

THE NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM

A Consortium of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook Clusters

Comments on the FY 2011 Operating Budget

On behalf of the NEC Middle Schools

Briggs Chaney Middle School

White Oak Middle School

Francis Scott Key Middle School

William Farquhar Middle School

Benjamin Banneker Middle School

April 5, 2010

Good evening President Floreen and members of the Council. I am Lee Ann Doerflinger, Blake Cluster Coordinator, 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 this is a very difficult budget year. Nonetheless, we believe it is important to maintain the standards of excellence for which MCPS is rightly known. MCCPTA's Resolution on FY 2011 Operating Budget Priorities and the Operating Budget Compact focus in part on keeping staff positions which directly affect all students, as well as maintaining a safe, clean environment for learning, and maintaining communication between home and school. For middle schools particularly, however, there is a great need for "empirically based, developmentally appropriate, fully supported curriculum implementation": unfortunately budgeting difficulties seem to be slowing the implementation of middle school curriculum reform. It is important to our students that this curriculum continues to roll out as quickly as possible.

Given that money will continue to be short for several years to come, middle school parents in our consortium have expressed concern about proposed cuts which would result in MCPS losing many classroom teachers. Once these positions are lost, it will be very hard to rebuild those classes and programs in the future.

It is particularly distressing that we may be allowing class sizes to grow again after a decade of hard work to reduce class sizes, a strategy that has helped countless students. Again, our Resolution on Operating Budget Priorities asks that class sizes be kept as low as possible to keep the education going on in those classrooms as effective as possible. Other points in the resolution regarding staffing could also be affected. Special education students and those who need extra assistance for any reason are vulnerable: they need adequate staffing 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.

Finally, we are concerned about the maintenance of school buildings and portable classrooms. Continuing, ongoing maintenance is the important factor in keeping those structures clean, mold-free and safe. Fixing things as they break is an inefficient method of keeping buildings in working order. Adequate staffing of maintenance depots is imperative.

In this year of very difficult budget decisions, we ask you to preserve these programs and positions. Thank you.

The Northeast Consortium Cluster Coordinators

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