board of Education's class-size reduction initiative.

Our classes are already too large. They are diverse not only culturally, but diverse in the number of learning styles and accommodations students require to be successful. In our minds, therefore, it is unthinkable that hours-based staffing could be reduced when efforts are being made to include special education students in regular classrooms. And we are also extremely troubled by the possibility that school guidance counselors could be cut when the academic demands and societal pressures have never been greater

While every agency here tonight, requesting full funding, is valued and has an important role in the fabric of our county - - the school system stands alone: not only in its breadth of purpose, but in the urgency its funding takes if you believe, as we do, that our children are our future.

The Board of Education is committed to providing an excellent education for all students. It would be short sighted to make budget cuts that would delay or thwart the progress being made by our children in school.

Our county's school system is world class. The quality of our schools is directly related to the economic value of our region by attracting residents to this county, While you have an unenviable task before you - - you also have the opportunity to see clearly, and to make the necessary and wise investment in our county's future: we urge you to fully fund the school system's proposed operating budget.

Thank you.