

January 20, 2010

Board of Education
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Board Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Wheaton High School PTSA about the Superintendent's recommended budget. We appreciate that this budget is intended to spread the pain system-wide but we are concerned that, in the end, it will hurt some more than others.

Class size - We know that class size increases are important to spending less and, even though we believe reduced class size has been the anchor of our current success, we accept this proposal. However, we ask that it be limited to the recommended one additional student per class.

Academic intervention teachers - We are troubled at the prospect of the proposed reduction of academic intervention teachers at Wheaton because we know the positive impact they have had on our improved scores in AP, HSA, SAT, ACT, and Accuplacer tests. Wheaton HS students do not have the personal resources that students in other areas of the County enjoy to offset this reduction.

Special program teachers - The proposed cuts in special program teachers will hit us hard because the academy structure at Wheaton can only survive if the special program teachers are allowed to continue with release periods. The academy heads are already down to one release period from the originally planned two. The academy coordinator has gone from a full-time non-teaching position to teaching 3 classes. Position cuts have made it extremely difficult for the academies to continue to provide outside resources and experiences to the academy students. The academy coordinator has little time to do anything other than prepare for the DCC processes which we feel hurts the future of the academy programs. If further cuts must happen, they should only continue for the shortest possible time.

Learning environment – With the proposed budget-related sacrifices, please make sure that priority is given to ensure stable staffing for maintenance of our very old building from building service workers to electricians. It takes a lot of work to make the old girl go every day, especially with the stresses age and high schoolers can bring. Our students must continue to have a safe and comfortable learning environment even as the grownups grapple with budget deficits.

Extracurricular activities – We worry that increased fees will keep many Wheaton HS students from being able to participate. In addition, we no longer have a Booster Club and have little prospect of having one in the near future. There will be nothing to buffer these programs from reductions. They will suffer.

Thank you for your continued support of Wheaton High School and for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the recommended budget with you.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Gadbois, President
Wheaton HS PTSA
12601 Dalewood Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20906