

# Churchill Cluster Update

January 2008

This year brings change, challenge, and much excitement for our cluster schools. We hope 2008 is a year of rich involvement by our parents in the education of their children, including membership in your school(s) PTA or PTSA. If you have not yet made your commitment to parent involvement through membership, do it today. Contact your PTA/PTSA president or membership chair to add your voice to our Churchill Cluster community. And as nominating committees for the 2008-09 PTA and MCCPTA boards start to form, please consider becoming part of the local and county parent leadership that makes such a difference in the educational experience of every child. Contact your PTA/PTSA presidents or us, your cluster coordinators, for more information on the many opportunities to get involved.

**Change.** Students from Bells Mill Elementary School rang in the new year in a “new” building—the Grosvenor holding school. With an amazing effort by the entire Bells Mill community—led by their principal Mrs. Ogelsby—and MCPS, an entire school moved almost seamlessly thanks to dedicated staff, community spirit, patience, tireless work, and continuous, open communication.

And with the start of the construction process at Bells Mill comes the launch of a boundary study that, at present, will impact and involve the Bells Mill, Potomac, and Seven Locks elementary school communities, as well as those of Hoover and Cabin John middle schools. This month, PTA and PTSA presidents and MCCPTA Churchill Cluster coordinators met with MCPS officials to start the process and work up a schedule for community input. Each PTA/PTSA from the impacted schools is forming a small group of parent representatives to attend the series of meetings; sessions are open to other parent observers as well.

**Challenge.** In mid-January, our cluster testified before the Board of Education on our view of the Superintendent’s proposed FY09 Operating Budget. With our local economy stalled and revenue projections down, our school system will be challenged to meet compensation commitments while continuing to implement new programs, such as Middle School reform. Support from each parent for local and state funding for public education—and for our priorities—will be critical. Consider attending county budget hearings. Make your voice heard.

On that note, we invite you—and your children—to join MCCPTA and our cluster for PTA Night in Annapolis the evening of Monday February 11<sup>th</sup> (conveniently, there is no school the next day due to primary elections). This will be our opportunity to show lawmakers in Annapolis how important school funding and education issues are to our community; please let your PTA/PTSA president or us know if you can make it so we can gather together. Secondary school students will receive SSL hours for attending.

**Excitement.** The performance of our schools, the coordination between our school and parent leadership, and the programs and cooperation of our PTA/PTSAs make this cluster a standout. We can all be proud of the community effort—under the leadership

of Churchill High School principal Dr. Benz—that made our high school not only the first MCPS high school since the adoption new selection criteria to be named a National Blue Ribbon School but also a nationally-ranked Gold Medal school—at 42 in the top 100—from the over 18,000 public high schools in the United States. Be part of the excitement. Contact us or your PTA/PTSA and resolve to get involved in 2008.

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