

December 3, 2014

Alexandria City Public Schools Board Members
c/o Clerk of the School Board
2000 N. Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311

Via email

To the Honorable Karen Graf, Chair, and Members of the Alexandria City School Board:

At Mount Vernon Community School (MVCS), we are proud to be a hub of the Del Ray community. Integrated into the commercial and residential fabric of the neighborhood, our playground sees more use outside of school hours than any other schoolyard in the city.

The play area is an invaluable resource to MVCS students as well, including groups that are at high risk for childhood obesity, such as Hispanic students (a system-high 58% of the school population) and lower-income students (more than 50% of our students qualify for free and reduced-price meals).

In addition, according to the Alexandria Childhood Obesity Action Network, the area many MVCS students call home, Arlandria, is a "play desert," combining a high concentration of children with a lack of quality places to play. For many students, the school playground is the main place they get to exercise, which we know is key to combating obesity in kids. The playground may also be the main space for exploring nature and engaging in social and imaginative play, a key to developing executive functioning in children.

However, the play area at MVCS leaves much to be desired. There are immediate safety and infrastructure needs. Large portions of the area are unusable in wet weather, due to poor drainage and the existing site is in need of more varied and inclusive play opportunities. The MVCS PTA has launched an effort to improve the safety, usability and attractiveness of our playground. Through donations of materials and volunteer time, we have undertaken landscaping and beautification projects, but it is clear that a much greater effort is needed.

The MVCS PTA therefore respectfully requests that the School Board support the CIP line item for playground improvements in the 2015-2016 budget at the requested level, and support MVCS' receipt of part of that funding for playground repairs and improvements.

MVCS will provide a sound and timely investment for the division's CIP dollars. The PTA has already raised more than \$10,000 and will continue to raise funds to complement ACPS' CIP allocation. We have hired a landscape architect, who will shortly complete a plan for the playground design, and we are meeting regularly with ACPS Educational Facilities Director, Dr. William Holley, ensuring sustained momentum for the project and wise use of funds.

We thank you for your continued support of MVCS and all of Alexandria's students.

Sincerely,



The Mount Vernon Community School Parent-Teacher Association
Deborah Altenburg, President