

Blair Cluster Testimony to BOE on FY2013 Capital Budget and FY 2013-2018 CIP

Blair Cluster Testimony on  
FY2013 Capital Budget and the FY 2013-2018 Capital Improvements Program  
Before the Board of Education  
November 10, 2011

Speaking for Cluster:  
Susan Fleck, Cluster Co-Coordinator

(Note, Sligo Creek ES and Silver Spring International have split articulation between  
Blair and Northwood clusters)

Written testimony from:  
Eastern Middle School PTSA  
Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest Elementary Schools PTA  
New Hampshire Estates and Oak View Elementary Schools PTA  
Piney Branch Elementary School PTA  
Rolling Terrace Elementary School PTA  
Sligo Creek Elementary School PTA

East Silver Spring Elementary \* Montgomery Knolls Elementary \* New Hampshire Estates Elementary \*  
Oak View Elementary \* Piney Branch Elementary \* Pine Crest Elementary \* Rolling Terrace Elementary \*  
Sligo Creek Elementary \* Takoma Park Elementary  
Eastern Middle \* Silver Spring International Middle \* Takoma Park Middle  
Montgomery Blair High School

## Blair Cluster Testimony to BOE on FY2013 Capital Budget and FY 2013-2018 CIP

Dear President Barclay and Members of the Board and MCPS officials,

My name is Susan Fleck - Bladimir Duenas and Shruti Bhatnagar and I are the cluster coordinators representing the Blair Cluster. Two of our 13 schools have split articulation with the Northwood cluster.

The Blair cluster of schools teaches **10,000** students. The cluster last saw this **high** level of enrollment in 2004. Thirteen percent of the growth in the number of students in our county's schools last year was based in the Blair Cluster. Our schools teach 7% of MCPS students.

Our super-sized high school with 2,960 students has 150 more students enrolled than previously anticipated and is now over capacity. We have three middle schools with 800 students each, and 9 elementary schools with a little over 400 students in each. Because all but 2 of our schools split their articulation, each elementary school pair represents 700 to 900 elementary school students. All but a few schools have between 30 and 100 more students this year than they did last year.

Our schools are much better positioned to handle this growth in enrollment, thanks to the completion of additions at **Takoma Park Elementary, East Silver Spring Elementary,** and, **as of August this year, Montgomery Knolls Elementary School.** The Montgomery Knolls kindergarteners and second graders have swapped 13 cubicles for new classrooms, and the vintage bathrooms were also fixed up. The investment in these three buildings has alleviated crowding across 5 schools, but now **Pine Crest ES is in dire need of one more portable classroom** to provide room for students because of a surprise bump up in enrollment.

We thank Dr. Starr for his leadership in developing this year's Capital budget and the next 6 years of Capital Improvements. He has shown a great willingness to listen to the concerns of the community. We know that long term plans during this weak economic recovery are subject to great variability, but the Blair Cluster asks that you reconsider the CIP priorities. The 1.4 billion dollar CIP budget provides an adequate, but not an excellent, blueprint for keeping our schools in good shape.

We propose that the CIP budget focus on the basics, the here and now. If our budget is in a crisis, then we have to have some crisis management. The underlying principles of CIP budget decisions must be to address the **basic safety of our students and the integrity of their school buildings.**

First, continue the schedule to address **Compliance Projects.** In the Blair Cluster, these issues are important. For example, **asbestos abatement** should continue unabated. Schools that have not been modernized - such as **Piney Branch ES** and **Eastern MS** - are seeing asbestos floor and ceiling tiles loosen and fall, creating a safety hazard. **Piney Branch ES** has lead paint issues in the building that - while not in the classroom - affect students' access to some areas of the building. And storm water management is needed

for **Rolling Terrace ES's playing fields and parking lot**, as well as **Sligo Creek ES media center**, which suffers from the smell of sewage.

We also recognize the importance of prioritizing **Capacity Projects**. The most pressing **capacity** issue for our cluster is the need for **another portable classroom at Pine Crest ES**. Another concern at the **Blair HS is insufficient electrical circuitry** in the cafeteria; lack of grounded outlets means that there are NO microwaves for the 3,000 high school students to heat their lunch. We strongly support the **Capacity Projects** in other areas of the county that experience serious overcrowding.

There are two problems rampant throughout the schools of the Blair Cluster that we see as our most important priorities. They are the **Capital Maintenance Projects** of **malfunctioning HVAC systems and leaky roofs**. All students and staff are negatively affected, and in some cases, their health is at risk, when HVAC systems don't work. The structural integrity of the building is compromised when leaky roofs are not fixed, which has a cascading impact on other parts of the building as well as the physical environment of learning.

**HVAC systems** are the bane of many a principal's existence, and the challenge for students in the classrooms in half of Blair Cluster schools! **Takoma Park ES non-renovated building, Pine Crest, New Hampshire Estates, Piney Branch, and Rolling Terrace ES** all have serious ventilation and extremes of temperature in a far reaching number of classrooms. **Blair HS** has fans, but no air conditioning ducts to feed the air conditioning into the gym, where hundreds of students take PE every day. From boiling to freezing, these HVAC problems need to be looked at in a much more systemic way, and resolutions to these problems that take advantage of economies of scale would be one way to get the most out of this year's budget. For all of these schools, these problems are recurring, no matter the number of work orders submitted during a year.

**Leaky roofs**. Thanks to MCPS for giving Silver Spring International MS a roof repair this summer. Two of our cluster schools – **Pine Crest** and **Oak View ES** - are also scheduled for summer 2012 roof repairs – please keep these on track, as these repairs are much needed. **Piney Branch, Sligo Creek, Rolling Terrace ES, and Eastern** also have leaks in roofs, problems with gutters, and all sorts of water issues. These items can't wait until a 2020 modernization schedule to be fixed. Roof repairs are like putting antiseptic on a wound. Without the antiseptic, the wound will grow and fester. Roof repairs are an essential first defense to maintain the integrity of the building.

We are not happy about the delay in the high school and middle school modernization schedule, but if the urgent concerns I've mentioned here are addressed, then we may be able to wait a little longer.

Please, **ELIMINATE unnecessary IT spending**. Do NOT spend 150 million dollars on technology modernization. Use this money for **Capital Maintenance Projects**. Basic IT investments, like fixing the network printer at **Pine Crest ES**, are important, but NO MORE PROMETHEAN BOARDS. Promethean boards seem to propagate like rabbits

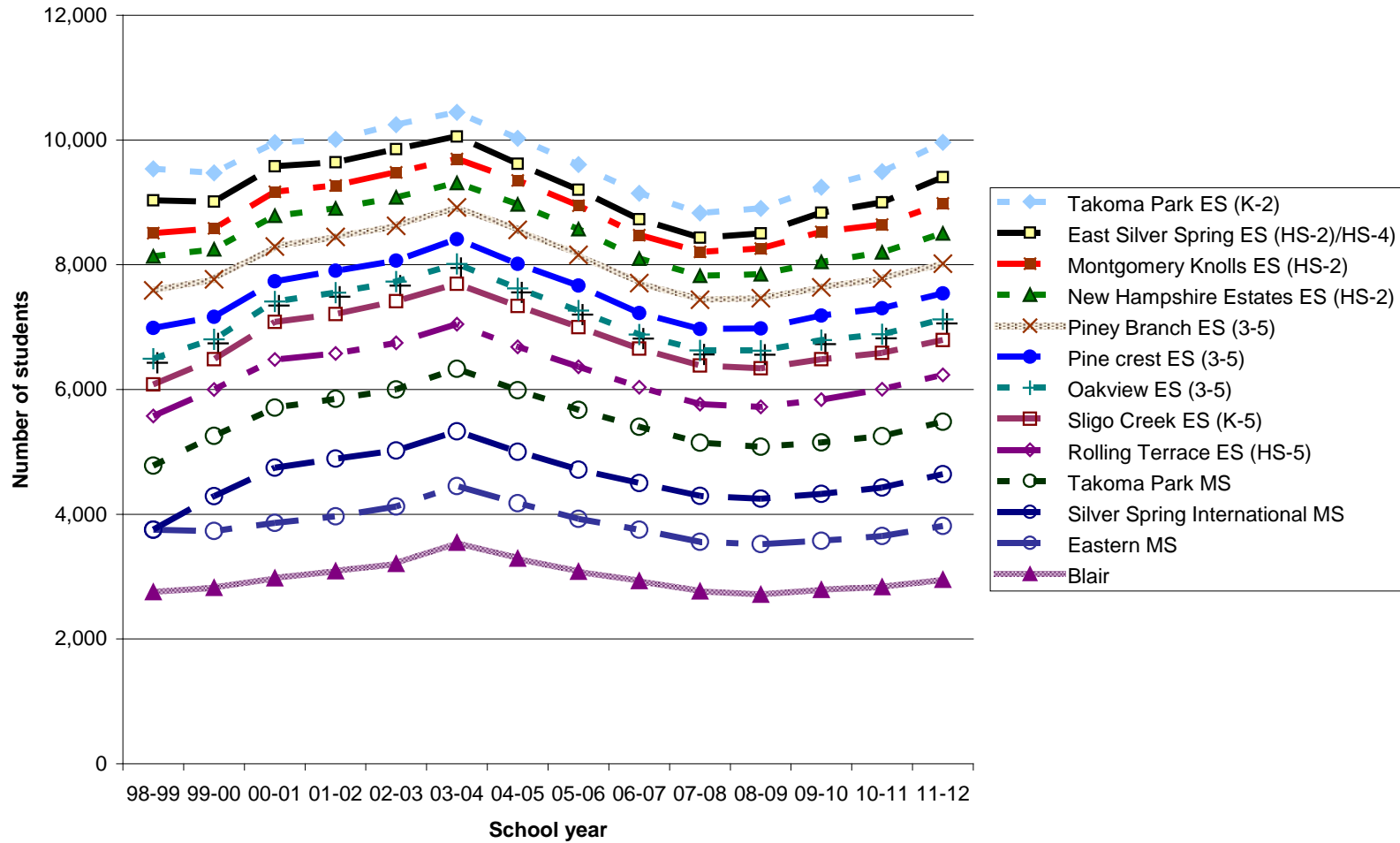
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over the summer, and we only find out about their installation at our child's classroom on Open House night.

Stop this extravagant purchase so we can stick to the basics of keeping our buildings and our children healthy and safe.

**Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak with you tonight. Please critically review the budget that Dr. Starr has presented to you and thoughtfully consider a crisis management strategy that will support our children and maintain our buildings.**

Twelve years of Blair cluster enrollment



Eastern Middle School PTSA  
300 University Boulevard, East  
Silver Spring, MD 20901

November 9, 2011

Carver Educational Services Center, Room 123  
850 Hungerford Drive  
Rockville, MD 20850

Board of Education Members:

The Eastern Middle School PTSA requests that the following facility concerns at our school be included in this round of CIP review:

- Reconsider the delay in modernization initially scheduled for completion in 2019. Eastern Middle School (EMS) has not had a modernization since 1976, and the facility is showing its age. Stairs need to be repaired or replaced, ceiling tiles in many classrooms are stained and missing, sinks in the science rooms are leaking. With construction costs being at an all time low and projected enrollment at EMS to exceed capacity by 2017, this modernization needs be kept to its previous schedule to meet the safety and educational needs of our community.
- Repair the leak in the main gym roof and replace, once again, the section of the wood floor that was damaged by this leak. The floor is curling up in the corner and is a safety hazard for students and staff.

We invite members of the Board of Education, MCPS Department of Long Range Planning and the Superintendent to tour the school to see for themselves the urgent need to address these concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Harris  
Eastern Middle School PTSA President

Linda Krimm  
Eastern Middle School PTSA Cluster Representative

From: Kathryn Larin, Blair Cluster Representative, MKES PTA  
To: Blair Cluster; MCPS; Board of Education  
RE: Comments on the Capital Improvement Plan  
Date: November 2011

MKPC PTA would like to thank MCPS and the Board of Education for funding the new Gymnasium and additional small classrooms for **Montgomery Knolls Elementary School**. The construction was completed in time for students to move in at the beginning of this school year and the remaining finishing touches—including new playground equipment—should be installed within the next few weeks. The new addition allows **Montgomery Knolls** to adequately serve its increased population for the first time in years, and the new gymnasium will reap benefits in the community far beyond the current student population.

MKPC PTA would also like to thank MCPS and the Board of Education for their continued support for **Pine Crest Elementary School**, including the planned replacement of the school roof during the summer of 2012. We would like to note, however, that the **Pine Crest** assigned staffing has increased over the past several years to meeting its growing student population and is now over capacity for room assignments. The school is in dire need of an additional portable classroom to handle meeting student needs with assigned staff without doubling up in classrooms or movement to a cart without a classroom. **Pine Crest** is also in dire need to continue with its tech modernization. For example, the school currently does not have consistent access to working printers.

Specifically, we urge you to consider addressing some of the remaining urgent repair needs in the schools, including:

**HVAC Replacement**

Repairs to the Pine Crest HVAC system are continuing in response to ongoing problems; request continued support to fully resolve HVAC issues.

**PLAR:**

MKES requests replacement of the school sign.

**Restroom Renovations:**

Pine Crest requests bathroom renovations including replacement of bathroom stall dividers, wall repainting, and installation of bathroom drains

**Roof Replacement:**

Pine Crest requests a full roof replacement as planned in summer 2012

**Technology Modernization:**

Pine Crest requests a re-evaluation of the school's technology modernization plans; most urgently, the school needs additional/new printers.

**Portable Classrooms:**

Pine Crest requests the addition of one portable classroom to help address overcrowding in the school.

cc: Jen Gunnulfson, MKPC PTA President  
Deann Collins, MKES Principal  
Meredith Casper, PCES Principal



**New Hampshire Estates and Oak View Elementary Schools  
Parent Teacher Association**



8720 Carroll Avenue Silver Spring, MD 20903

400 East Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20901

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November 9, 2011

The New Hampshire Estates and Oak View (NHE/OV) Elementary School PTA requests that the following facility concerns at our schools be included in this round of CIP review:

New Hampshire Estates ES

Address the inconsistent heating and air conditioning zones through out the school. Some parts of the building are too hot in warm weather and too cold in cold weather. During the early spring heat waves common in our area, children and staff are sweltering in classrooms that are too hot and the heat cannot be adjusted. Their only option is to open windows to relieve the heat, and this is a very inefficient use of energy.

Oak View ES

Assure that the old section of the roof that was not repaired during the school renovation several years ago is replaced so the leaks do not cause damage to internal structures. We have been told that a roof repair is scheduled for summer 2012, and we request that this timeline be followed.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Krimm  
NHE/OV PTA Blair Cluster Representative

To: Montgomery County Board of Education  
From: Piney Branch Elementary School PTA, Vineda Myers, PBES PTA president,  
Todd Solomon, PBES Blair Cluster PTA representative  
Re: Capital Improvement Project FY2012 request for the MCPS Board of Education  
Date: November 10, 2010

Piney Branch Elementary School is in the midst of a boundary redraw process, and our population is changing. PBES is fortunate to have on site a swimming pool that is used by students during school hours for physical education. The pool also increases PBES's use as a center of community activity.

The most pressing problems of the PBES premises requiring attention include:

1. Flooring tiles and carpet in the building. Original tiles in the building contain asbestos-based material. When intact, these tiles pose minimal risk. However, when they become loose, that risk of harm to students is elevated. We take it very seriously, but completing the necessary paperwork and work-order for repair of individual loose tiles is inefficient and hardly cost-effective for the County.

2. Lead-based paint identified in the pool and locker room areas. While students use these facilities infrequently, parents are concerned. The community is unwavering in its position that excluding students from use of these facilities is not an option.

3. Striping and pavement markings in the PBES drop-off area. PBES is one of few schools where school buses and passenger cars share the same roadway access and egress, with two parallel and narrow lanes. Parents drop off students in the lane farthest from the school entrance, with buses using the inner lane. The striping between lanes is, to all intents and purposes, invisible. Crosswalk markings have also faded. The substandard demarcation of vehicle lanes and pedestrian crosswalks is a serious safety hazard that could be remedied inexpensively.

4. Mechanical (AC/Heating) system requires a complete overhaul and/or upgrade. The PBES building was original constructed as an open-space design. When partitions were installed to create classrooms during the conversion from middle to elementary school use, that process totally disrupted the air-flow, intake/outflow system. However, the HVAC system was not modified accordingly. As a result, during the winter, some rooms are consistently hot while others are significantly colder. An overhaul of our mechanical system would:

- allow for heating and cooling to take place simultaneously;
- provide increased ventilation throughout the entire building;
- allow for more individual room temperature control; and
- reduce the significant temperature disparity between rooms.

5. Ceiling tiles and ceiling lights. The ceiling tiles date from the building's original 1973 construction. They are not energy efficient; they are old; and many are discolored. This would

allow the use of more energy efficient material and decreased energy consumption. It would also create a more uniformed coloration of classroom ceilings.

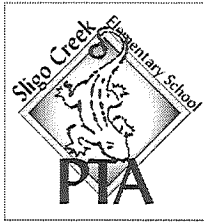
TO: Board of Education, MCPS  
FROM: Margarita Sol, President, and Donna Victoria, Cluster representative, Rolling Terrace ES PTA  
DATE: November 8, 2011  
RE: Capital Improvement Priorities for Rolling Terrace ES

The Rolling Terrace community appreciates the construction of the school community based health center to provide health care.

Rolling Terrace Elementary School has identified the following issues as Capital Improvement Priorities:

- Temperature control –excessive heat in classrooms. The heating system thermostats are not functioning properly, leading to the heat being on at all times and overheating some classrooms. These seem to be the same classrooms/section of the building that is also too hot in warm weather; this is an issue with how thermostats and sensor controls work, not believed to be HVAC unit itself.
- Sidewalk from Hood Street to rear of RT building is crumbling, narrow, and unsafe for public access; should be re-paved and made ADA-compliant.
- Our playing field is frequently an unsafe surface; it is hard packed and often ice-covered and unusable in winter. Recent heavy truck traffic during health center construction has exacerbated conditions. We would like to see a drainage system installed (there is currently none) and re-sod.
- Parking lot needs re-grade and paving; blacktop for play area adjacent to K-classrooms needs re-grade for drainage and re-paving.
- There are windows without screens in classrooms, and some with poorly fitting screens that fall out; leading to windows unsafe to open in classrooms.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Bridge to Portables and fields is in need of a new roof and new guttering.
- Stairwells, our rubber treads need repair in some places (B wing especially).
- We have four classrooms divided by accordion partitions rather than permanent walls; we would like to see 2 permanent walls installed since they are counted and always used as 4 classrooms (1 partition between A101 and A103, 1 partition between A201 and A203)
- Some of our water fountains are original to the building and in need of update.

Thank you! Please contact us at (301) 346-9257 if you have any questions.



*Sligo Creek Elementary School Parent Teacher Ass'n*  
*Sligo Creek Elementary School*  
*500 Schuyler Road*  
*Silver Spring, MD 20910*

November 3, 2011

VIA E-MAIL

VIA E-MAIL

Montgomery County Board of Education Members  
Carver Educational Services Center  
850 Hungerford Drive, Room 123  
Rockville, Maryland 20850  
E-mail: boe@mcpsmd.org

Members:

Christopher S. Barclay, President  
Shirley Brandman, Vice-President  
Philip Kauffman  
Judith Docca  
Laura Berthiaume  
Patricia O'Neill  
Alan Xie, Student Member

Dear Board Members:

In this difficult budget year, Sligo Creek Elementary School (SCES) requests Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) funds to rectify deficiencies in our historic school building (the old Blair HS). As you know, our school building was neither designed as an elementary school nor modernized before SCES opened in 1999. Our requests are thus for basic, core repairs and improvements that were not provided when the school opened. We hope you will approve the following CIP requests in order to make SCES fully suitable for elementary school students.

For this year, SCES requests CIP funding to address the following problems:

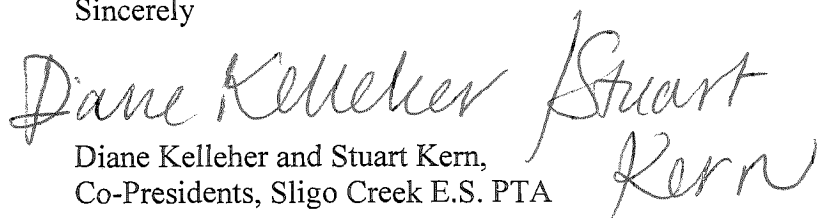
- First, SCES needs a new roof. The school is consistently dealing with a roof that leaks. When Blair was converted into a middle and elementary school, the heating and cooling systems were not updated. Without exception, when it rains, the SCES roof leaks.
- Second, SCES needs new gutters and drains at the front entrance of our school (at the SCES Grand Staircase). There are no gutters or drains at this entrance. As a result, when it rains, the water drains off the roof and down the slope, creating a large area of water at this entrance. The accumulation of water at this location is eroding the base of the

columns that support part of the roof, and it also poses a hazard for the large number of persons entering and exiting the school from this entrance.

- Third, SCES needs repairs to its sewage and drainage in various areas in the building. Periodically, the SCES media center smells of sewage, and although several repair efforts have been tried (including a thorough cleaning of nearby drains, involving the use of chlorine bleach), the problem has not been fixed. We ask for MCPS funding to rectify this situation and ensure that the sewer problems do not recur.
- We also ask your assistance with creating some kind of barrier or secured entrance to our trash lot in our side parking lot of our school (along Schuyler Ave). Currently, our school is experiencing a large amount of dumped neighborhood trash near at school dumpsters (presumably to avoid calling for a special collection or a trip to the dump); these items include refrigerators, safes, laundry baskets, lamps, couches, and television sets. The items discarded by the community are not only unattractive, but they also pose a danger to staff, students, and parents who access our school entrance from the side parking lot. We would appreciate any assistance MCPS can provide with securing this area or making it more difficult for neighbors to dump their household trash at our school.
- SCES needs new mats behind the basketball goals in the gym. The mats currently in our gym are original from the old Blair HS, and, as a result of age and use, they no longer provide the cushion that is needed for student safety in the gym.
- SCES also needs new curtains at our gym stage; the curtains are also original to the old Blair HS, and they are quite old and very dirty. The curtains have made it difficult for students with allergies to participate in some of our performing arts activities.
- Finally, our SCES front office needs new desks, chairs, and shelves. The “hand-me-down” desks that are currently in the front office have drawers do not work, and they do not have adequate storage.

These steps are not particularly expensive, but they are needed to create a safe, comfortable and practical learning environment for our staff, students, and community.

Sincerely

  
Diane Kelleher and Stuart Kern,  
Co-Presidents, Sligo Creek E.S. PTA

Cc: Diantha Swift, Sligo Creek ES,  
Principal