



Rachel Carson Elementary School
100 Tschiffely Square Rd.
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Mrs. Brandman and Members of the Board,

I have been a representative for Rachel Carson, Ridgeview, Lakelands Park and/or the cluster coordinator in the Quince Orchard cluster for 11 years now. I am entering my 12th year. I have testified before the board on many occasions.

The board, since Nancy King was there, **listened** to the community when we said we were growing and needed a new middle school. The board also **listened** when the community came together and stated our elementary schools were overcrowded and requested and received funding for 2 different boundary studies. I have also been around to see many difficult decisions, you, as elected board members, have needed to make, and I have been privileged to participate on numerous committees in my many years.

I also feel privileged to be here this evening. I am one of many parents who continue to take time away from their busy schedules and their families to try and work with our Community Superintendent and her Principals, the cluster, the Board of Education, the County Council, and the City of Gaithersburg on how to achieve greatness in a school that is well overcapacity. We all realize budgets are tight. The problem is simple, the answers ...well, if we go through the proper channels, are unacceptable to us. **The mantra seems to be deal with it!!!**

Everyone is aware of the tough economic times. However, certain things are very striking in the workings of our schools.

- The classroom size has a maximum, depending on the grade.
- The number of administrators is set by the level of school
 - Elementary School, Middle School, High School
- The number of school counselors is set by the level of school
 - Elementary School, Middle School, High School
- Even the number of copiers is set by the level of school
 - Elementary School, Middle School, High School
- We have schools receiving FARM funding based on a percentage, rather than percentage and number.

We have Rachel Carson Elementary serving a student population size seen mostly by middle school and some small high schools. Last year we had 16% FARMs of approximately 850 students. These 136 children are larger in number than other elementary schools that receive FARM funding.

Rachel Carson is one of 4 elementary schools needing to be evaluated by a special committee, and services need to be provided. It is terrific to limit the number of children in a class. However, if teachers can't make copies because the equipment is tied up and the evening service is maxed out, the children suffer. And if we have a significant number of children who should be receiving additional resources but don't because they are a smaller minority in a very large school, the process is BROKEN.

One area in which Rachel Carson seems to be unique is in receiving accurate projections. As we have seen in the past, Bruce Crispell has under-projected us by approximately 40 children. I have a great deal of respect for Bruce and his task. I also understand how close he is on the county level, which is great for the county as a whole and for projecting county-wide budgets. However, that does not help our particular situation.

Here's where Rachel Carson is now. We were projected to be at 870 children. A requested "learning cottage" was denied based on those projections. However, we opened this school year with approximately 900 students and needed that "learning cottage." Again, it is very evident the projection process is broken. Currently, we are sitting at 910 students.

Where the recommended ratio for counselors is 1 to approximately 400, last year, Rachel Cason was 1:800. This year, we were thankful to receive an additional .5 counselor. This brings the ratio to 1 to over 600; still well over the recommended 1:400. Our children need these services. It is not fair or acceptable to see our FARM ratio or any other percentage of need and restrict our ability to meet the needs of our students.

We need you, our elected to officials, to insist, as we are, to look at numbers for these large schools and make sure ALL children are accounted for and receive the necessary services. These services start with the school's front office, go to the classroom, head back to the copy room, then go to the lunch room, PE, Art, recess and don't end until EVERY CHILD receives what they deserve by attending an MCPS school.

In closing, we are not asking for a boundary study. The funds are not there and there is no consensus in the community. We want a much more cost effective solution. **Resources!!!**

Thank you for your time.

Roy Fleischer,
Rachel Carson Elementary School Representative for the Quince Orchard Cluster