

CENTRAL AREA EDUCATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Baltimore County Public Schools
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To: Baltimore County Board Of Education**Date: October 20, 2005****From: Central Area Educational Advisory Council****RE: Pre-Budget Hearing Report**

The pre-budget hearing for the Central area was held on October 20, 2005 at Carver Center for Arts & Technology. We have prepared this report for your review and consideration. We have organized the report into the following three sections and attached an appendix that contains the written testimony of any speakers who provided such testimony:

- I. Introduction -States the purpose and highlights major issues of concern
- II. Information and Summarized Testimony -Statistical information about the hearings and excerpts from the testimony of individual speakers by school category or issue where appropriate.
- III. Summary and Recommendations

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose—The Central Area community voiced their concerns about what they believe the priorities should be for the next operating budget for their school system. The pre-budget hearing serves as the primary opportunity for citizens to express their opinions directly about the budget. We urge the Board to give careful consideration to the testimony and recommendations in this report. Giving serious consideration to citizen input maintains the Board's connection to the community it serves and contributes to a high quality educational system for our children.

B. Issues-- We have listed the issues presented in no particular order, provided a rationale along with the Council's recommended action for that issue. We believe these items require the Board's immediate attention and should considered items for funding in the next operating budget.

1. **Equity among schools** – This was a common thread that ran through the comments. Smaller schools feel penalized for their size because it limits their funding and staffing. No extra sources of special revenue are available for most of these schools. Baseline staffing requirements for all schools should be reviewed. These positions are based on student population and smaller schools are disadvantaged. Kindergarten classes are still felt to be too large and because our smaller schools do not qualify for extra dollars to hire Instructional Assistants (IAs) like other schools, these students are penalized. This same argument of the inability to merge dollars to boost hiring affect the ability of the smaller elementary schools to secure at least a halftime technology position. Some elementary schools have a science-math resource teacher to assist with student achievement. All elementary schools should have this resource.

- ③ **Recommendation: Review elementary school baseline staffing requirements**
- ③ **Recommendation: All elementary schools should have a Science-Math Resource teacher**
- ③ **Recommendation: Consider making the technology position a half-time to full-time position for all elementary schools**
- ③ **Recommendation: Review the use of IAs in Kindergarten**

2. **Libraries-** Most BCPS media centers are not meeting the recommended MD State standards for adequate library staffing. In elementary schools of less than 800 students there should be one certified media specialist and one clerical/technical personnel. Any school with a student population between 800-1200 should have 1.5 certified media specialist and 1.5 clerical/technical personnel. Over 1200 students it should be 2 certified media specialists and 2 clerical personnel. Second, our all our elementary libraries need to have any old Macintosh computers replaced with Dell computers. BCPS automated library system is not running efficiently on the outdated equipment and is at risk of losing this data due to a system failure. New equipment would allow the automated system to be upgraded to a web-based platform

- ③ **Recommendation: Review library staffing at each school and bring up to recommended Maryland standards.**
- ③ **Recommendation: Replace outdated Macintosh computers in all elementary schools media centers with Dell computers.**

3. **Program staffing and funding** – Continuation of magnet programs, science/math resource teachers, IT personnel, gifted & talented resource teachers in elementary schools, AVID, and other programs are dependent upon providing both the staffing and funding. These resources are needed to continue to offer a quality education in Baltimore County and to meet the needs of all the children. This issue continues to be a concern of our community. The dollars spent in these areas may well be offset by minimizing the need for remediation.

- ③ **Recommendation: Review staffing and funding for magnet school programs**
- ③ **Recommendation: Review resource personnel available to elementary schools to see that needs are adequately being met.**
- ③ **Continue to fund programs such as AVID**

4. **Compensation/Benefits for Teachers** - In order to attract and retain quality staff, not only do we need to be competitive with our salaries, but we also need to have a competitive benefits package. This includes the teachers' retirement plan. Currently, Maryland's retirement plan for teachers ranks 49th. We need to help see that their retirement plan is improved. We are in fierce competition for hiring and keeping the brightest and best for our children not only within Maryland but outside of MD as well. It is essential that both salaries and benefits keep pace if Baltimore County Public Schools are to remain a quality system.

- ③ **Recommendation: Help to work towards improving the retirement plan for BCPS teachers**

5. **Career and Technology Education** – The number of students participating in the Career and Technology programs has grown. Funding has remained static. Funds need to be preserved at current level at the very minimum to maintain program.

- ③ **Recommendation: Fully fund the requested 2006-2007 Career and Technology Education budget in order to maintain the quality of the CTE programs.**

6. **Technology Needs** – Many comments from our speakers were about various technology needs. These included updating to new Dells, Sound Enhancement System, and upgrading the IT position in elementary schools. The Sound Enhancement System amplifies a teacher's voice and evenly distributes it around the room. Studies have shown that even children with normal hearing can miss up to one third of what a teacher is saying in a regular classroom. Studies have shown that these systems increase test scores of all students by 10-15% and results in a

decline in Special Education costs.

- ③ **Recommendation: Review the technology needs of all schools to create a prioritized list of needs and begin funding**
- ③ **Recommendation: Review the benefits and costs of the Sound Enhancement System for viability of use in BCPS**

7. **Funding** – The parents and community request that *ALL* of the dollars needed be requested in the budget. Our children needs are not driven by politics and funding, to the contrary, their needs are what should drive politics and funding.

- ③ **Recommendation: Request the funds needed to maintain BCPS as a quality school system and serve our students well by maintaining high quality staff, facilities and supplies.**

We commend the Board for their continuing support of the Advisory Councils and for their commitment to an open, inclusive budgetary process. As always, we thank you for your time and effort on behalf of all the students in the Baltimore County Public Schools.

cc: Dr. Joe Hairston, Superintendent
Dr. Christine Johns, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Robert Haines, Deputy Superintendent of Business Services
Rita Fromm, Chief of Staff
Dr. Kim Whitehead, Central Area Executive Director
Barbara Burnopp, Executive Director of Fiscal Services
Executive Director of Physical Facilities
Vicki Schultz-Unger, Coordinator of Area Educational Advisory Councils
Jim Smith, Baltimore County Executive
T. Bryan McIntire, Third District County Councilman
Vincent J. Gardina, Fifth District County Councilman
Joe Bartenfelder, Sixth District County Councilman
Kevin Kamenetz, Second District County Councilman
Kenneth Oliver, Fourth District County Councilman
Samuel Moxley, First District County Councilman
John Olszewski, Sr., Seventh District County Councilman

II. INFORMATION AND SUMMARIZED TESTIMONY

A. Statistical Information

Central Area Educational Advisory Members Attending:	5
Total Number Attending:	57
Number of Speakers:	17
Number Submitting Written Testimony Only:	2
Number of Schools Represented:	11
Number of Special Groups Represented:	4

B. Middle Schools

1. Loch Raven Academy

- ☞ Magnet schools need to be fully funded; Loch Raven has lost both the health and dance magnet programs
- ☞ Review all programs at Magnet schools to make sure they have tools and staffing needed to excel

C. Elementary Schools

1. Carroll Manor Elementary School

- ☞ Adequate staffing for media/libraries; Do not meet MD state standards for adequate library staffing
- ☞ Need to update all library computer equipment to Dell computers

2. Jacksonville Elementary School

- ☞ Increase funding to Instructional Technology positions so that every elementary school can increase number of days of help
- ☞ Currently much of the IT position's time is spent on maintenance not curriculum
- ☞ Adequate staffing for media/libraries; Do not meet MD state standards for adequate library staffing
- ☞ Need to update all library computer equipment to Dell computers

3. Pleasant Plains Elementary

- ☞ Equity issue – some schools have dollars to fund extra positions
- ☞ Kindergarten needs teacher aides
- ☞ Class sizes too large

4. Pretty Boy Elementary School

- ☞ Adequate staffing for media/libraries; Do not meet MD state standards for adequate library staffing
- ☞ Need to update all library computer equipment to Dell computers

5. Seventh District Elementary School

- ☞ Adequate staffing for media/libraries; Do not meet MD state standards for adequate library staffing
- ☞ Need to update all library computer equipment to Dell computers Increase teacher salaries to hire and retain highly qualified teachers

6. Stoneleigh Elementary School

- ☞ Sound Enhancement System should be placed in all ES classrooms
- ☞ Would assist all students with learning and raise test scores

7. Timonium Elementary School

- ☞ Increase funding to new Instructional Technology positions so that every elementary school has at least a ½ time position
- ☞ Equity issue- smaller schools can't combine funds as well to optimize use
- ☞ All schools need STEM teacher

D. Area Education Advisory Councils

- ☞ Adequate funding for curriculum – especially for core subjects
- ☞ Need another alternative school
- ☞ Continue to support Career & Technology programs
- ☞ Continue implementation of AVID program in all high schools
- ☞ Support librarians request
- ☞ Support Sound Enhancement System request

E. Baltimore Education Coalition

- ☞ Increase teacher salaries to hire and retain highly qualified teachers and staff
- ☞ Improve pension benefits needed
- ☞ Adequate funding for curriculum – especially for core subjects
- ☞ Need another alternative school
- ☞ Continue to support Career & Technology programs
- ☞ Continue implementation of AVID program in all high schools
- ☞ Support librarians request
- ☞ Support Sound Enhancement System request
- ☞ Support Bridge Center
- ☞ Continue support of Catalyst program

III. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the submission of this report and attached testimony, the Central Area Educational Advisory Council strives to fulfill its mission. We have provided community input to the Board of Education as requested with the expectation that the community's concerns will be heard. In our advisory capacity, we urge the Board of Education to do the following as it formulates the operating budget for next year:

- **Review elementary school baseline staffing requirements**
- **All elementary schools should have a Science-Math Resource teacher**
- **Consider making the technology position a half-time to full-time position for all elementary schools**
- **Review the use of IAs in Kindergarten**
- **Review library staffing at each school and bring up to recommended Maryland standards.**
- **Replace outdated Macintosh computers in all elementary schools media centers with Dell computers.**
- **Review staffing and funding for magnet school programs**
- **Review resource personnel available to elementary schools to see that needs are adequately being met.**
- **Continue to fund programs such as AVID**
- **Help to work towards improving the retirement plan for BCPS teachers**
- **Review the benefits and costs of the Sound Enhancement System for viability of use**

in BCPS

- **Fully fund the requested 2006-2007 Career and Technology Education budget in order to maintain the quality of the CTE programs.**
- **Review the technology needs of all schools to create a prioritized list of needs and begin funding**
- **Request the funds needed to maintain BCPS as a quality school system and serve out students well by maintaining high quality staff, facilities and supplies.**