

**FY 2009 Budget Speech**  
**December 13, 2007**  
**Final**

Thank you, Mrs. Brandman, for those kind words, and thank you, Dr. Munk, for once again graciously hosting us. I'm proud of the progress under way here at Rockville High School and the strong leadership you have brought to this school.

And good evening to all of you! I'm excited to be here. You have helped us achieve great things over the last eight years. Tonight, let's celebrate those achievements. Let's acknowledge the tremendous investment our community has made to give our children so many wonderful opportunities. Opportunities to learn in new ways. Opportunities to earn college credit in high school. Opportunities to earn high school credit in middle school. And Opportunities to achieve regardless of the color of your skin, how much money your family makes or what language your parents speak at home.

When we talk about achievement, what do we mean? In today's world, it's not enough that our graduates can master the basics. Opportunities for our students will be defined by their ability to learn and relearn over their lifetimes. I stand with you to commit that our children – all of our children – will be ready for this opportunity when they leave our care. We may not know exactly what their future will look like but we know that our students will be well-prepared for whatever it is.

We know we are on the right track, but day to day progress can be hard to see. To keep up our energy and efforts, we need to sometimes take a step back and look at the big picture. Thanks to you, Montgomery County Public Schools has a wonderful big picture to share. I'm the first to admit that it's easy to get mired in detail so let me remind you of some of the great things our work together has helped our children accomplish.

- In elementary school, nearly every kindergarten student is reading as the door to first grade swings open. That wasn't even an expectation 8 years ago.
- Half of our fifth graders – nearly 5,000 – are enrolled in sixth grade math or higher this year.
- Eight years ago, fewer than 200 fifth graders were working at this level.
- More than half of last year's eighth graders completed Algebra 1 or higher, and this year, two-thirds of eighth graders are enrolled in Algebra 1 or higher.
- In four years, the number of Advanced Placement scholars in our high schools has increased 15 fold – from 20 to nearly 300. Nearly 300 students achieved a four or five on eight – count 'em -- EIGHT! or more AP national exams. Isn't that remarkable?

The story behind these accomplishments is our people. All of the nearly 22,000 people

who work in our school system play a major role in that story. On any given day, a child will succeed or not depending on dozens of things. A safe bus ride. A secure school. A clean classroom. A caring instructional assistant. A pat on the back from the principal. An encouraging word from a teacher. A smile from the cafeteria worker. Good advice from a counselor. Help finding just the right book in the media center.

The bus driver, the para-educator, the teacher, the administrator, the counselor – each person is part of the investment the taxpayers of Montgomery County make in the public schools. Thousands of dedicated people work every day to create opportunities for each child to succeed. And succeed they do!

Take Lauren Haynes, a junior at Magruder High School. She has a GPA of 4.65 when you count all of her honors credits. She has one AP course under her belt and this year she's enrolled in 4 AP classes – English, Calculus, World History and Chemistry. If that's not enough, she found time to start the “Relay for Life club” that raises money for the American Cancer Society -- she's on the field hockey and track teams -- and she's a member of the math and Spanish honor societies. Isn't she incredible?

When I talked to her about her success, Lauren said her teachers are what has made the difference. Their support, their high expectations, and the time they give to their students, even volunteering to come in on Saturdays to help students.

Your investment in teachers gives Lauren this kind of opportunity.

Success stories like Lauren's are abundant across the system. If you walk into Chris Orlando's Advanced Placement Calculus classroom at Bethesda Chevy Chase High School, you know what his expectations are. You'll see six lists of names on the wall – students who have scored a perfect five on an AP Calculus exam. In five years, the list has grown from just five students to 47. You think students are motivated to get their names on that wall? You bet.

Principal Sean Bulson says there's a waiting list to get into Mr. Orlando's classes because he's passionate, energetic, the kids know he cares about them and he makes learning downright fun.

We focus a great deal on Advanced Placement in MCPS because AP exams are the single best indicator that students are ready for college level work. Did you know that three out of four of our high school students scored well enough to receive college credit for at least one Advanced Placement course? Only about half of the students in the country reach that benchmark.

We're proud of the immense success our students are having in AP and we're especially pleased with the performance of African American and Latino students. African American students in MCPS passed more AP tests than in any other school system in United States of America, except for New York City.

It's all about investment, opportunities, and results.

Success in AP doesn't start in high school. It starts at the elementary level. Look at what's happening at Strathmore Elementary. I visited Natalie Howard's fifth grade classroom, where about 25 students were working on sixth grade math, learning how to multiply fractions. Everything Natalie does is purposeful, organized and supports our belief that every child can succeed. In her lessons, students used simple little white boards to flash their work at Ms. Howard. She could tell who got the concept right away, and who needed a little extra help. She seamlessly transitioned a group to a table for ten minutes of extra instruction while the rest of the class forged ahead. And then she brought everyone back together to review and wrap up with a fun activity to reinforce the lesson.

It was interesting to watch this one student, Jhalesiya, who was so focused on understanding every idea Ms. Howard explained. You could just see the wheels turning in her mind. Jhalesiya wants to be a teacher just like Ms. Howard when she grows up.

This is what Jhalesiya says about Ms. Howard: "She takes her time helping us and she doesn't get frustrated when we get stuff wrong. She'll keep on trying to help us."

The investment we're making to support great teachers like Natalie and outstanding leaders like principal Robert Dodd is producing results you can see.

As more of our students are leaving elementary school with more sophisticated math and reading skills, it makes the need for strengthening our middle schools even greater.

### MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Ahhhh, Middle Schools....That's an interesting time, isn't it?

Did you know that children go through more changes in their lives during the middle school years than at any other time except for the first three years of life?

Middle school students are changing in other ways. . . that stump us adults just as much....

They use cutting edge technology to talk to friends around the globe. They are communicating with each other constantly through cell phones, text messaging and their own web pages. They are downloading music and information, playing online video games with individuals in other countries and making and posting their own videos on the web.

I believe we have some middle school students in the audience tonight...

It's great to see you all here. I have a few questions for you....

How many of you do your homework while simultaneously listening to music, watching a video and chatting with your friends?

I think they might even be better multitaskers than we are!

How many of you download music, create videos or websites?

How many of you want your school to be a place where you can use technology, be creative . . . and do more hands on activities?

It's clear our students are eager to connect, communicate and create. We must take advantage of their boundless energy and help them channel it into meaningful learning. And that's exactly what we've done in designing the three consortium middle schools, Parkland, Argyle and A. Mario Loiederman. Innovative courses and programs are making a measurable difference in student performance. Sixth grade consortium students have increased their math scores three times as fast as students in other middle schools. These three schools are actively engaging students to think critically, solve complex problems, work in teams, communicate effectively and connect ideas across subject areas.

Let's take a look at how they are doing it at Loiederman Middle School.

## **VIDEO**

It's that connection, the spark that Morgan has . . . that we want every middle school student to have.

Is Loiederman a great school or what?

What does it take to get students so excited about learning? It takes great principals like Alison Serino, her dedicated administrators, support professionals and committed teachers. It takes a wonderful curriculum that engages and challenges students. And it takes a strong professional development program to bring this kind of magic to life.

While we want our students to be on the cutting edge of learning, we want the same for our staff. Yes, we have more highly qualified teachers than any other system in Maryland, but every professional needs to stay current and keep their skills updated.

One of the ways we're doing that is through the Professional Learning Communities Institute, where our staff can learn from the best about how to become the best.

School teams learn the most effective strategies to use in their classrooms, how to analyze data to improve instruction and how to build a strong school culture founded on high expectations for all. The institute is changing methods, changing minds, and changing attitudes and is producing results for children.

Students in schools with professional learning community support are consistently performing well on state tests and increasing their success at a faster rate than schools without these additional efforts.

This emphasis on building the skills of our workforce has become a very important part of our work to improve middle schools. We are also making the curriculum more relevant, the courses more rigorous and accelerated, the technology more engaging, our partnership with parents stronger, and the school day more fascinating and FUN!

We're building on the success of the middle school consortium and expanding some of the exciting courses there to other middle schools. Over the next couple of years, students will be able to choose from 21 fascinating classes such as forensic science, applied robotic engineering, and digital art! Five of these courses will actually count for high school credit including new classes in English and science. Now that's engagement. That's investing to create world class middle schools. Our students will be ready to succeed in some of the best high schools in the nation right here in MCPS.

## BUDGET

The budget I'm recommending will help us continue middle school reform and other initiatives we began eight years ago to raise the bar and close the achievement gap.

The most important element of our reform is our exceptional workforce. That's why the largest part of our budget – nearly 90 percent – pays for our people. We know our community supports competitive salaries to retain excellent teachers, support professionals, and administrators.

The majority of the budget increase will pay for a five percent salary increase. We have been able to attract highly qualified teachers, many of whom have achieved National Board Certified status, and we need to continue to do that. Montgomery County must remain an attractive place in which to work. This is our challenge, and we have the community's support to meet it.

Every year we start from scratch in our budget process and build the budget from the ground up. We do it by bringing our partners to the table. I want to thank our three employee associations and their leaders – Bonnie Cullison of MCEA, Merle Cuttitta of SEIU Local 500, and Becky Newman of MCAASP – for their strong leadership and their steadfast commitment to doing what's right for our children every day.

This year, for the first time, we also brought the County Council of PTAs to the table with President Jane de Winter and Kay Romero. Their insights and suggestions were invaluable and helped us shape a budget that continues to move us forward. Thank you, Jane and Kay, for dedicating so much time to help us create this budget and for the work you do on behalf of our parents every day.

Now the numbers... In total, we will request a 5 ½ percent increase over the 2008 budget

– \$110 million above current spending. We are sensitive to the current economic climate and that’s why our request is the smallest percentage increase we’ve asked for in more than a decade. In addition, as mandated by the county council, we’ll include \$16 million to pay for the healthcare needs of future retirees.

Our county is growing and the school budget reflects that growth. This year, we have 750 more students than we had expected – one of the challenges of living in a dynamic area. As you know, we are being asked to do our part to help the county recover from a shortfall that’s the result of a soft economy.

My recommended budget will enable us to make the necessary adjustments without sacrificing the quality that our community expects and our children deserve.

The new items in this year’s budget will be offset by savings from other categories. Here’s what we’re proposing to support our schools and our students:

We're going to expand middle school reform to nine more schools and add new courses

We're going to continue to support the middle school magnet consortium

We're going to add more elementary assistant principals, and we're going to add more elementary school counselors

In this budget, I am recommending that we also add more parent community coordinators and more lunch hour aides to better supervise our playgrounds

And at three schools significantly impacted by poverty, we're going to reduce class size

At Poolesville High School, we're expanding the successful magnet program to include the 11th grade

And at Seneca Valley and John F. Kennedy high schools, we'll add the renowned International Baccalaureate program. We'll also continue the Kennedy Cluster project with our partners in Montgomery County Government

And we'll add hours-based special education staffing at three more middle schools to support students with disabilities.

The rest of our total requested budget increase reflects higher costs in several areas such as fuel for buses, utilities, and materials costs.

We are fortunate to be a part of a community that places such a high value on education. A community that is forward thinking – understanding that it takes a strong investment to change an educational model that was created 150 years ago and designed to teach students how to work in the factory and on the farm. We’ve been on a journey to transform that model – to give our children the opportunity to be different thinkers than

we were. To give them an education that enables them to experience – to innovate – to create a future where they will play important roles.

It's the kind of education students are getting at Banneker Middle School – one of the first five schools in middle school reform. Take a look.

## **VIDEO**

Now that's a proud mother who recognizes the work of our amazing teachers.

When students know that their teachers care about them; and when learning is connected to real life dreams become reality.

The work that Sam Rivera and his staff at Banneker are doing is possible because of the steady leadership of our Board of Education, and the support we receive from our county executive Ike Leggett, County Council, and state legislators.

They make it possible for us to build the futures of tomorrow for students like Derek, Brian, and Tyrel and the other 138,000 students in our school system.

Everything we need for continued success is before us: great people, wonderful programs, and a community... that knows supporting education is the right thing to do. Our community understands that an excellent school system allows our children to open doors and enter worlds unknown to us. Our children will lead us to a future... that we can only imagine. They will bring new perspectives to problems, that have confounded us, and with open minds, will find solutions. Today's children will light the path to tomorrow.

As William Butler Yeats wrote 100 years ago – “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire...”

Let's pledge together tonight that we will care for each flame until it shines for all to see.

Thank you and good night.