

CLARKSBURG CLUSTER

Clarksburg High School
Rocky Hill Middle School (split articulated)
Neelsville Middle School (split articulated)

Clarksburg Elementary School
Fox Chapel Elementary School
Little Bennett Elementary School
Capt. James E. Daly Elementary School
William B. Gibbs, Jr. Elementary School
Cedar Grove Elementary School (split articulated)

Thank you Dr. Weast, President Barclay, and Members of the Board for giving us this opportunity to provide input on the Superintendent's recommended FY 2012 Operating Budget on behalf of the Clarksburg Cluster.

For the third year in a row, Maryland public schools ranked 1st in the country, in no small part thanks to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Unfortunately, in these challenging economic times, we cannot sit back on old practices and hope to continue past achievements. And, while we understand the Board's desire for each cluster to identify budget cuts, the enormity of the crisis makes it impossible for an individual cluster to find that magic bullet. What will be called for is a concerted effort to identify that which makes MCPS the best system in the country, and work judiciously to keep it intact when making budgetary decisions.

One such decision you will be faced with is the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. Our cluster is passionate about the need for this program, and its expansion. We are advocating for the assignment of a dedicated SRO to every high school in MCPS and for support being provided to middle and elementary schools as needed. We feel it is completely unacceptable that our SRO, Officer Larson, is tasked with overseeing FIVE high schools, with a maximum distance between them of almost 23 miles! If something happens at Damascus High School while Officer Larson is at Poolesville High, it could take him more than 30 minutes to get there!! Further, we must have improved coordination and support between the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) and MCPS in order to ensure the safety of students, staff and the communities surrounding our schools. Accountability has always been a critical piece to long term success. If it's the only way to save the program, we plead with you find a way to share the funding with MCPD. The SRO program is much more than "the cop in the shop." An SRO program reflects a community's desire to ensure that its schools are safe, secure and orderly. We must save and restore this proactive program that brings prevention and intervention into our schools. We don't want to be the next school system to experience tragedy, and look back in hindsight and regret not having done everything possible to ensure our students' safety.

To be honest, while it's tempting to say there isn't any fat in the system to be cut, from a cluster coordinator's vantage point, we are not privy to enough information to make that call. Additionally, it's not our place to say that any given individual or group of employees isn't worthwhile. Likewise, every program in our schools is useful to our students, and we can't suggest making cuts to them, either.

So where does that leave us...?

Our cluster is a growing one, and we expect a significant portion of the projected enrollment increases to occur in our schools. Because of this, our principals and PTAs have identified a number of additional staffing requirements, and we have attached this list to the written testimony. As was requested, we have also created a list of potential cost saving ideas, but please remember that these “small” changes will not add up to fill the expected budget gap.

We understand the urgency and catastrophic nature of the problem, but “piecemealing” it at the cluster level won’t find the money needed. It seems to us that broad cuts are the only equitable solution – as painful as that might be.

What we hope and expect is that all parties – MCCPTA, MCPS employees, the Board of Education, the Superintendent, the County Executive, and the County Council – will work together with a spirit of patience, collaboration, and solidarity, and keep the best interests of the children as the focus of all decisions. We know this effort may be the hardest thing you will ever do, and we pledge to support you during this process in any way we can.

Respectfully submitted-

Todd Powell, Janet Sanchez, and Marcia Tivoli
MCCPTA Clarksburg Cluster Coordinators

List of Operating Budget Needs for Clarksburg Cluster, FY 2012

Cedar Grove ES and Clarksburg ES (both small schools)

- Keep staff development teachers
- We are not asking for anything additional, just to preserve what precious little resources we have now. As small schools, they have been cut to the absolute bare bones.

Capt. James E. Daly ES

- Preserve the resources we have
- Keep the staff development teachers
- Keep the SRO program

William B. Gibbs, Jr. ES

- Maintain the staff development teacher
- Support having a SRO in every high school

Little Bennett ES

- Keep a full-time staff development teacher
- An additional 0.5 FTE attendance secretary to support our growing enrollment and additional record keeping responsibilities. Current enrollment is 858 students.
- Additional special education staffing (professional and support) to support our growing special education population
- Additional lunch hour aide allocation to support our growing enrollment. Our lunch block is three hours per day to accommodate all students.

Rocky Hill MS

- Keep staff development teacher
- Keep and increase SRO program

Clarksburg HS

- Keep staff development teacher - crucial to the continued success of the teachers and of student success
- Continue support for the signature programs and coordinator/.4 FTE (CAPS and APPS) - without these programs and the coordinator we cannot continue to increase student academic success and the success of the special education program/students
- Increase in Administrative Team FTE by 1 in order to adequately communicate with parents on instructional and behavioral needs, both of these are at critical mass - the number of enrolled students at the High School has increased and continues to increase, resulting in an increased demand/need for support by parents and students and thereby increasing the need for additional administrative staff

- Obtain a dedicated SRO for the High School - crucial to maintaining a safe and healthy environment and providing on-site deterrent for students
- Continue support for maintenance staff - as enrollment increases the maintenance staff is challenged to keep up with the demands of maintaining the building in the great condition currently in existence, any cut would be detrimental to this effort

Ideas for cost savings in FY 2012

Short Term suggestions

- Replace old portables as they cost more to keep than to buy new ones (energy and upkeep)
- Non-classroom staff sharing between schools. For example, having an underutilized Administrative Assistant at one school spend part of the day at another school needing more support, similar to what's done with Special Ed, Music, Art, P.E., etc.
- Create modified schedule for buses during high school exam week, as most parents pick up their children due to the modified schedule
- Remove Terra Nova 2 testing in 2nd grade, as it is so dissimilar from every other test we give (primary reading assessments, MSA, etc.)
- Reduce amount of testing and research performed, as much of it seems unnecessary
- CopyPlus is currently inefficient to use, as it takes too long a lead-time to process jobs
- Increase IT refresh cycle so equipment isn't replaced quite as frequently – the private sector typically has a 3-4 year cycle, as the standard office applications run perfectly well on somewhat older equipment

Long Term suggestions

- Implement college-like lecture halls for appropriate subjects, as a way to maximize superb teachers while addressing class size limitations. Additionally, distance learning could be incorporated by broadcasting the lectures to multiple schools.
- Implement green technologies at our schools, such as installing solar panels