

**MAGRUDER HIGH SCHOOL CLUSTER
FY 2013 Operating Budget Testimony
before the
Montgomery County Public Schools
Board of Education**

January 10, 2012

Good evening Members of the Board, Dr. Starr, and MCPS Staff:

My name is Martha Schaerr, and I represent the Magruder Cluster along with my co-coordinators, Beatrice Hanson and Annie Ahmed-Foster.

On behalf of Candlewood Elementary School, I thank you for approving the Up-County Center as our future holding school site. Last night Mr. James Song, Director of MCPS Facilities Management, and Dr. Darryl Williams, our Community Superintendent, shared that welcome news with over 80 parents attending the PTA meeting organized to discuss the holding school issue. We are hopeful that the Up-County Center will enable Candlewood to avoid the hour-long commute to the Grovsnor holding school.

In preparation for this testimony I asked cluster PTA leaders and principals to send me their operating budget priorities. The first responses I got were, "We know that we can't ask for anything because there's no money." When I probed about what they would like to ask for I got some different answers. Our cluster is fully aware of the budget constraints, but there are some things we think we can still do. Some of them don't require any more money!

Our smaller elementary schools, Cashell and Candlewood, struggle with no assistant principal and only a half-time media center specialist, counselor, staff development person, and reading specialist. Cuts this drastic have severely impacted the support classroom teachers receive. Making even one of these positions full time would greatly strengthen their ability to help their students be successful.

As the Board discussed yesterday, decreasing staff development positions at the high schools leaves classroom teachers more on their own at a

time when they need more training and support. Our teachers soldier on, but you can see by our ineligibility rates that we need to do more than just soldier on.

Redland Middle School, still not part of Middle School Reform, would like to explore how it can offer classes currently restricted to schools where Middle School Reform has been implemented. The current policy puts Redland students at a disadvantage at Magruder since Shady Grove (our other middle school) is part of the Middle School Reform program. We think this can be done without impacting the operating budget.

The change in policy about class fees for art and science is going to cause problems in the future for Magruder. Funds created when fees were allowed are being depleted, and future students in art and science classes may not be able to develop as many pictures or conduct as many experiments without increasing operating budget funds in these areas.

Copy machines at Magruder require daily service calls, and some days all three copiers are down at once. Magruder is really hoping for a new copy machine! Shady Grove is also experiencing increased copy machine problems.

Flower Hill Elementary School requests an upgrade in their cafeteria refrigerator/freezer capacity which would allow them to qualify for a state breakfast program for students who need breakfast. When their addition was put on hold the refrigerator capacity was also put on hold, and we'd like to have that considered now.

The Magruder Cluster supports the MCCPTA 2013 Operating Budget Compact and the Superintendent's recommended FY2013 Operating Budget Recommendation. Thank you for your service to our children, the MCPS staff and our entire community.