

**Montgomery County Board of Education  
Public Hearing on the Proposed FY13 Operating Budget**

**January 18, 2012**

**Testimony of  
Doug Prouty, MCEA President**

Good evening President Brandman, members of the Board, and Dr. Starr. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Superintendent's Recommended Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2013. I am Doug Prouty, president of the Montgomery County Education Association which represents 12,000 teachers and other non-supervisory professional educators. I want to commend Dr. Starr for continuing the budget process begun by his predecessor of having the leadership of the unions and the county PTA included on the MCPS budget team. It may seem redundant to say so, but we are fully in support of the budget that Dr. Starr submitted to you.

The past three years have been difficult for everyone involved in public education here and elsewhere. The cuts we have had to make have resulted in larger classes, fewer resources available to teachers and fewer opportunities available for professional development. The limited professional development has been, as you heard during the fall, particularly difficult for our elementary teachers and educators working to implement the Elementary Integrated Curriculum. We appreciate Dr. Starr's focus on professional development in his discussions of MCPS' priorities for the coming years. The MCEA Board supports his call for a systemic review of professional development. We understand that a better designed professional development system may not result in budget savings; it may cost more. It makes sense to analyze where we are now and what we need to change and improve before asking for additional funding to support the recommendations of that review.

I was heartened to hear Dr. Starr highlight the sacrifices made by the members of MCEA and the other employees of MCPS in his budget presentation. It is clear for anyone who pays attention that, aside from the 1%, we have all suffered from the economic downturn. But there are unique pressures that have been placed on educators in the past few years which have, frankly, put morale on a precipice. I don't need to remind you, but I will, that national rhetoric extolling evaluation systems that make the results of standardized tests the overriding factor in an evaluation demeans the complexity of our work. We all know that a student is not a test score—neither is a teacher. I want to thank Mr. Barclay in particular for his strong advocacy as a member of the state's Educator Effectiveness Council. Our longstanding partnership on our acclaimed Teacher Professional Growth System rightly places the emphasis on meaningful feedback and support to improve pedagogy and content knowledge. MCEA is concerned that the Teacher Professional Growth System has been compromised by unexpectedly large hiring numbers this year and your review of the budget should include an examination of whether or not we are able to support novice and underperforming teachers in the way we intend to at current levels of staffing.

It's important to keep the pressures educators are under and the tenuous state of morale in mind as we contemplate this budget. The employees of MCPS do indeed need to see a light at the end

of the tunnel in terms of compensation. This year's budget is a good start. There are third year teachers throughout this county who make the same salary as their first year counterpart next door. The inclusion of funding for steps and the results of our ongoing negotiations – we hope - will send the right signal. I'll be blunt- our members, every one of them, need more take home pay and they need a plan that creates a sense of stability currently missing. Our joint bargaining on compensation gives me hope that you will be presented with a settlement that can do just that.

Up until the mid-nineties, MCPS used to offer early retirement incentive programs in order to realize budget savings. We believe such programs are beneficial to both employees and to the school system, and we would encourage further discussions of re-instating such plans.

There are a number of items that were identified by a group of our members who formed an ad hoc budget workgroup that I will mention and that we should collectively keep in mind as we continue this year's budget process and engage in next year's. The Superintendent's budget realizes a number of cost savings in central office budgets. We believe there must be an ongoing effort to find cost savings and efficiencies in central office budgets in order to direct more resources to our classrooms.

One idea is to increase the revenue MCPS receives from the use of our facilities after school. It's important to have public facilities available to the community, but if the cost of rental does not cover MCPS' expenses in the use of the facility, there needs to be an adjustment. We would welcome the opportunity to join with you in working to increase the ICB fees so that they cover the school system's costs.

We also should consider whether the High School Plus program might be made more self-sustaining while ensuring the availability of these classes to students who would struggle to pay for the opportunity. We're interested in continuing to consider the results of the workgroup on 12 month positions and the dialogue we're engaged in about whether there are savings to be found there. Finally, the ongoing work to be sure that providing transportation to access Special Education services and Special Programs is as efficient as possible needs to continue. We are appreciative of the work already accomplished in this regard. MCPS now spends more on special transportation (to out-of-boundary programs) than it does on regular (in boundary) transportation.

We would also encourage the creation of an 'employee suggestion and invention program' that provides financial awards for specific suggestions that result in measurable financial savings to the system. Such programs are in place in many public and private sector organizations and serve to recognize the expertise of the frontline workforce.

And so I conclude by commending you for all you have done, all that we have done together. And I implore you, each of you and as a body, to continue to work with MCAAP, SEIU Local 500, our PTAs, and MCEA, to advocate for our students. The acrimony of budget discussions of previous years- and I'm not saying we started it- seems to be giving way to a more appropriate level of discourse, one that we would want our students to emulate. Thanks for your hard work and your time this evening.