

On the Public Education Front

by

Mark R. Adelman, Chair, KHCA Education Committee

Our committee is working on arranging visits to MCPS schools that serve the children of Kensington Heights. The first of these will be to Einstein HS at a time to be determined, but after the threat of bad weather has passed. We also propose to arrange visits to the two elementary schools and the two middle schools our kids attend. Please contact me to let us know which schools you'd like to visit and, if possible, days/times that would "work best" for you. Obviously, since we have to arrange these in coordination with the principals and staffs of the various schools, it's impossible to make any promises, but let us know your wishes and we'll do our best. Contact me by phone (301-942-6893) or Email (adelman3@erols.com).

As one of your representatives to the Montgomery County Civic Federation, and as Chair of the MCCF Education Committee, I've been tracking various MCPS issues and want to make you aware of some of them. Many of these have been in local newspapers; my editorials on some of them have appeared in The Sentinel (<http://www.thesentinel.com/> - but MCCF columns are not available on-line) and copies are available on the MCCF Website (<http://www.montgomerycivic.org/index.asp>). The MCCF site also gives you access to past copies of the Civic Federation Newsletter, where some of these issues have been discussed. And you might also look at the MCPS Website (<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/>), where various documents are posted.

From my point of view, perhaps the "hottest" issue just now is the apparent willingness of the Board of Education to support Superintendent Weast's plans to grant the request of our County Executive and County Council: to declare as "unneeded" certain parcels of MCPS land and have the State turn such parcels over to the County, which proposes to use them to increase "affordable housing". Various organizations, including the MCCPTA, have joined Civic Fed in opposing this "plan", but to no avail. One parcel (the Edson Lane site) has already been declared unneeded and others are in the crosshairs. Never mind the incredible short-sightedness of giving away school land when so many of our kids go to class in "portables" and the number of school-age children continues to grow. Never mind the fact that no one can guarantee such sites will generate affordable housing; indeed the public record of our current Council and Executive, in terms of generating such housing, is abysmal. Many of us suspect that this sort of transfer will only generate profits for a select few. But that is for you to decide. Look into it, discuss it with others; then let your elected officials - including the Board of Education - know your opinion. And while you are at it, why not look at the proposed MCPS FY2006 budget: over 50% of your (increasing!) tax dollar goes to MCPS and 90% of that goes to personnel costs negotiated by three powerful unions. My testimony before the Board of Education last week made some suggestions (an excerpted version will appear in The Sentinel, and then be posted to the MCCF Website): I'll bet you could make some very wise suggestions as well,

if you'd take a bit of time to study the matter. And then there is the continuing issue of how "transparent" MCPS is (or isn't) in its dealings with parents and other citizens. A recent article in the Gazette (you can read it on-line at <http://www.gazette.net/200503/silverspring/news/255379-1.html>) indicates why parents of kids attending the re-opened Northwood HS (part of the Downcounty Consortium that includes Einstein) feel they were sandbagged when the "4x4" program was pulled out from under them with little warning and less justification.

Are our schools good? Pretty good. Could they be better? Many of us think so. How can we improve them? Only if more of us pitch in, and not just more money!

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