

# Watkins Mill Cluster

Watkins Mill High School.  
Montgomery Village Middle School; Neelsville Middle School  
South Lake Elementary School; Stedwick Elementary School; Watkins Mill Elementary School;  
Whetstone Elementary School

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May 1, 2007

**The Honorable Marilyn Praisner  
and Members of the County Council  
Council Office Building  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville MD 20850**

Good evening Mrs. Praisner and Members of the County Council:

My name is Susan Young, and together with Lon Hamann and Brenda Szcsezny, we are the Watkins Mill Cluster Co-Coordinates. I appreciate this opportunity to testify on behalf of the schools in the Watkins Mill Cluster. I am here primarily to offer our sincere thanks.

- We thank you for the recent capital improvements to Watkins Mill Elementary School. Over capacity, with FARM and mobility rates almost double the County elementary school averages, the new classrooms and gymnasium were sorely needed and are truly appreciated. We thank you also for the timely completion of Clarksburg High School. While not actually in our cluster, its opening has helped reduce some of the stress and overcrowding at Watkins Mill High School. Finally, we are grateful that construction is scheduled to start on an addition to Stedwick Elementary School this summer.

We are here tonight also to ask for your support for the following capital projects:

- Whetstone Elementary School Addition: Whetstone, with 624 students, is one of the largest elementary schools in the county, and is 167 students over its stated capacity of 457. FARM and mobility rates for Whetstone, while not the highest in the cluster, are well above County elementary school averages. The feasibility study is underway for an addition. We ask your support for funding this much-needed addition as soon as possible.
- Watkins Mill Middle School #2. Neelsville Middle School now falls within the boundaries of the Clarksburg Cluster, and all students will soon articulate to Clarksburg High School. A site has been located for a new middle school to serve the Watkins Mill Cluster, and a feasibility study has been initiated. We ask you to support this new addition to our cluster. The Montgomery Village community is particularly pleased to know that it will be a LEED-certified, "green" building.

We also support funding for County-wide projects that work to improve the quality, safety and health of the school facilities. The needs are numerous and varied, ranging from replacement of obsolete phone and public address systems, replacement of soiled and worn carpets, and repair of missing/damaged floor tiles at Watkins Mill High School; to new carpet and lockers at Neelsville Middle School; and overdue bathroom renovations in most of our Cluster's schools. There is only so much magic a good building services team can do to hold these older buildings and facilities together.

Our cluster has much positive going for it today. For starters, we have a group of dynamic principals who work so well together. This year they initiated a cluster-wide literacy focus, with each school working as part of a vertically integrated team. Our requested Capital and Countywide projects can ensure this work takes place in a positive and supportive environment, one conducive to good learning. We ask that as you balance the many competing needs within Montgomery County, you continue to support those of our growing and diverse community.