

THE NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM

A Consortium of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook Clusters

Comments on the FY 2013 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2013-2018
Capital Improvements Program

On behalf of The NEC High Schools

November 14, 2011

Blake High School
Paint Branch High School
Springbrook High School

Good evening Superintendent Starr, Mr. Barclay, and members of the Board. My name is Jocelyn Walker and I am the Blake Cluster Coordinator for the Northeast Consortium. I am here tonight to speak on behalf of the CIP needs of the three high schools in our Northeast Consortium — Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook.

The Northeast Consortium fully supports the MCCPTA Resolution on the FY 2013 CIP Budget and the FY 2013-18 CIP and the MCCPTA Resolution on the Restroom Renovation Project in the FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvement Program.

Springbrook High School requests water fountain renovations. This is their top priority. Visitors to the school, as well as students and staff at the school should not have to live with the current dilapidated conditions.

Springbrook HS has serious problems with their restrooms. They are experiencing recurring plumbing issues that require frequent maintenance requests and work orders, with numerous visits by depot personnel. We question the cost effectiveness of this approach. Many of the fixtures are so old that replacement parts are no longer available. Springbrook has all metal stall dividers, which have been etched in and are repainted almost daily. Painting these over and over has become a real problem. Springbrook needs nonabsorbent stall dividers, which allow for quicker/easier clean up. Their first floor bathrooms, which need to accommodate not only students but most visitors, are so unappealing as to reflect poorly on the school.

The good news is, they are on the current list for the restroom renovation program, the bad news is, they are scheduled for 2017. Springbrook HS will be waiting six years for repairs that are needed **now**! It is our opinion that it is clearly more cost effective and realistic to put the money into maintenance and repair of the restrooms in our schools. A couple of years ago the MCCPTA Delegates voted to support a resolution placing the importance of maintenance above the current restroom renovation program. Springbrook HS would certainly benefit from this approach.

We all understand the importance of technology in modern education. Springbrook High School needs their TV Studio to be modernized. They are offering a state-of-the-art technology education to their students. However, the TV Studio is outdated. I looked back at past testimony, and was disheartened to see this request predates my time as Cluster Coordinator. They need to have their lighting replaced due to the old wiring, an upgrade to the TV switch chroma key, the soundboard updated and need software for their students to process their raw footage. Given that Springbrook houses the Technology Signature Program, it seems only logical that its equipment remain state-of-the-art and functional to optimize the opportunities for the students there.

Blake HS is once again requesting more storage space for equipment. The need is especially critical in the auditorium area for the storage of props, costumes and supplies and they request an addition be considered to expand the scene shop area. The building was designed before the signature program was determined and they have been trying to retro-fit ever since.

Frankly, Blake HS is a good example of the costs and problems associated with not fully funding CIP projects. The lesson to be learned is that when the school was built, they scaled back its size, including the core capacity, and no matter how many classroom additions are built the core facilities will always be too small. That is very expensive, and thus practically impossible, to fix. That is the danger of not fully funding the CIP projects. Please don't let this happen to any other schools.

The Paint Branch HS Community is marveling at the new building being constructed on site. Someone even asked if it was a college! We thank you for having the vision to move forward with this project, taking advantage of the lower construction costs. High schools behind Paint Branch on the modernization schedule, Gaithersburg, Wheaton, Seneca Valley, are also eagerly waiting their turns to see their schools transformed into the gems of their communities, and we strongly support them in seeing their projects, and indeed all modernizations and additions, completed on time and as planned. In addition, we would like to see modernizations be given **at least** equal priority to additions when planning the budget. We feel that both are critical to student achievement, health and safety.

We fully support the budget for desperately needed heating and air conditioning improvements. We also are supportive of the continuation and expansion of the BMPI, Roof Replacements and School Security countywide projects funding. However, we would like to have more information provided as to the anticipated replacement or rehabilitation of HVAC systems. What is their current expected lifetime? We would also like more information about exactly what projects are included under the BMPI line item, perhaps in the form of a list. There has been confusion in the past about what belongs in that category, and having a list of typical projects will help us communicate clearly with our local schools. Another important program is the PLAR program, and we would like to see some of what we consider routine upkeep included in this. At Blake HS, floor tile throughout the building is in horrendous condition; far beyond what would be a result of natural wear and tear. It is separating, buckling, and gathering mold due to separations. The majority of hallway tile, specifically on the lower floor, needs to be replaced. Not only is it aesthetically a nightmare and a safety issue with people tripping on separated and lumpy tile, but mold is a concern as a significant number of the tiles are edged in black mold.

This is a possible health hazard. This has been an ongoing problem at the school, with one area being repaired, only to have the problem recur somewhere else.

Programs that could also benefit from continued expansion are the Roof Replacement and School Security programs. While it is not currently an issue, over the last few years, Paint Branch has had some significant roof leaks, resulting in damaged equipment. And, because our high schools are large, outdoor cameras are particularly important for the protection of our buildings. For instance, Blake has a 93 acre campus, making the issue of outdoor security that much more complex.

While maintenance is an Operating Budget item, we feel it is important to mention that it really is a critical issue for our aging buildings, and it would make sense to link it to the CIP Budget. Maintenance plays an important role with the issues focused on by MCCPTA advocacy. We need well defined preventative maintenance programs for our schools that lessen the need for costly repairs and remediation.

As we work for continuous improvement in our schools, for reaching benchmarks, for raising test scores and student achievement, we need to be mindful that to accomplish these goals, our children need the proper resources. Our number one priority should be to provide each student with a safe, secure and modern facility that is conducive to learning. This is all about the children! I am confident we share this commonality of purpose. We must fully fund the projects in the CIP.

We very much appreciate your giving us the opportunity to speak on behalf of our high schools tonight. Thank you for your time and your consideration of these requests.

Respectfully,

The Northeast Consortium Cluster Coordinators

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