

**Testimony of Susan Loftus  
Before the Montgomery County Board of Education  
Public Hearing on the Strategic Plan October 12, 2006**

My name is Susan Loftus. I am a Silver Spring resident, a MCPS elementary physical education teacher, and a wellness advocate.

My comments focus on the MCPS response to the childhood obesity epidemic. Are we doing enough? I think it is a case of 1 step forward and 2 or 3 steps back.

Moving forward. The BOE recently approved a rigorous physical education curriculum framework. Thank you.

Now the steps back:

The new P.E. framework includes scientific concepts of biomechanics, exercise physiology, nutrition, motor learning, and psychological principles of exercise. All this to teach when elementary students are scheduled for only 32-40 P.E. classes per year! Now that the BOE has raised the bar, more instructional minutes are needed.

MCPS Physical Education teachers have not had mandatory Tier 1 staff development training in over 10 years. Providing this will be crucial for successful implementation of the new curriculum.

A giant step backwards occurred 2 years ago. The BOE's budget actually expanded the gap regarding all students having equal access to the P.E. curriculum. During the past 2 years, physical education instructional minutes have been decreased at many schools. This happened as an unintended "ripple" effect of the lower class size initiative that provided 135 more elementary classroom teachers in the county. No matching PE teacher allocation was made to teach these new classes. Some school based decision makers are trying to cope by sending double and even triple classes (40-60 students) to one physical education teacher. Does anyone really think this is good for quality instruction and insuring every student has multiple opportunities for learning? Don't take my word for it. As MCPS is a Baldrige Award winner and knows about data based decision making, please go to the schools and check the numbers. These situations must be corrected.

Last year's budget provided 1 more elementary physical education teacher for the entire county. Thank you. It will however, take an allocation of 5-6 more elementary P.E. teachers just to bring us back to the FY '05 allocation formula and corresponding instructional minutes for students. If MCPS can't move forward by adding more P.E. instructional minutes at this time, won't you at least make sure students are not moving backwards? You've raised the bar. Please provide funding to close the gap!

Your leadership is needed regarding student wellness. Please make MCPS a place where "No Child is Left on her/his Behind!"

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