

**CLOVERLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PARENT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
800 BRIGGS CHANEY RD.
SILVER SPRING, MD 20905**

October 15, 2009

Good evening President Brandman and members of the Board. My name is Jennifer Gruber, and I'm the PTA Advocacy Coordinator at Cloverly Elementary School. On behalf of the Cloverly PTA, we would like to thank you for asking for our input regarding budget priorities for the 2010-2011 school year.

We polled the 35 members present at our PTA meeting last week, asking what is most important to them. Although we listed many important issues, two received the highest number of votes by a very wide margin.

The greatest priority within our community is class size. Currently, most of our classes are at or approaching maximum capacity. We have fabulous teachers who are passionate about meeting the needs of each student. They provide academic enrichment and acceleration within heterogeneous classrooms, they devote extra attention to addressing the needs of students who struggle, and they adjust to the demands of frequent curriculum reform initiatives, all of which require lower class sizes. Our wonderful principal, Melissa Brunson, has been able to utilize our aides and student teachers effectively to ensure the greatest possible individualized attention for each student, but our staff is stretched to the limit.

We are very proud of the fact that nearly 60 percent of last year's 5th grade class left Cloverly having successfully completed 6th grade math, and 93 percent were reading on grade level or above. We are setting the bar high for our students, and we are thrilled that they have risen to the challenge. However, to implement the programs that will improve achievement for all students, it's essential that our class size remains manageable. We recognize that current budget constraints may limit further class size reduction, but we ask that you not increase the current maximum class size.

The other issue of most significant importance to our PTA is high school modernization. For the majority of our families, Paint Branch is our home school. We're thrilled that construction on the new facility is scheduled to begin later this year and want to let you know how important we feel it is that this project stay on track.

I mentioned before that, when asked to vote on their top MCPS budget priorities, our members voted overwhelmingly to support this issue. I'm not going to elaborate on the problems with the current facility or the reasons for needing a new one. You've heard that many times already. But I'd like for you to keep in mind that this vote was taken at an elementary school PTA meeting. Of the 35 members present, only one has a child currently in high school. Another five have students in middle school. The remainder are parents whose oldest child is in elementary school, and many only have children in

kindergarten or first grade. Despite the fact that their families are many years away from high school, our members see the importance of making changes now that will benefit their children, and the whole community, in the future. High school modernization is not an issue exclusive to high school families. It's important to all of us.

Thanks so much for your time and consideration.