

NW Advisory Council Pre-Budget Meeting - Operating Budget
October 17, 2006

The Northwest Advisory Council held its annual Pre-Budget meeting on Tuesday, October 17, 2006. Twenty-four people signed up to give testimony. Twenty-three of those people actually testified. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Brittany Alexander, a senior from New Town High School. The first two topics are the most important in the Council's opinion.

- 1) Computer Technology was an overriding issue of the evening. Many people spoke about the need for portable, laptop computer labs as well as the support staff to make sure the computers are running properly and to solve problems on site. The use of the technology staff as classroom teachers / technology liaisons is problematic especially as it relates to time. It has proven to be inefficient and impractical. Specific to Owings Mills High School is the need for twenty-five new Dell computers to restock their journalism lab. This school has had a model journalism program and is in desperate need of the upgrade to help maintain their strong commitment to journalism.
- 2) Salaries for staff specifically for teachers, educational support staff and personal assistants were another key issue. The need to retain our more experienced teachers was mentioned specifically. Personal Assistants, caring for students with disabilities, receive an extremely low salary, and no benefits. It has become increasingly difficult to find the personnel willing to fill these positions. The need to increase these salaries and offer the basic benefits has become most apparent. More kindergarten assistants, special education teachers, and resource teachers, such as audiologists, and social workers were requested by several schools as well.
- 3) The continuing need for smaller classes was another issue raised to help increase student achievement. The actual class size rather than a student to teacher ratio is needed to accurately tell the real class size.
- 4) Requests for training for General Education teachers, administrators and instructional assistants in special education issues. Additionally those requests were extended for parental training and information on the special education programs and services process.
- 5) Separating STEM resources from the Gifted and Talented Program was still requested to make sure both programs get the attention needed.
- 6) Copier issues are still a problem with a large part of the in school budget going toward the lease of a copier and the cost of the copies. Fort Garrison Elementary said it uses nearly one-fifth of its budget on the copier lease.
- 7) Bus transportation issues were a concern. These issues include overcrowding, safety concerns, undesignated stops, playing inappropriate music, inappropriate student behavior, and bus drivers who are disrespectful of students riding the bus. This was specific to Pikesville Middle School.
- 8) Brittany Alexander, a student from New Town High School, suggested using seniors to be peer mentors for younger students trying to pass the HSA tests.

Respectfully submitted by the North West Advisory Council
Abby Beytin, Chair Clifford Collins, Vice Chair