

THE SHERWOOD CLUSTER

Comments on the FY 2011 Operating Budget

On behalf of the schools within the Sherwood Cluster

April 5, 2010

Good evening, President Floreen and members of the Council, my name is Virginia Twombly and I am the cluster coordinator for Sherwood High School Cluster. Thank you very much for giving up your time to once again solicit feedback from the public. Your commitment to be partners with community members is gratefully appreciated even when it seems nothing but criticisms are heard. The Sherwood Cluster supports MCCPTA and Kay Romero's testimony as well as Dr. Weast's request for full funding of the maintenance of effort budget.

Like many of the other speakers here, my cluster does understand the realities of the current fiscal situation and all we can do is add our voice urging you to make the best of these difficult decisions. The proposed cuts, if proven necessary, will be very hard for many – particularly our most needy families. Schools are the first to try to meet the needs of our most vulnerable members of society – our children. Every morning, teachers are the first to try to help students who may be worried about their parents, upset at a move, or hungry because there is not enough to eat at home. Reducing the schools' budget also reduces schools' ability to buffer the challenges students bring with them while trying to enable them with the skills they'll need for their, and our own, futures.

When this testimony was being discussed at a cluster meeting I was asked to share our very serious concerns regarding cuts made to the Department of Health and Human Services in the area of School Health. School nurses and especially School Room Health Aides are critically important to our schools. You may not be aware but the Sherwood Cluster has the highest percent of Juvenile Diabetes in the county. In my daughter's elementary school, there are 3 students, one as young as 6, who require the school health room aide to perform an average of 20 treatments per day. Additionally this same school has 34 students requiring Epipens because of severe life-threatening allergic reactions. Many students come with inhalers and nebulizers to treat their asthma but being young children, require an adult to support them. An elementary-age student was taken to the emergency room the week before spring break by ambulance due to asthma. With the proposed cuts, meeting these children's health needs will fall to school secretaries and or security personnel who not only have full time job responsibilities but do not have the medical skills necessary to address some life-threatening conditions. I encourage the County Council to consider allocating health room aides and nurses based on the needs of a school or cluster rather than a generic formula that does not consider school population needs.

Thank you again for allowing me to share with you these concerns and thoughts on behalf of the Sherwood Cluster Schools.

Virginia Twombly
Cluster Coordinator