

**Statement by Janette Gilman
MCCPTA Churchill Cluster Coordinator
Regarding the FY 2009-14 Capital Improvement Plan**

**Board of Education Public Hearing
Carver Education Services Center
November 14, 2007**

President Navarro, Vice President Brandman, Superintendent Weast, distinguished members. My name is Janette Gilman; I serve as one of MCCPTA's Churchill Cluster coordinators. It is my privilege to address you this evening regarding the CIP needs of the eight remarkable school communities that make up the Churchill Cluster.

Our PTA leaders and school administrators together have determined a singular request for the FY 2009 Capital Budget and the FY 2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program—***to ask that slated modernizations and additions be fully funded and kept in train, on track, and on time.***

- Full funding and adherence to your systematic, systemic modernization schedule in the Churchill Cluster—and throughout the county—alone will ensure that the effort and tax dollars you put into curriculum, staff development, and the myriad other requirements of educating our 138,000 students translate into a quality education for all.

- Substandard buildings and temporaries that require constant, costly maintenance, where children avoid using antiquated restrooms or sit cramped in overcrowded classrooms do not support the continuous improvement of educational programs you seek. Capital improvements may at times seem expendable; you and we know that for quality education they most assuredly are not.

In the Churchill Cluster, MCPS planners have designed a timetable that ensures a sequencing of construction that provides adequate facilities and space as our neighborhoods shift school destinations, and fully take advantage of each new school facility.

- In a few months, our cluster will launch a boundary study, with the angst and anticipation such efforts bring. Fidelity to the proposed capital projects timetable would go far in reassuring the thousands of families for whom the decisions Dr. Weast reaches next Fall will mean very real change.
- Just weeks away, staff and students at **Bells Mill Elementary School** will begin packing up for their move to Grosvenor, looking to return to a beautiful new Bells Mill in the Fall of 2009. Meanwhile, the staff and students of **Wayside Elementary School** eagerly await the completion of their 8 classroom addition now underway. Following these starts, our two middle schools—**Cabin John** and **Herbert Hoover**—are slated for sequenced modernizations

that will enable them to meet the needs of their students, including those reassigned by the boundary changes. Those modernizations will coincide with construction at **Beverly Farms** and **Seven Locks** elementaries.

- At the same time, we applaud the Superintendent's attention to **Churchill High School's** programmatic needs through his recommendation for three additional science labs in this CIP. Approving and funding this FY09 appropriation will pay dividends in student and staff performance.
- Along with these planned projects, we urge the scheduling of a full modernization for our cluster's oldest facility, **Potomac Elementary School**. Built in 1949, and last modernized three decades ago, Potomac is an integrated arts school and home to the county's first and largest Chinese partial immersion program.

Even as we welcome the modernization and additions now in train for our cluster, we implore MCPS to adopt system-wide maintenance standards for portables. Notwithstanding initiatives to reduce their numbers, portables continue to be a fact of life throughout MCPS and in our Churchill Cluster. Indeed, even as construction began at **Wayside**, we saw the first introduction of portables at **Beverly Farms**—bringing the total number of temporaries in our cluster to 32.

- We urge MCPS to undertake efforts to ensure the quality and safety of existing units and any future leased or purchased portables. Most portables now leased are susceptible to water infiltration, have acoustical issues, questionable air quality, and lack running water or bathrooms, making a code red or blue event unbearable if longer than a couple hours.

Our PTA and PTSA leaders also are deeply concerned about the use of the CIP budgetary process to unveil MCPS policy changes. Stephen Knolls, a school that we learned through publication of the CIP is targeted for “collocation” with an elementary school to be determined, serves our children. Where were the public hearings on this initiative? Certainly, if the collocation of Stephen Knolls—and the Carl Sandburg Learning Center—are in the best interest of the community, they can be openly discussed and debated. Indeed, your policies demand such stakeholder involvement.

The children of MCPS—and the Churchill Cluster—thrive when they have the opportunity to learn in well-designed, safe, healthy facilities.

- Under the outstanding leadership of Dr. Joan Benz, **Winston Churchill High School**—our cluster’s lone modernized facility—was named a National Blue Ribbon School this September, the first and only Montgomery County public high school to date to achieve this honor.

Sustaining and building on such success depends on your commitment to providing our children—and all the children of MCPS—with facilities that support educational achievement. We urge your unwavering commitment to scheduled capital improvements, to mandating guidelines for the maintenance of healthy portable classrooms, and to honoring the voice of all stakeholders as you formulate the policies that shape our lives, and mold our children's future.

Thank you for your passion and commitment to the children of Montgomery County, and for the opportunity to stand before you on behalf of the parents of the Churchill community.

What have the Churchill cluster students, staff, and parents achieved this year?

- **Winston Churchill High School, under the leadership of Dr. Joan Benz**, was named a National Blue Ribbon School in September; Churchill is the first public high school in Montgomery County to garner this recognition since the program's inception;
- Across the four content areas that the High School Assessments test, **Churchill High** students passed Algebra at 97.6%, Biology at 96.6%, English at 96.6%, and Government at 97.7%;
- **Herbert Hoover Middle School** students achieved the highest proficiency rates in the state of Maryland across the board on the MSAs for grades 6, 7, and 8;
- Students at **Cabin John** and **Hoover** Middle schools had the top two highest successful completion rates in Algebra I in MCPS for the 2006-07 school year, and our middle school students are on track to exceed the county Algebra I targets for the current, 2007-08 school year;
- All five of our elementaries—**Bells Mill, Beverly Farms, Potomac, Seven Locks, and Wayside**—have significantly raised the number of 5th grade students taking advanced math. The elementary schools in our cluster exceed the county target of 37.2% students completing Math A in the 07-08

school year and are several years ahead of the targeted 45% for the 2009-10 school year;

- Parents are engaged in our schools. Last year, **our PTA and PTSAs combined for the highest cluster PTA membership, almost 5,700 members, accounting for almost 11 percent of total MCCPTA members; by comparison, our children comprise roughly 5 percent of county students.** We were home to the largest high school PTSA, the largest middle school PTSA and PTA, and the largest elementary school PTA. Our smallest school, **Seven Locks Elementary**, already has a phenomenal 92 percent parent and guardian membership in its PTA this year. This is parent involvement;
- All our PTAs and PTSAs are heavily involved in community service, with many PTAs running monthly drives or programs. Several of our schools, for example, participated in the Walk for the Homeless in support of our friends and neighbors at Rockville's Stepping Stones Shelter; nearly a thousand student and staff members walked this Fall, raising well over \$10,000 for Stepping Stones;
- Our PTA leadership works actively together as a cluster, sharing best practices, successes, and challenges on a constant basis; and
- Our Cluster staff offers a cluster-wide Summer Learning Camp for students in grades K - 5,

collaboratively planned, taught and facilitated by Churchill cluster staff. It is designed to prepare all students for success. Similarly, our staff partnered to present the **Churchill Cluster Parent Academy** in the Fall, an initiative that predated the new MCPS Parent Academies, and has provided our parents with information to help guide their child's education.