

Superintendent's FY 2007 Operating Budget Presentation
December 14, 2005

Thank you, Dr. Haughey. And thank you, Dr. Munk, for hosting us here at Rockville High School. It's good to be at this beautiful school again to talk about our plans to make our great school system even better.

One of the reasons we have such a great system is because we have the finest Board of Education and executive leadership team in America. Their strong collaboration with the leaders of the employee unions and parent organizations underscores the depth of our commitment to high quality teaching and learning. I want to personally thank them for all they do every day for our children.

We also are fortunate to have strong support from our County Executive Doug Duncan and the County Council, especially Councilmember Michael Subin. Mr. Subin is chair of the education committee and because of his steady leadership over the past sixteen years, we've been able to put our plans into action. I also want to thank Councilmember Steve Silverman, who is with us tonight, for his strong advocacy for reducing class size and improving student achievement.

In this auditorium tonight are the finest principals in the nation. And I just want to take a moment to say thank you for the work you do every single day. The best part of being superintendent is visiting your schools and meeting with our students, teachers, and staff. They are the very reason why the Montgomery County Public School system is the envy of the state, and indeed the nation.

I enjoyed meeting the student volunteers coming in tonight and listening to their plans for college and life. That's why we're here...to help these fine young people and all 140,000 MCPS students prepare for their future.

I'm inspired by what's happening in our schools. Across Montgomery County, we're seeing the fruits of our work together over the last six years, whether you're in Germantown, Silver Spring, Bethesda, or Poolesville. Our strategic plan is working and our kids are succeeding. I was at Piney Branch Elementary School in Takoma Park a few weeks ago where there are more than 70 fifth graders taking sixth grade math. Principal Bertram Generlette believes in challenging his students with higher-level math so that they are ready to take on the world. The students are thriving and their energy and enthusiasm for learning should give us all confidence – confidence that we are on the right track and that our reforms are working. We are making this a school system where every child can achieve and achieve at high levels.

Together, we've invested well to help these students and all students achieve. Next year, it's critical that we continue to build on our momentum so that all of our students can soar to new heights.

The Board of Education has steered us along an ambitious course to raise student achievement for every child at every level. We know that equity in education doesn't mean equality in

spending. So we've invested more in the areas most impacted by poverty. We targeted funding and made a strategic decision to invest first in early childhood education. We know it's critical for children to have a strong start if they are to succeed in school. But it doesn't stop there. We're moving ahead with continued improvements in elementary, middle, and high schools and special centers.

We know that our students continue to excel because of one very simple reason – the 21,000 teachers, administrators, and support staff who are dedicated to helping our children succeed.

Yes, we have grown more diverse. Yes, we have more students of color. Yes, we have more students who don't speak English. Yes, we have more students living in poverty. And yes, we have more students with special needs. In other districts across America, these factors might lead to a decline in student performance. But not here. Not in Montgomery County. We have embraced our diversity, and demonstrated that indeed ALL children can succeed at high levels if given the opportunity. Let's consider just some of the things we've accomplished as a community:

- For the first time ever, we have 81 percent of our kindergarten students meeting our reading benchmark. That's up 10 percentage points from last year and up from 39 percent just four years ago! We saw significant gains among every group, especially among African American and Hispanic students and students with limited English skills.
- 39 percent of the students in the 2004 class scored a 3 or higher on at least one Advanced Placement exam. That's three times the national average and double the Maryland average. And we increased the number of African American and Hispanic students taking AP exams.
- We have more National Advanced Placement Scholars than ever before – 160 this year compared to just 20 two years ago. That means these students scored a 4 or 5 on EIGHT or more AP exams.
- For the second year in a row, our seniors have topped 1100 on the SAT – something no other school system in Maryland has done. Once again, our students outperformed the state and national averages by more than 70 points. And we set another record in participation with 463 more students taking the test. The biggest increase in participation came from African American and Hispanic students.
- Newsweek magazine ranked *ALL* 23 of our eligible high schools in the top 3 percent of the nation's high schools. Five of our high schools are in the top 100 in the nation – Richard Montgomery, Thomas Wootton, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Winston Churchill and Walter Johnson. Their principals Mo Carrasco, Michael Doran, Sean Bulson, Joan Benz and Chris Garran are here tonight. Let's thank them and their entire staffs for the outstanding work they do for our students year after year.
- We had 15 semifinalists in the national Intel Science Talent search – and 4 of these outstanding students from Montgomery Blair High School went on to become finalists.

In fact, Blair had more semifinalists than any other school in America. Congratulations to the great staff at Blair High School and their principal, Phil Gainous.

- Next year, Oxford, England will have three new Rhodes Scholars from Montgomery County Public Schools.
- And this year, two more Montgomery County Public Schools were named Blue Ribbon winners, bringing our total number of winners to 31! Congratulations to Matt Devan and the staff of Viers Mill Elementary School and Michael Zarchin and the staff of Thomas Pyle Middle School on this extraordinary accomplishment!
- Our 4th graders last year set the highest score ever on the Maryland School Assessments. This is the first group of children to benefit from the reforms we began in 2000.

Let's give all of these folks a big hand!

For 2007, we've developed a budget that will keep us moving forward. It builds on six years of progress under our strategic plan – Our Call to Action. With your support, we will implement the next phase of our plan to improve student achievement with new investments that focus on improving special education, expanding International Baccalaureate and gifted programs, strengthening outreach to our multilingual parent communities, improving middle and high schools, and continuing the expansion of full-day kindergarten.

Our multi-year plan builds the capacity of our workforce and provides the resources they need to improve student achievement in every school across the county. We stood together six years ago, and said, our kids can do it. We worked together to build a plan to make that happen. Together, we've had the courage – backed by a competent and capable workforce – to address one of the most vexing problems in American education – the achievement gap. While there is much more work to do, we are making good progress. Our students have met and even surpassed our expectations.

Consider the story of Oakland Terrace Elementary School. I visited this wonderful school to celebrate the success of their second graders on the CTBS exam. The school went from 64 percent of its students scoring above the national average to 75 percent. Most impressive is that Oakland Terrace has nearly eliminated the achievement gap. Eighty percent of BOTH African American and White students are achieving above the national average. And 68 percent of Hispanic students are above the national average compared to only 46 percent four years ago. It's clear that when you *expect the best* – from your staff and your students – you can expect excellence in achievement for all. Congratulations to Principal Cheryl Pulliam and her great staff at Oakland Terrace Elementary School!

The success of our elementary students is a direct result of our Early Success Plan. We put in full-day kindergarten, revised the curriculum, reduced class size in the most highly impacted schools and improved teacher development. We've added more time for reading and math and put in new diagnostic assessments so that we could better understand what students know and are able to do.

With each passing year, our students are performing better and better. And we couldn't be prouder of their efforts.

The first group of children to benefit from the reforms is now in 5th grade and these students have set performance records at every grade level.

As 4th graders, they set the district record in reading and math. Again, we saw impressive gains among African American and Hispanic students.

As 2nd graders, they scored higher than any previous class on the CTBS.

As Kindergarten and 1st graders, they blazed the trail, reading at a younger age and with greater comprehension than any class before them.

This year, once again, these students are leading the way. In 2001, only 196 fifth graders were enrolled in above-grade-level math and these classes were at our highly gifted centers. Today, we have more than 3,800 children, or 37 percent of all fifth graders enrolled in accelerated math. These classes are available throughout the county to ALL students who are ready. I'm proud to report that almost half of the fifth graders enrolled in accelerated math are not labeled as gifted and talented. Our teachers are focused on quality instruction, not the label. Let's give our elementary students, the administrators, the teachers and the support teams all a big hand!

About this time last year, we got a call from the state with the fantastic news that Viers Mill Elementary School was a Maryland Blue Ribbon School. I'm very pleased to announce tonight that Viers Mill Elementary went on to win a national Blue Ribbon as well!

Viers Mill is only the second Title 1 school in Montgomery County ever to win a national Blue Ribbon. How did this school with such a high poverty level do it? Their staff *expects the best* – from themselves and from their students.

At Viers Mill, 77 percent of the students are Hispanic and African American; 30 percent of the children don't speak English as their first language; and 20 percent frequently move and don't complete the year at the same school. Some might view these as insurmountable obstacles. But not in Montgomery County. And that's because our leaders and our staff have the courage to look beyond the challenges and focus on what's important – the children.

What Jamie Virga – the principal at the time – and his successor, Matt Devan, and the Viers Mill staff have done is absolutely remarkable. They eliminated the achievement gap between white and African American third graders. Both groups of students are scoring 100 percent proficient on the MSA test. And their 3rd grade students with limited English skills went from 10 percent proficient to 90 percent proficient over the last three years! That, my friends, is the power of high expectations. That is the power of skilled administrators, quality teachers, outstanding support staff, and dedicated parents.

Stories like Viers Mill and Oakland Terrace are inspiring and give us the proof that when we follow the courage of our convictions; when we *expect the best* from our staff and students; and when we develop and follow a carefully built plan – we can do incredible things together. The sense of urgency we have for our mission is just as great today as it was when we began our journey together six years ago. We must not – we cannot – slow down our efforts to raise the bar and close the achievement gap. We must work even harder to ensure that every child has access to a high quality education *built on high standards*. We must prepare our students so that every child can succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy.

When they leave MCPS, our students must be prepared to compete with students not just around the corner, but around the world. Right now, it's difficult to make the case that the United States is keeping up with the world. International studies show the United States ranks 18 out of 24 nations in terms of effectiveness of our educational system. We lag behind countries such as South Korea, Japan, Singapore, and Finland.

I know that our students in Montgomery County have what it takes to match students anywhere in the world. To do it, though, we must continue to raise our expectations and constantly strive to improve. And we must have the courage to confront and eliminate barriers to student achievement.

One barrier we're eliminating is access to higher-level courses at the secondary level. We've increased participation in Advanced Placement and Honors courses in high school. More than two thirds of our high school students are now enrolled in at least one AP or honors course.

Take Seneca Valley High School. AP enrollment has increased there 13 percent and African American participation has almost doubled. SAT scores are up 52 points. Such progress is possible because of the school's laser-like focus on results. Seneca Valley's principal Suzanne Maxey has a book in her office entitled, "Whatever It Takes." If you're acquainted with Suzanne, her energy and passion, you know how fitting that title is. It's the motto for her entire staff because they know that student success takes perseverance and a huge team effort.

Suzanne's support staff are essential members of her team. Her building services manager Bill Clevenger does an outstanding job managing a staff of 13. Walk into Seneca Valley. You'll see that the building is clean, the grounds are in good shape, the paint is touched up and banners adorn the hallways. It's a building that reflects how much the adults care about children. It makes the students feel good about themselves and about their school. Thank you, Suzanne, Bill, and the entire staff and PTA leadership at Seneca Valley!

And take a look at Wheaton High School where Principal George Arlotto and his staff have increased AP enrollment 23 percent! Wheaton is also the location for our new partnership with the University of Maryland at Baltimore County and Montgomery College. George has been a driving force behind an exciting new program – the Institute for Global and Cultural Studies. Wheaton students will have the chance to learn from professors from these two institutions. And earn up to 15 college credits for free. This new program expands and enhances the College Institute model offered at Gaithersburg, Kennedy, Seneca Valley and Wootton high schools.

It's the people – our people – who make these programs work. The research is clear and our experience bears this out – it takes a high quality teacher in every classroom to improve student achievement. That's why we've invested and continue to invest about \$50 million annually in professional development to make sure our workforce is the best.

We put staff development teachers – teacher coaches – in every building to support our teachers in their classrooms. We've worked hand in glove with the Montgomery County Education Association to provide consulting teachers for those who need extra help or are new to the profession. We want to make sure our teachers have the supports they need to do their jobs well.

We have a very special teacher here tonight who has benefited from these supports and is now helping other young teachers in Montgomery County – and across the state! Please join me in congratulating the 2005 Maryland Teacher of the Year – Kimberly Oliver of Broad Acres Elementary School!

Kim is a key member of the team that turned a troubled school into a terrific success story. Under the leadership of their former principal, Jody Leleck, who is now an Associate Superintendent, and their current principal, Suzette Chagnon, the Broad Acres team believes in their students and sets high expectations for every single one of them.

As a kindergarten teacher at Broad Acres, Kim Oliver is preparing her students for a lifetime of learning. She is masterful at differentiating instruction so that each child in her class gets exactly what he or she needs. She calls it the “three bears” rule. Each child, like the bears, wants and needs different things. She fashions her teaching to be “just right” for every child.

Kim treasures every minute of her day in the classroom with her students. She helps them through their challenges and delights in their successes. But always, always, she is there with the strong reassurance that her students can do it because she believes in them and she expects the best from them.

Kim, you are an inspiration to your students, your colleagues – and – to all of us. Give her a big hand!

Broad Acres is a good example of how we have met one of our biggest challenges – the growth in households where English is not the first language. In fact, in Kim Oliver's kindergarten class, 11 out of 13 students do not speak English at home. MCPS has ***nearly half*** of all ESOL students in Maryland. Next year, we expect to have 13,400 students who will need help learning English.

Our students with limited English skills are making steady progress. We have more English language learners enrolled in AP classes in high school than ever before – 32 percent – up from 17 percent 4 years ago. In Kindergarten, the most recent data show that 70 percent of English language learners are reading. That's up 12 percentage points from last year.

We're committed to ensuring that students with limited English skills are given every opportunity to succeed. Last year we created a new translation unit to help us communicate more effectively with our multicultural parent community. We are now providing more

documents, television programs, videos, and web pages in six different languages than ever before. In this budget, we plan to expand the translation unit so that we can continue to strengthen our parent engagement efforts.

Our partnership with parents is critical to our success. Yes, we need them to support our students and make sure the homework and the studying are done. But we also need them to help guide our mission. This year, we asked a group of parents to meet with us to give us feedback on our math pathways. Each and every parent wanted to make sure their child had access to a rigorous math class taught by a capable teacher. We're privileged to have one of those teachers with us here tonight – Jennifer Feldman of Luxmanor Elementary School. Jennifer was named Maryland's 2005 math teacher of the year. She believes in challenging her students and she works tirelessly to make sure they succeed. She's able to give her students more individualized attention now because of the support our community gave us for last year's budget. One of the initiatives the budget funded was reduced class size. This year, Jennifer has 19 students in her class, down from 27 students last year. The smaller class size is helping to improve the teaching and learning in her classroom. Thanks to the outstanding work of Jennifer under the leadership of her principal, Mike Bayewitz, I have no doubt that these students will complete Algebra in the 8th grade and Calculus in the 12th.

The students at Broad Acres, Viers Mill, Oakland Terrace, and Luxmanor are just a few of the great examples of how our early success program is working. We started our work at the elementary level and then focused our efforts at the high school level. Now, it's time for us to turn to middle school where we've started a comprehensive reform effort. Teams of educators, parents, community leaders, and students are researching the best practices to make all of these schools more successful.

As we work to improve middle schools, let's not lose sight of the fact that we have some exceptional efforts happening at this level. Look at what Principal Eric Davis is doing in his second year leading Montgomery Village Middle School. Eric and his staff tackled the issue of school safety head on. He instituted four simple rules aimed at reducing fights, disrespect, and bullying. The staff set clear expectations and rewarded good behavior. And it's working.

Academically, Montgomery Village students are also making steady progress. Last year, the staff and parents produced a math DVD and workbook to prepare 8th graders for the state tests. Parents even used it so they could help their children with practice problems. It was a great idea and it worked. Math scores jumped 17 points!

Eric and his staff also have worked hard to involve parents in the school. He and his team tour neighborhoods, visit students' homes, and greet parents at shopping centers. Congratulations to you, Eric, and your great staff and parents at Montgomery Village Middle School.

We're also excited about our new Middle School Magnet Consortium of Argyle, A. Mario Loiederman, and Parkland middle schools. This is a new concept – whole school magnets – where every student at the three schools has the opportunity to earn as many as eight high school credits. Students at these schools are also learning about information technology, creative and performing arts and aerospace science. I know that principals Debra Mugge, Alison Serino, and

Kevin Hobbs are going to make these middle schools exemplary models to follow, not only in Montgomery County, but throughout America.

We have broken down many barriers to student achievement. And as we move forward with the next wave of middle school reform, we know there are more to be shattered. We cannot let the barriers of race, ethnicity, language, poverty, and disability stand in the way of student success. We must be united in the belief that all students can succeed. Before there was a No Child Left Behind Act, our Board of Education had the courage to confront this issue. We know we have a disproportionate number of African American students being suspended and coded for special education and that too few students of color are being identified as gifted or participating in Honors and AP courses. We don't hide behind averages... we show you the data, broken down by race, ethnicity, poverty, language, and disability. As a community, we stand together tonight and say THIS CANNOT CONTINUE.

We are going to knock down barriers to student achievement and we are going to open doors for all children. My friends, education is the great equalizer. It is the only thing that gives the poorest among us the hope and the tools to break the shackles of poverty. It is the one thing that can give every child the ticket to a brighter future.

Opportunities and bright futures are also what we want for our children with special needs. Special education is a critical part of our mission in MCPS. It's an area where we're making progress... but our focus must remain firm if we are to make the kind of progress our children deserve.

Our students with special needs outperformed the Maryland state average on the state tests last year. And we have 19 percent of our students with disabilities taking honors and AP classes. We're also making progress in moving more students into the general education environment. We've increased the number of special education students in general education from 53 percent to 78 percent. But we must do more. We are committed to helping more students succeed on the MSA's and we're committed to including more special needs students in general education classes.

We all have dreams for our children – that they will grow up to be successful, happy, productive members of their communities. The parents of children with special needs want no less for their children. And they look to the school system to prepare their children for a successful life after high school – whether it's higher education or the world of work. We're all here because we believe we can make a difference in children's lives. This is especially true for those who choose to work in special education. We have more than 3,000 special education staff members – in our schools and in central office – from the classroom teacher to the paraeducator to the speech therapist. To them, it's more than a job, it's a calling. Please join me in giving them a big hand.

I want to share with you a letter that I received this summer about a 5th grader at Burning Tree Elementary School. This child came to us as a preschooler with special needs.

His parents wrote: “As we watched him on the stage, we thought about the many teachers, therapists, and others at Burning Tree and at Ashburton who contributed so much time, effort and affection over the past 8 years that have enabled him to make so much progress.”

Thank you, Helen Chaset, principal of Burning Tree, and Barbara Haughey, principal of Ashburton, and all of your staff members.

There are many parents who share this family’s satisfaction and joy with the progress their children make in our schools. We want all of our families to value their MCPS experience as much as this family. And we’re committed to helping students with special needs succeed.

That’s why next year we plan to increase spending in special education by \$28 million dollars. Four million dollars of this investment will improve programs that assist middle and high school students with learning disabilities. We’ll provide these students with the supports they need to access a rigorous curriculum in general education...obtain a diploma...and prepare for life after high school.

How are we going to meet the challenges that lay before us? How do we continue moving ahead with the reforms that have brought us so much success? Well, we know that the courage of our convictions will guide us, the daily hard work will drive us, and our operating budget will provide us with the resources we need to do the job.

Every year, our goal is to prepare a budget that will carry us forward. We’re committed to spending every dollar entrusted to us to improve student achievement. In fact, MCPS spends more of every dollar on direct classroom instruction than any other school district in Maryland. At the same time, we have the third lowest central administrative costs in the state at 2 percent.

We’re always working to ensure that we direct as many resources as possible to the classroom. Over the last six years, we have redirected \$55 million dollars back to the classroom. I’m confident in telling Montgomery County taxpayers that your tax dollars are being spent wisely.

This year, for the first time, we involved the three employee organizations in every phase of the budget process. The three union presidents – Merle Cuttitta, Bonnie Cullison, and Becky Newman – were with us every step of the way as we decided where to save money and where to invest it. We were all guided by the simple question – how will this improve student achievement?

I know of no other school system in America where the leadership of the school district works so closely with the employee organizations.

Thank you, Merle. Thank you, Bonnie. And thank you, Becky. It is through our collaboration that we will build the capacity of our employees to make this school system even better.

Overall, we’re seeking an increase of about 7 percent this year. That amounts to \$68 million dollars from local taxpayers and \$54 million dollars from state, federal, and other sources, for a total of \$122 million dollars.

How are we going to invest these new resources?

About \$75 million dollars of the increase is for salaries and benefits for our employees. We know that MCPS is only as good as the people who lead, teach, supervise, and support. If we're going to attract a high caliber workforce, then we must offer competitive salaries and benefits. Indeed, that's why the vast majority of our budget – 89 percent – pays for our people.

The sad news is that it's increasingly difficult for those who work in Montgomery County to live here. Right now, one out of four employees lives outside of our county. It's no wonder. Home heating bills, gas prices, and housing costs have all soared. In Montgomery County, a household with two parents and two children needs about \$64,000 just to get by. If you're a single parent with two kids, you need about \$59,000.

What does an average new teacher in Montgomery County make? \$43,673. You can see why it's so difficult for our public employees, especially those who are new, to live in the county. You can understand why we put such a high value on offering attractive salaries.

We'll also need to direct additional resources for new schools and growth. We're requesting an increase of approximately \$18 million dollars for the operating costs of five new schools and growth. Next year, we'll open Clarksburg High School and 4 elementary schools – two upcounty and two downcounty. This is the most schools we've opened since 1990.

In special education, we expect one of the largest increases in enrollment in several years. Most of the increase will be in our infants and toddlers programs and at the secondary level.

One area where the increase is higher than expected is due to a spike in energy costs. We have a number of efficiencies in place but we'll still need a \$14 million dollar increase for utilities, textbooks and inflation to cover the rising costs of natural gas, electricity, diesel fuel and other increases as a result of inflation.

With your support, we've made tremendous gains in student achievement. We're requesting \$15 million dollars in initiatives next year so that we can continue to build on this success and move into the next phase of our reform effort. We plan to:

- Expand full-day kindergarten to 17 more schools for a total of 110 schools
- Strengthen special education in middle and high schools. That includes reducing the size of general education classes with special education students
- Lower high school class sizes in core subject areas
- Increase supports at high school to strengthen literacy, to improve performance on High School Assessments and to boost the number of students eligible for extracurricular activities
- Add 15 elementary assistant principals
- Support middle school reform
- Enhance violence prevention programs
- Expand the Ride by the Rules program to improve student safety on school buses
- Hire more teacher aides

- Expand the Study Circles program
- Expand IB and gifted programs
- Improve technology supports for instruction
- Hire more foreign language translators and
- Add more building services workers

We identified these priorities as we worked with the employee associations, the PTA, and the community this year. We also received valuable feedback at our community budget forums that helped us refine our priorities as a school system.

As we prepare to leave Rockville tonight, let's visit our national Blue Ribbon Elementary School – Viers Mill – to hear a story of opportunity, hard work and achievement. Let's meet some of the students, a group of motivated 5th graders who were in the first class to benefit from your investments. They are now excelling, taking sixth grade math, also known as Math A, and setting a bright course for their future.

(VIDEO)

Hillary, we're so proud of you. You've had great teachers, a supportive family, and wonderful opportunities to succeed. And you have several of your classmates here with you tonight. Let's give a big hand to the students, their families, and the staff at Viers Mill Elementary School.

I told Hillary before we came in tonight that she represents all of our students. All 140,000. Hillary, our pledge to you and to your classmates is to keep the doors of opportunity wide open. Our pledge is to prepare you and your classmates to reach your goals in life. Continue to work hard and dream big.

You have the commitment and support of everyone here tonight and all of us in MCPS. Always remember that we're behind you every step of the way.

Thank you all again for coming out tonight and for your strong support of the children of Montgomery County. Remember, education is the key that will unlock opportunity for every one of these children.

Good night.