

Seneca Valley Cluster

Seneca Valley High School
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School
Roberto Clemente Middle School

Lake Seneca Elementary School
S. Christa McAuliffe Elementary School
Dr. Sally K. Ride Elementary School
Waters Landing Elementary School

Comments to
The County Council
For
FY 2010 Operating Budget
Prepared by: Kevin David, Seneca Valley Cluster Coordinator
April 16, 2009

Good evening President Andrews and members of the County Council. My name is Kevin David and I am one of the Seneca Valley Cluster Coordinators.

I would like to recommend that you vote to fully fund the FY 2010 Operating Budget as passed by the Board of Education. This budget has made substantial cuts in all operating areas while trying to maintain the level of excellence that we have grown accustomed to here in Montgomery County.

However with the economic climate as bad as it is today and with every group fighting for every dollar the question still remains:

“Where do we hold the line?”

It has taken us ten years to implement class size reduction around the county and that effort could be wiped out in less than two years if the budget is met by increasing class size. Our cluster has higher than the county average FARMS rates and each elementary school is a focus school. The currently proposed budget already has our four elementary schools increasing their Kindergarten class size from 15 students to 17 students. We all know that increased class size will affect the FARMS impacted schools the most.

The proposed budget continues with the comprehensive middle school reform program, but Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School is not one of the schools budgeted this year. This is a program that we have been asking for and waiting patiently for. Therefore, we would like to see it stay on track. The proposed reduction of 11 teacher support positions in the current middle school reform schools will be a major setback to both the students and the staff. To remove anymore resources from this initiative would be detrimental to the future students of MLK and to the reform as a whole.

The proposed budget already includes the reduction of 23% of our academic intervention teachers and this will have a devastating effect on our struggling and at risk students. If Montgomery County wants to stay 10 percentage points ahead of the state wide averages

and 15 percentage points ahead of the nationwide averages for AP testing, we cannot afford any more reductions in this area.

The proposed budget already includes a reduction of 15 literacy coach positions at the high school level which strips away another area of support for the struggling student. This is an important position at Seneca Valley High School and one that will be sorely missed. One just has to look at our AP testing scores to see that Seneca Valley students cannot afford to lose anymore academic support positions.

Nothing in the proposed budget pains us more than to see the reduction in building services staff. As a cluster we are currently enjoying wonderful response from the Division of School Plant Operations and we would like to see this continue. However with many of our county schools getting up in age, Seneca Valley and Gaithersburg High Schools for example, now would be a great time to evaluate all the major systems in each school and to create a preventive maintenance schedule so that we may be able to head off more costly repairs in the future.

Many of us traveled to Annapolis at your behest during this legislative session to stress to our elected officials how important fully funding education was to us. They were quick to point out that they were pro education and that it was a top priority for them as well.

However action speaks louder than words and we all know that our state Senators pulled the rug out from under GCEI.

We have appealed to the Board of Education, we have appealed to our legislators in Annapolis and now it is your turn.

Don't let us down – fully fund the FY 2010 Operating Budget as passed by the Board of Education.