



CommUNITY: It Takes A Village!



Blake-Farquhar-Burnt Mills-Fairland-Page-Stonegate-Paint Branch-Banneker-
Briggs Chaney-Burtonsville-Cloverly-Galway-Greencastle-Sherwood-Rosa
Parks-Belmont-Brooke Grove-Greenwood-Olney-Sherwood-Springbrook-Key-
White Oak-Cannon Rd-Cresthaven-Drew-Leleck-Jackson Rd-Nix-Westover

OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY FISCAL 2022

April 5, 2021

Presented By: Charisse Callender-Scott, Area Vice President, MCCPTA – NEC-Sherwood

Presented To: Montgomery County Council Members & The Community

Testimony Representing: Northeast Consortium School Clusters - Blake | Paint Branch | Springbrook

Despite all that we know, and have learned through our experiences, using the resources available to us, that outlined history of a time that proceeded us, and the lessons that were taught following that time to prepare us for the world that we live in today, did you ever stop to imagine, or consider that you may one day be forced to relive some of that history that you were taught, or did you just factor it as the past? Did you ever stop to consider that you may one day become the author of the history for the generation that will follow you? Could you have ever imagined as a child, growing up, that the scope of your work, your impact, or your relevance to society, would be to help create and shape the platform for education that will impact society in a way that you may never see fully manifest in your own lifetime, but for some reason you do it anyway, knowing that its relevance will make a positive difference in the world you leave behind. If you never thought of that as a child growing up, I'm sure you do now, as this is the position we find ourselves in today, as leaders in this work to prepare our young people to accept the relevance of their future.

We have seen our next generation of young people begin to take initiative to rise-up and address some of today's problems, and the inequity that comes with the solutions to many of those problems. We have also seen our next generation of young people suffer from some of today's problems, some of them overcome successfully, while others with loss of life, loss of hope, lack of support, lack of guidance, lack of options, lack of the full understanding of life, history, and their powerful ability to shape it for themselves. We acknowledge and expect, that the proposed operating budget, will address this lack.

Perspective on how to approach a budget, is often contingent on its anticipated outcome, or the expectations set by the final decision, and its measurable results. But let us be honest with each other, when looking at an Operating Budget, and the anticipated outcome or measurable expectations in an environment such as the one we are living in today, that may not be a reasonable goal to set. What we can set as a reasonable and measurable result, are the ways in which we go about setting forth the allocations of the budget, based on its intended outcome. Understanding it is up to the school system to address the allocation, please note this testimony is presented, asking that you fully fund the budget, so

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that the funds can be allocated to address the following as presented to the School Board in January 2021. Thanking you in advance for your review and consideration of this testimony.

Here's an example: we can look at this proposed budget and see clearly the intent to resolve an issue where there were too few Paraeducators in the system, as well as a need for additional support in areas of Special Education. However, what we can not see in the budget, is where those resources will be placed, and how the decisions to place those resources will be made. Those of us who understand this testimony process and have been engaged in it for some time recognize this as part of the process by which some of those decisions may be influenced. However, there are many people who do not know this.

As I am representing the Northeast Consortium of Schools in this testimony today, I can say confidently on behalf of our school communities, thank you. Thank you for acknowledging this major issue as it has been presented over the years, and thank you for addressing it in this budget, we support the increase in this line item, and we look forward to the details of how the allocations will be set forth to positively impact our school communities, as well others that have a similar need. This endorsement is based on the perspective of our NEC school communities, other communities that don't have this issue, might not find the numbers presented valid in the grand scheme of this budget.

Now in applying the allocation to this line item and determining how the resources will be distributed, the question respectfully becomes, is your perspective when crafting this budget looking at the needs of yesterday, when the request was made; today, where the need may or may not have increased; or tomorrow, where the need might be even greater depending upon the direction our school system takes to recover from the loss of academic time during this pandemic? You get the drift.

I'm pretty sure if you were to answer that question today, you might say all of the above. However, there is a certain degree of transparency, and accountability that our school communities are looking for in terms of how the school budget is presented, and how decisions are being made to support the true needs of our schools today and tomorrow. We need that to be addressed, so that we can effectively advocate, and ensure that your staff has all of the pertinent details needed to make super informed decisions as we prepare this next generation of leaders to run a new world. There is new math; new money; new agriculture; there are new dictionaries; new language; new science and new history being made every day. Who is writing that curriculum, and how is it being programmed and applied for today's learners to be prepared for their very near future? Budgeting for the evolution of education is no easy task, and it should not be taken for granted how the budget is presented, the questions that are asked of it, and the external support of the family and community partners, who want nothing more than to be there to help supplement where the school system cannot address what's needed to support

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our collective future that is ultimately driven by the growth and development of our young people and their evolution.

We are thankful to the MCPS staff, and leadership that were available to join the MCCPTA Operating Budget Workshop earlier this week. As a result of that collaboration, there was a lot of clarity brought forth on the intention of the spend of this proposed operating budget. With that, our community in the Northeast Consortium to include the elementary, middle and high schools in the Blake, Paint Branch, and Springbrook Clusters, ask the following:

- Detail on how the Staffing Allocations will support the recovery of learning loss through accelerated learning, extended day, weekend, or summer courses with no associated fee to families. Will this be addressed per school, or in a cluster, or area collective sort of environment similar to the George B Thomas Saturday School set up? Will the opportunity for more small group teacher student engagement exist for our middle and high school learners to engage and excel, as many elementary schools are developing small breakout groups for reading and phonics?
 - Detail on Tangible Materials for students where specialized High School Course work may require one level of material access, we would like to know how the funds will be applied to support our younger learners, and middle schoolers with their hands-on learning application and accountability.
 - Detail on how the budget will address the socialization of students in the Curriculum whether it includes Safe Outdoor Space for traditional learning, or Safe Outdoor Space to facilitate Specials like ART, PE, MUSIC, and even SEL that could be done at a distance, in an outdoor school environment potentially offering a fun and intermittent opportunity for students to see each other once or twice a week to get some outdoor instruction on the off days. The flexibility of options needs to be reflected tangibly.
 - We would like to see the office of Family Support work with the school PTA's to engage the most vulnerable families, and all families in a way that pulls the community together to create harbors for support beyond the school's control. This will help create a balance of accountability, and encourage neighbors and students to assist each other where the need truly exists. Possibly establishing peer group support opportunities, creating cohorts to grow in this environment together, instead of apart behind their black zoom screens. With that we are looking for fair allocation of school Psychologist, PPW's and Counselors, whose hours are reflective of the need within the school they service allowing them to pay more attention, and
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fully service their assigned schools. Much like Paraeducators, the Pupil Personnel Workers are an overutilized but under-resourced line item in the budget. They are spread thin between their schools and there needs to be more of them to address the dynamics of what each student and their families are experiencing, which will help them to effectively identify the best referral resources and options when the scope is beyond what they can do. This is a key resource in our NEC communities, and we need to make sure there is sufficient funding and allocation here.

- Should the students return to school, we would like to see in the budget enhanced protocol, education, or materials, that support the proper use and enforcement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) materials on the school bus, as well as in the school buildings, so that it becomes second nature to the students, especially our youngest learners. Who will be the dedicated enforcer of this behavior in the schools? For safety reasons, there should be some dedicated resource or protocol to help implement the safe use of these materials into the school culture and daily curriculum.
- We appreciate the time and care being put into the facilitation of how the air will be handled and filtered through the most updated HVAC systems in ALL of our schools. That is a measurable allocation, that we will look forward to seeing implemented across the board to ensure the environmental safety of all who enter the school buildings. We are asking for a timeline on the anticipated implementation of the air filtration systems, as well as the school's water treatment, and installation of hydration systems in ALL of our schools prior to a normalized return to the buildings.

Understanding this proposed budget is presented as a "Same Services" budget to move the work forward, we are cautiously optimistic that it will in fact be what is required to ensure a progressive approach in addressing the regression many students may be experiencing at this time, not only academically, but also socially, emotionally, and financially, to ensure they are properly positioned to be receptive to the academic rigor they are being presented to help them prepare for a future where they can become self-sufficient, self-confident, and self-motivated to be the best version of themselves today, and making a greater impact tomorrow that will be relevant for the future, no matter who's watching.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and your self-less commitment to our youth. Specific school requests have been presented in the text version of this testimony.

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