

Michael Hagan

MCJC President

Michael-Hagan@mcpsmd.org

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Honorable members of the school board, citizens, and community leaders. On behalf of Montgomery County Middle School students, I would like to present to you these ideas that came directly from middle school students. I'm Michael Hagan, an 8th grade student and president of Montgomery County Junior Councils (MCJC), the county-level middle school student government. My passion and the passion of many others in MCJC is quality education. To gain the quality education that my friends and I desire, we believe that students should have a say in all aspects of the school system. Tonight I speak not just for myself, but also collectively as the students of Montgomery County. Please consider the following.

Though I for one am not quite sure of how much these energy saving devices cost, I do think that with rising energy prices and an increasing amount of environmental concern in America, it would be more than worth it for MCPS to at least look into technologies such as motion sensitive lighting to make up for human error in the turning off of classroom lights. Though this technology might be costly up front, it has the potential to save MCPS a large sum of money after a few years.

MCPS is already spending an enormous sum of money on energy this fiscal year, and with escalating power costs, we will probably be spending much more next year. If we take steps like this now, then we will just be lowering the enormous utilities expenses for the years to come. With money saved on energy, we can enhance the educations of the projected 145,622 MCPS students in the 2007-2008 school year and in years to come.

I am not suggesting that MCPS should immediately supply all schools with this equipment, but I am saying that these technologies will help us greatly in the long run, and the money we save on energy with this technology could be used to address many of the issues in MCPS such as class sizes, the amount of courses that we offer to students, and the updating of equipment vital to instruction in our classrooms. Becoming more energy efficient not only helps the environment, it helps county taxpayers. MCPS should begin this upcoming year to equip older, less energy efficient schools with motion sensitive lighting. It would keep the Earth green, and give MCPS some extra green.

Another issue that affects many 6th graders and groups such as MCJC that use the Smith Center is the lack of air conditioning in the buildings. I have been informed that MCPC is looking into replacing the heating system with heat pumps that would provide heat and air conditioning to the center. I urge the MCPS to take this step into to making the Smith Center a welcoming and comfortable place. I have stayed in the Center during the summer months and it is miserable. It is outrageously hot, and mildew is everywhere. No place, especially a building run by one of the finest school systems in the nation should be miserably hot and uncomfortable. I have also been informed that the heat pumps that are being looked into will save energy, and will basically pay for themselves within several years of use, thus saving money for MCPS that can be used for my next point.

Because of our 139,387 students, it is difficult for MCPS to hire enough staff to keep class sizes in check. No matter how much money it would take for MCPS to keep our classes small, steps

must be taken to decrease the amount of students in academic classes. All the textbooks and equipment that MCPS invests in will do nothing compared to what small class sizes would do for education. My school is supposedly ahead of the curve in education quality, but I still have a few classes that are enormous. It is so hard to learn when more than thirty students are asking questions, talking to friends, flipping through binders, and demanding the teacher's individual attention. Class size is probably one of the biggest factors that jeopardize the quality of a student's education. Lowering class size is the biggest thing MCPS can do to make it better for students to learn.

At the end of last year at my school, there was a mass exodus of teachers. A lot of these teachers taught non-academic courses. My school has not yet replaced these teachers, and now we are without a music education program other than band and orchestra, we have no Family and Consumers Sciences Course, and a few other electives in which many kids were interested. I think that this is a disaster, and I am sure my school isn't the only school with this problem. MCPS needs to make sure that schools offer a wide variety of electives covering many different fields. These are the courses that students pick so they can gain skills and career plans for the future. Denying students these courses will have a very negative affect on them because they will not gain the skill other than math, English, science, and government that will help them in the future. Middle school is one of the last opportunities that students have to explore the electives. Some students are only successful in their elective classes—don't forget that students read, write, and do math in elective classes! Maybe not on the scale of a specific math or English class, but the electives are not just "fluff" courses!

Thank you for allowing me to share with you these ideas that middle school students from around the county expressed to me. Please consider them while deciding on the 2008 budget. Have a good evening.