

# **THE NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM**

## **A Consortium of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook Clusters**

### Comments on the FY 2011 Capital Budget and the FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvements Program

#### **On behalf of The NEC High Schools**

February 16, 2010

Blake High School  
Paint Branch High School  
Springbrook High School

Good evening President Floreen and members of the Council. My name is Patti Twigg and I am the Paint Branch Cluster Coordinator. 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 2011 Capital Improvement Program Budget and FY2011-2016 CIP and the MCCPTA Resolution on the Restroom Renovation Project in the FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvement Program. We also fully support the MCCPTA testimony given by President Kay Romero.

We all know the realities of the budget and economy. We know that we live in tight budgetary times. But, by aggressively pursuing bids for upcoming projects, we can take maximum advantage of the economic climate and secure large cost savings for years to come. We think it makes sense for MCPS to prepare as many projects as possible for bid in the next year. At a minimum, we fully support the modernization and addition projects in the Superintendent's Recommendation. Concurrently, we urge prudence, encouraging you to seek out and modify or eliminate programs that may not be cost effective, in order to realize greater savings.

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! We send a strong message to our children when we provide them with modern, state of the art schools in which to learn. We impart to them the fact that we value them, and place a priority on their education. We must fully fund the projects in the CIP.

As an example of the costs and problems associated with not fully funding the CIP projects, let us remember the case of Blake HS. The cautionary lesson to be learned from them 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 gym 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 Paint Branch HS or any other school.

Our entire Northeast Consortium community is very excited by the news of the enormous cost savings to be gained by moving forward with the construction of the new Paint Branch HS. We are also grateful for Mr. Leggett's support to move forward with this project. Students currently in 6<sup>th</sup> grade will be starting at the new Paint Branch HS in 2012, the year it will open under the current schedule. Just this past fall, the football team played its last game in the existing stadium due to the imminent commencement of the site work, and they now embark on a three-year journey of all games being played on other fields. The entire NEC community is eagerly anticipating the completion of this project, and stands fully behind its completion on schedule.

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 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 would like to see a full examination of the process for evaluating schools and assigning FACT scores. We think it is important to gather input from all stakeholders towards this process, in order to address the long range planning and capital needs of our schools. Schools that do not currently have FACT scores are eagerly awaiting them, and more transparency in the process would benefit everyone. We would also like to see the development of a standardized set of designs for schools at each level, which can then be evaluated and customized for each individual project, the ultimate goal being to reduce the design phase of a school as it approaches its modernization, or for the construction of a new school.

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.

Related to this issue is the recent stance by the MCCPTA Delgates who voted to support a resolution placing the importance of maintenance above the current restroom renovation program. Springbrook HS needs their bathrooms renovated. This has been a request for several years now. Springbrook has all metal stall dividers, which have been etched in and are repainted daily. Painting these over and over has become a real problem. Springbrook needs nonabsorbent stall dividers, which allow for quicker/easier clean up. Many of the fixtures are so old that replacement parts are no longer available. Their first floor bathrooms, which need to accommodate not only students but most visitors, are so unappealing as to reflect poorly on the school. However, they are not on the current list for the restroom renovation program, which goes out through 2016. If we adhere to the restroom renovation program as it stands, Springbrook HS will be waiting a minimum of seven years for much needed repairs. We feel it is clearly more cost effective and realistic to instead put the money into maintenance and repair

of the restrooms in our schools.

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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