

Board of Education Community Forum
Watkins Mill High School

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Testimony presented by:

Jane Hall

South Lake Elementary School

PTA President

9861 Dockside Terrace

Montgomery Village, MD 20886

Good evening President Navarro, Dr. Weast, members of the Board of Education and our community. My name is Jane Hall and I am the PTA President of South Lake Elementary School, resident of Montgomery Village and a parent.

South Lake Parents were extremely discouraged and disappointed when the proposed Middle School on Centerway Road in the Village was not approved. We are now looking at the proposal to expand MVMS (Montgomery Village Middle School) and we see the positives and negatives of such expansion. What we want to see is our children kept in the Village and nearer to their homes. We know the importance of parent involvement and know that the further away the school is the less likely the parents of our children will be involved. One of the problems facing many of our parents is transportation. Getting to a school nearby is difficult enough without having to travel past one middle school to get to another. What a waste to have a beautifully renovated school that could house all Village students and take the burden off Neelsville to allow them to handle the excess capacity from Clarksburg.

We feel that the addition to MVMS would bring our children back to the neighborhood school and with that addition a boundary change would be needed to allow the children who travel from Germantown now to attend South Lake to bring them back to their home schools. When South Lake was opened in 1972, children were brought from many different pockets of the community to this school. It is time to re-evaluate this.

Neelsville MS, the former Dr. Martin Luther Middle School, is a building that is 28 years old and has been housing our South Lake Students for the last 13 years. The building poses many challenges for our students; such as lockers that are too small, that cannot hold a backpack on wheels and are always in need of repairs. The gym floor is made of rubber and has 2 holes in it that could eventually injure our students if not replaced. Neelsville is the only middle school that has a locker bank on the lower level of the building with 900 - 7 feet lockers making the area hard to supervise between classes. Ms. McClain and her staff work hard to make sure the area is safe for our students but cameras would help. The school has requested exterior lighting because of the vandalism that has taken place on the weekends and holidays i.e., over the July 4 weekend a fire was set on the loading dock and although the school was not seriously damaged, the kitchen doors had to be replaced. Although the families of South Lake ES would like to get our

students closer to home, which would mean eventually attending MVMS, we would like to have Neelsville safe and conducive to learning. These requests would help in that regard.

Additionally, we at South Lake support bringing the Middle Years program to our students. This would support the IB program at WMHS. The idea is to provide the best education for our diverse student body. We are obligated, as a community, to provide our students with the tools needed to make a good life for themselves and be an asset to our community. Many of our children come from families where English is the second language. By providing our students with a middle years program they are better prepared to take advantage of the WMHS IB program, which we know is very successful. We need to give our students the best of the best. Why aren't we provided with the same services and educational opportunities that other clusters in the county have? Please help our students to have access to schools that are in their neighborhood, safe and educationally challenging.

In closing, I would like to thank you for all your dedication to our students and for your continued work on making our schools the best they can be for EVERY child.

Thank you and have a good evening.