



**Rachel Carson Parent Teacher Association**  
**Rachel Carson Elementary School**  
100 Tschiffely Square Road  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878

September 17, 2009

Good evening.

My name is Mark Ezrin and I am the PTA President at Rachel Carson Elementary.

It is my privilege to be here on behalf of our fantastic administration, teachers, staff, parents, and of course, our students. Our community, comprised of 700 families, includes 1400 parents, 105 staff and 898 students, and represents many nationalities, languages and cultures.

We thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight on their behalf.

I could spend more than three minutes sharing superlatives about Rachel Carson. But that isn't why we're here tonight. You have asked for feedback on priorities to improve achievement for all students. I am going to presume achievement isn't limited to academics. To me, it is about the Elementary School Experience, maintaining our academic standards for all students and providing a positive environment for all. Rachel Carson is a high performing school. Our issues are mostly outside the classroom.

What is the Elementary School Experience? A safe, fun and happy environment. A place that kids look forward to and want to be. Beyond traditional academics, reading, writing and arithmetic, it is art, gym, music. A stress free and enjoyable lunch and a safe and energetic recess. It is a place that parents can volunteer and provide help. It is a place where teachers choose to work. And our students grow, academically and through personal achievement and enrichment.

Rachel Carson is a middle school population in an elementary school facility. What are our struggles? Size and diversity. And we're not proposing changing either. What we desire is equity across all schools. We are celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> year yet we're pushing out our walls with seven portables and a usable blacktop that is half the size of most schools with double many schools' populations. We have a field we can't easily access because it is up a hill. We have other over utilized resources like a single copier.

With close to 900 students, we traditionally struggle to meet the needs of the large student body. Many of these issues are common among our sister schools, Matsunaga, Oakland Terrace and Little Bennett Elementary Schools. All four of us have many of the same resources that are provided to schools 1/3 to 1/2 our sizes.

We need MCPS to examine how assets are deployed and to look at a new model. The current model calls simply for High School, Middle School and



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Elementary School labels. While smaller schools might be our worthy goal, it is time to recognize that we do have large schools and they are here to stay. The good news is they can and will function well at their current sizes. If, they are given the proper resources. MCPS should entertain a new model that examines student population count and create tiers at the elementary school level. Again, we're a middle school population in an elementary school facility. Resources should be deployed based upon student population. As schools expand, the auxiliary (ancillary?) facility resources should be augmented as well.

This summer, we were fortunate enough to get some extra blacktop and a .5 counselor. Prior to the additional counselor, our wonderful counselor, Mrs. Seubert, struggled to work with 850 students. That is nearly double many other schools within MCPS and is greater than an MCPS average of 483:1. All four of our large schools have one copier. Yet, elementary schools tend to be more paper intensive. We utilize Copy Plus but that is not the answer. We need an extra copier. We need another .5 counselor so we have 2 full time counselors. Other large schools have the same issues. If we can't reach the students, then how can we help those in need achieve personally and academically?

Translators and cultural help. We need more funding for additional language resources. We are grateful for our diversity and what it adds to our school but it creates some challenges within our predominantly English speaking school. We are trying to lean heavily on outside resources but that isn't enough. Nor is it the answer. As a side note, we're very proud of the cultural outreach programs we're initiating and we hope to share our success with you in the future.

I'm lucky and honored to run a PTA that has good financial resources and an incredibly strong volunteer base. What about the schools that don't have the means to do so?

In closing, I would encourage you to visit our school and see it in action. In particular, I would ask you to mark your calendars for one of our annual highlights. Thursday, April 16 is our International Night and will give you the opportunity to see how we showcase our school. Of course, we have many other activities during the academic day that might be of interest as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration.