

THE NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM

A Consortium of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook Clusters

Comments on the FY 2013 Operating Budget

On behalf of The NEC Middle Schools

Benjamin Banneker
Briggs Chaney
William H. Farquhar
Francis Scott Key
White Oak

January 11, 2012

Good evening Superintendent Starr, Ms. Brandman and members of the Board. My name is Reva Gambrell. I am Cluster Coordinator for the Springbrook Cluster, and I am here this evening to speak on behalf of the five middle schools of the Northeast Consortium: Briggs Chaney, White Oak, Francis Scott Key, Benjamin Banneker, and William Farquhar which we share with the Sherwood Cluster.

We recognize that we face yet another very difficult budget year. Even while facing this challenge, I believe that we still must strive to **exceed** the standards of excellence associated with our MCPS system.

The NEC advocates for a balanced and thoughtful budget review process, careful to avoid cuts to programs that are hallmarks of the Montgomery County Public Schools. These are programs that our parents expect and our students deserve when they matriculate through our system.

The NEC supports MCCPTA's FY 2013 Operating Budget Priorities and the Operating Budget Compact which speaks to the MCCPTA's highest **budget priorities – students, teaching and learning.**

MCCPTA operating budget goals are:

- **Ensure Success for Every Student**
- **Provide an Effective Instructional Program**
- **Strengthen Productive Partnerships for Education**
- **Create a Positive Work Environment in a Self-Renewing Organization**
- **Provide high quality business services that are essential to the educational success of students**

Recognizing the continued sluggish growth in local tax revenues paired with a rapid growth in student enrollment we know that there will be tough decisions. The NEC urges as tough funding decisions are made, that the Board of Education will focus on protecting the items listed as priorities in the MCCPTA Operating Budget Compact.

As middle school students are beginning to make choices about classes that will follow them into high school -- for instance in math and foreign languages -- it is important that counselor positions are staffed and available to help individual students make these types of choices carefully. As students start down a curriculum path they expect their high school classes to be available as well. -- Will our middle school students be able to continue and complete the courses they started as they move to high school? We must make choices that ensure courses are available to our rising high schoolers. We must stay focused and **exceed** teaching and learning expectations.

The MCCPTA Operating Budget Compact asks that class sizes be kept as low as possible to better ensure a rich and effective teaching and learning classroom experience. Special education students and those who need extra assistance for any reason are vulnerable: these students need adequate staff support to ensure that they are able to learn to the fullest extent of their abilities. And students who are gifted academically need the enrichment that makes their education suited to their abilities as well.

Related to staffing, Farquhar Middle School PTSA specifically highlights the following:

- **Reinstatement of their staff development allocation** to a 1.0 (currently a .4). This would allow for professional development which is needed in order to identify their next level of work.
- **Alternative I allocation** - provide the staffing to support their students who are not being successful in the general education setting. These are students who are not coded special education and lack the skills needed to be successful. It provides the staff with an opportunity to offer individualized case management during the school day.
- **ITSS allocation** (currently a .5 back to a 1.0)
- **Maintain hours based staffing for special education**

We are also concerned about the maintenance of the school buildings, building services and security staff. Continuing, ongoing maintenance is the key factor in keeping our buildings clean and safe. Adequate staffing of maintenance depots is imperative. Building services staff do a wonderful job taking care of the schools under their care, but some things are beyond their scope and we need to recognize that fact and give them the support they need.

I close in agreement with a statement I've heard from Dr. Starr and many of you on the Board – We have the goal and responsibility of preparing our students for more options/choices when they leave MCPS than what they had before they came to MCPS.

For our children, we must preserve the rich experiences, the priceless memories and the “game changing” educational opportunities and curriculums offered in our Montgomery County Schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the NEC middle school community.

Respectfully,

The Northeast Consortium Cluster Coordinators

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