

Einstein Cluster Testimony MCPS FY2021 Operating Budget

Good evening,

I would like to start this year's testimony by thanking Dr. Smith for submitting a budget that prioritizes education that considers the whole child. Increasing the number of psychologists and counselors is extremely important. This budget does that, but we need to do even more. Specifically, Sligo MS has asked for an additional part-time counselor or at the very least, additional hours of ESOL counselor support. In addition, The Sligo Middle School METS program needs more funding and staffing. Increasing support for the Restorative Justice program is important as well.

Part of serving the whole child is also ensuring their safety and security. We agree that extra security staffing is needed in this budget. Many schools have areas that cannot be monitored with personnel, so we ask that more cameras be deployed. Sligo MS has asked for 6 additional cameras. We also support the technology for buses that would include an app for parents in the future. Please continue to work with Montgomery County and State transportation to make bus stops safer for kids. One death is too many and any safety enhancements are encouraged.

All kids need to have the opportunity to meet their potential. Expanding these opportunities should continue to be a priority. Elementary school teachers need more training as enhanced curriculum is introduced. A large class size and lack of teacher support means that kids might not get the full effect that is desired by the enhanced curriculum. Specifically Woodlin ES PTA asks for more support in this area. Also transitioning to new curriculum can be challenging for parents and kids alike. More support is needed. Sligo MS has asked for more materials in order to optimize their robotics program.

In preparation for this testimony, I reviewed the AP and IB scores. One particular score at Einstein highlighted an equity issue which can be addressed in this budget, or maybe during MCEA negotiations. One AP Computer Science course was offered last year, AP Computer Science Principals. The mean score for the county was 3.3 out of 5. The mean score at Einstein was 1.2., over a point lower than any other school offering the course. We must serve our students better. Computer skills are a must in our job market. I understand that there is a new teacher this year that will teach the course. Of course I have a lot of questions. Did a seasoned computer science teacher get placed at Einstein, one that will build a program in which kids can learn? If a new teacher was placed there, will they get the support needed in order to build the program? Can we identify more than 11 students that given the right environment, will acquire the skills needed to achieve a higher score? How does the system respond to a failing program that is pivotal in today's job market, especially in tech fields? Can we incentivize high performing teachers to take on such a challenge?

There are MANY success stories at Einstein high school, including our strong history and Spanish scores. We are building the kind of citizens we want for our country. Our IB program is building and flourishing. But we also have to look at ways to improve programs. The Operating budget is that tool. We ask that this budget is fully funded, but we also ask that you take the Black and Brown report to heart, and look at equity in staff placement as well.

Laura Stewart

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