

Magruder Cluster Operating Budget Testimony for January 13, 2010

Good evening, President O'Neill, Dr. Weast and members of the Board of Education. My name is Dawn Trahern. Annie Ahmed, Patrick Dunn and I represent the Magruder Cluster.

We thank you each year for reserving the time for each PTA cluster to testify on the Operating Budget and continuing your collaboration with MCCPTA in the budget development process and this year is no exception. Thank you for your support of this relationship.

The Magruder Cluster fully supports the MCCPTA Operating Budget Priorities and the testimony by Kay Romero with the success of our children in mind.

I have testified or been involved in the writing and presenting of PTA Operating Budget testimony over the last 6 years and I am finding that it was much easier to write testimony knowing the county and state "had" or would find the money necessary to support our school system. We have all known for a couple of years now that there will be budgetary constraints and that there will be shared sacrifice.

After perusing the 2011 Operating Budget in Brief, reviewing the list of possible reductions and attending an operating budget forum, I came away very informed and just as unnerved. The uncertainty of the funding we expect to receive from the county through the state to meet our budgetary requirements puts all of us in a state of limbo on what to advocate for. Given this uncertainty, it is very difficult to testify about specifics because the funding spectrum is so broad; therefore, our testimony will be a bit different than it has been in the past.

The Magruder Cluster has worked closely with the Board over the years, we believe there is a mutual respect and from proven past experience, we believe that each of you has the best interests of the children in mind when making decisions. We also recognize that you are presented with competing interest each day. After hearing the clusters testify over the years, we believe you are aware of our priorities as a group.

So here it goes! If MCPS receives the full funding required to meet Dr. Weast's proposed budget, we ask that you spend it with the children's educational success as a priority. Everything is funded as outlined in Dr. Weast's proposal-that is our best case scenario. If we are not fully funded, of special concern to us in the cluster are cuts that directly impact the classroom and the opportunities for all students to have access to the opportunities that MCPS has to offer. Finally, if we have our legs cut out from under us, we trust that you will make the cuts that will cause the least harm to the students. Cuts that directly impact the classroom and the opportunities for all students to have access to the opportunities that MCPS has to offer must be the last to consider. The 2011 Budget in Brief is very clear about what is on the table. Some of them are alarming since the cuts possible could set our initiatives back or completely dismantle some successes. Dr. Weast has clearly outlined areas for possible cuts. We trust that if cuts are necessary, priority will be given to the classroom.

We appreciate your dedication to our students and the Magruder Cluster looks forward to working closely with the Board in the future. We also plan to continue pressing our state legislators and Governor O'Malley to ensure that the GCEI is fully funded and the state continues to be responsible for teacher pensions.