

Board of Education Testimony
October 16, 2009

Good evening. My name is Kelly Giblin and I am the cluster coordinator here to try and represent the thoughts of the schools in the Einstein cluster.

Everyone in the Einstein cluster realizes the tough economic times we are in and the tough decisions that lie ahead for the BOE and MCPS. We completely understand that now is not the time to be looking for new and costly initiatives. Now is the time to look hard at the programs in place, evaluate their performance and make informed decisions about which are successful.

Now is the time to maintain the commitment to strong primary education. Our community is concerned about the accelerated math path and the push for students to quickly excel to higher levels of math. Now is the time to make sure all students move on to middle school with a solid foundation and a love for math to insure long-range success.

Now is the time to maintain the commitment to strengthen all middle schools. All students need the engagement and preparation for high school.

An alarming number of students are entering high school already at risk. About one-third of incoming freshmen at Einstein are at risk according to MCPS. Now is the time to look and see what is being done from the ground up to assure that this coupled with our stubborn academic ineligibility, involving over 30% or roughly 450 Einstein students, begins to make sustained decreases. MCPS invested heavily in schools throughout the County with algebra lead and literacy teachers. Now is not the time to remove them.

Now is the time to look at what is being done to support students accepting the challenge of honors, AP or IB courses and learn how many students will perform successfully in more than one.

Now is the time to look at the High School Plus program and evaluate the success of efforts at each school to help students regain credit or pass an HSA.

Now is the time to ask for a full evaluation of the Downcounty Consortium and its success toward meeting one of its goals -- to create engaging academic programs that would increase academic achievement for all students?

Now it is more important than ever to maintain effective support for the community outreach our schools are doing to engage all families. Parent engagement is NOT an extra. It goes hand in hand with academic achievement. Although we have no visible crisis, mental health issues like teen pregnancies, gang membership, and school violence remain present throughout the county. I know you recognize how important these issues are, as well as the issue of race relations. Strengthening the community's support, understanding and commitment to education is fundamental to achieving success for all students.

Now is the time to make sure that academic achievement for all students remains a top priority.