## *FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS COMMENTS ON TJ*

## BRADDOCK DISTRICT -- *Megan McLaughlin*

** TJHSST's mission helps promote the most critical elements of advanced-learning: challenging students to achieve at their highest level and discovering their academic passions. In return, TJHSST students graduate with outstanding academic preparation, and an ability to perform exceptionally well in their collegiate studies and future careers. While it might be great to have additional FCPS admissions seats available, TJHSST's status as a Governor's School brings in over $2.5M revenue annually.

** Currently, FCPS has several TJHSST diploma requirements that may not be essential, and they often require students to pursue summer classes in order to take additional electives during the academic year. This also prevents students from engaging in other summer enrichment activities. As such, it may be beneficial to examine these diploma requirements.

**One of the FCPS Budget Task Force proposed potential budget reductions is to eliminate the 8th period at TJHSST, which will adversely affect many student programs and, correspondingly, reduce the teachers' salaries.**

**a. Do you support this potential budget reduction?**

☐ Yes xx No

** Often the most dynamic learning opportunities occur within extracurricular activities and clubs. As a result, it could be academically and socially detrimental to students if they lose this 8th period.

** Because it creates a 7% pay cut for teachers, the loss of income could be harmful to teachers. In addition, many teachers may find additional joy in advising these dynamic extracurricular activities. As such, the loss of 8th period could negatively impact teacher morale.

**b. Do you support any reductions to the funding of TJHSST?**

☐ Yes xx No

** TJHSST remains one of the highest performing magnet schools in the country. As such, it is important to fully fund TJHSST's rigorous curriculum, labs and programs

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## DRANESVILLE DISTRICT - - *Janie Strauss*

** TJ provides an important learning opportunity for students to excel in the STEM fields. Students with unusual ability and passion in this area benefit from the TJ program but as importantly so does our community – and in reality the world. We look to these young students to develop their creative and analytical thinking skills in order to solve difficult and vexing problems important to all of us – in medicine, climate change, technology, communication, all the areas of research that science touches. Mr. Moon and I helped develop the vision for TJ that underlies the current TJ renovation, recognizing not only the importance of the learning that goes on inside the school but the importance of this learning to the broader community.

** As a Governor's School we are able to gather together a pool of students for whom TJ is an excellent fit. These students benefit from the school's unusual program while the students benefit from the opportunity to

learn from and stimulate each other. As a Governor's School, TJ also receives important state funding that helps sustain the unique programs.
** I don't support any changes in the program other than making sure that TJ students have access to as many internships and research opportunities as possible. As much as possible, our students need to have real time opportunities to participate in ongoing research projects in labs throughout the community and for that matter, the world.

**One of the FCPS Budget Task Force proposed potential budget reductions is to eliminate the 8th period at TJHSST, which will adversely affect many student programs and, correspondingly, reduce the teachers' salaries.**

**a. Do you support this potential budget reduction?**

☐ Yes ☐X No

** No, I don't support eliminating the 8th period at TJ and I don't support eliminating the 7th period in our other schools either. First the 7th period is needed at TJ just to run the labs and the basic TJ curriculum. The 8th period was originally added to make the transportation system work. But over the years the 8th period has enabled the many clubs, co-curricular and collaborative student activities to take place. In our FCPS Portrait of a Graduate, we talk about the need for students to be able to work together to solve problems. At TJ much of the important student collaboration wouldn't happen without the 8th period. As well, reducing the pay for TJ teachers would reduce our ability to keep our excellent teachers and make it harder to hire new high quality teachers. We are already experiencing difficulty keeping and hiring good teachers because our pay is not competitive. The 8th period at TJ is important for student learning and for the retention of our TJ teachers.

** We must pay attention to teacher salaries throughout FCPS. The quality of our teachers is important and the TJ program requires even more time of our TJ teachers. Losing quality teachers at TJ would have a very negative impact on the entire program. Losing the 8th period would harm the unique programs at TJ.

** We must be able to keep quality teachers at TJ and be able to continue to recruit excellent teachers. We must not reduce teacher pay, we must increase it. Doing anything that negatively impacts teacher moral will impact the quality of instruction at TJ. **I don't want to reduce program funding for any FCPS schools, including TJ. The quality of education for our children is more important than ever. All our students must be well educated in order to take their place in a high tech globalized world. We look to our TJ students especially to help solve difficult problems impacting all humanity.

** I don't want to narrow educational opportunities for any FCPS students, including our TJ students. I hope we will find the funds necessary to keep all our critical programs intact. While we have to continue to be efficient and effective, constantly evaluating all we do, we must advocate for our students' needs. If by spring, when the final budget decisions have to be made and the revenues are not sufficient and cuts still have to be made, we must spread the reductions across a wide field so as not to single out any one school.

## HUNTER MILL DISTRICT – No Response

## LEE DISTRICT – No Response

## MASON DISTRICT -- *Sandy Evans*

** TJ is one of the best high schools in America for a reason. Its mission is even more important today than when it was first created. My daughter (Class of '09) received a tremendous education at TJ, and I believe in continuing the great TJ tradition into the future.

** TJ has worked well as a regional school for some time, and gets extra funding from the state as a result of being a Governor's School. I would also like to work on encouraging more minority and lower-income students to apply and hope that more Mason District students will ultimately be successful in gaining admission to this school that sits in Mason District but serves so few of our children in the immediate area.

** The TJ curriculum, schedule and program work very well. There have been suggestions in recent years that some TJ students were not as prepared as they should be for the level of math at TJ. If that's the case, we either need to require more solid math skills for admission or adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of students who arrive in need of strengthening their math skills or the option to take less rigorous math courses. Personally, I believe students should have top-notch math skills (especially in Algebra) when they arrive in their freshman year, regardless of what level they completed in 8th grade. Throughout FCPS we are looking for ways to provide more real-world and workplace experience, and that would benefit TJ students as well.

**One of the FCPS Budget Task Force proposed potential budget reductions is to eliminate the 8th period at TJHSST, which will adversely affect many student programs and, correspondingly, reduce the teachers' salaries.**

**a. Do you support this potential budget reduction?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

** The Budget Task Force developed a very long list of available cost-saving ideas as a way of considering every possibility within FCPS control. It would be premature to comment on something that is currently nothing more than one item on that long list, not something that anyone has recommended. Having said that, it would be awful for TJ to lose 8th period.

** Eighth period is a wonderful part of the TJ experience, as I know from my daughter's time there. It's a signature part of the schedule that helps students in so many ways, not least of which is the ability to try out different clubs and extracurricular activities, volunteer for community service, and have flexible time to meet with teachers. I would love to see this approach extended to other high schools, if we had the resources to do it. Unfortunately, we don't at this time. Ending 8th period would be detrimental to student well-being and balance at this rigorous school, to the ability to get extra time with teachers, and to the possibility of extending this great model to other schools in the future.

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** I don't want to see any reductions at TJ, but I also don't want to see reductions in other programs that are important to students throughout Fairfax County. We need to work together to advocate with the state and local governments for adequate funds to cover our current programs as well as our increasing numbers of students and increased costs for uncontrollable items like VRS pension costs. If we don't get increased funding, the reality is that we will have to make some very painful cuts in FCPS, and no one will be immune.

** We need to keep TJ the vibrant, amazing place of learning and innovation that it has been for so many years. FCPS has invested a great deal in this school and will continue to do so. Our ability to fully fund all FCPS

programs at current (and preferably improved) levels depends largely on whether the state and county funding authorities provide the necessary resources to do so.

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## MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT -- *Karen Corbett Sanders*

** I am in absolute support of TJ's mission. I have been honored to chair the Advanced Academic Programs Advisory Committee for 4 years and believe that we need to be fostering an environment for equity and excellence where students throughout the county can take advantage of the opportunities provided by TJ. Today we do not have inequalities in the provision of AAP services (both in academic programming and enrichment opportunities at centers and in LLIV programs. TJ provides an excellent opportunity for students to pursue their passion in math and science, be innovative in problem solving, and be prepared academically for the most rigorous post secondary experiences in colleges and universities. My experience with the TJ students, is that they are committed to excellence and in giving back to their communities. I also had the pleasure to work with TJ's NeuroInspire.

** I support TJ as a regional science and technology school. It is my understanding that the state funds that TJ receives as a Governor's school are tied to ensuring that qualified students from around the region may attend. I do believe that the other regions should contribute more to the cost of running the school in proportion to the number of students attending the school.

** TJ is considered one of the best high schools in the country. We should continue to maintain this academic center of excellence. Having said this, teen stress continues to be a problem amongst high achieving students, including TJ. We need to address the mental health and stress management needs of teenagers through better programming.

**One of the FCPS Budget Task Force proposed potential budget reductions is to eliminate the 8th period at TJHSST, which will adversely affect many student programs and, correspondingly, reduce the teachers' salaries.**

**Do you support this potential budget reduction?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

** The budget reductions proposed are based on $50, $75 and $100 million dollar deficit projections. The most recent project is $70 million. That does not take into account any additional state funding that the Governor has promised to include for K-12 education in his upcoming budget. I believe before any cuts are made to student facing programs, such as the much valued 8th period at TJ, we should be exploring synergies with the BoS funded programs. Although I am not supportive of the elimination of the 8th period at TJHSST, if the decision were made to cut funding for this program, I would look to the business sector to create a public private partnership to maintain it.

We have a retention problem in FCPS caused by the lack of competitiveness of our salary and benefits in comparison with the surrounding jurisdictions. Although I believe that teachers are motivated by other factors, like the culture of a school and the ability to inspire some of the brightest minds in the country, cutting salaries will result in a loss of talented teachers and the elimination of valuable programs.

** In addition to what I have stated above, decreased salary and benefits for existing teachers will inevitably impact the ability to recruit new teachers and retain the best teachers. A decrease in pay sends the message that stability in salary is not assured. This inevitably effects morale as well.

** Any reductions to TJJSST should be proportionate to those affecting all schools. I do not believe we should be concentrating reductions on a single population or school.

** I believe TJHSST provides a wonderful curriculum which includes extensive experiential opportunities for students in the laboratory and by participating in individual programs. I am in full support of the programs, labs, and curriculum at the school. However, if there are extensive budget cuts across the system, the cuts to TJHSST programs should be proportionate to those taken at other schools. If that were to occur, I would encourage the county and TJHSST to pursue additional grants and business partnerships to pick up the shortfall.

## PROVIDENCE DISTRICT –- *Dalia Palchick*

** I attended TJHSST myself, graduating with the class of 2001. I received an amazing education at TJHSST, and consider it vital that our school continues to be top-ranked nationwide and major attraction to the county and FCPS. I believe it is important that TJHSST remain a community that fosters lifelong learning, a challenging environment focused on math, science, and technology, and inspires students to solve real-life problems through an integrated approach to learning.

** One of the greatest assets of the TJ community is the meeting of the minds that occurs from students who are from all parts of the county and beyond. As a Governor´s School, I believe that TJHSST must continue to have a regional mission. The students who attend TJ bring unique perspectives and a strong drive to be at one of the top schools in the nation.

** TJHSST is at the cutting edge and has a proven record in providing the best curriculum, schedule and programs to help its students succeed. I do not believe there should be any changes to TJHSST's curriculum, schedule, or programs.

**One of the FCPS Budget Task Force proposed potential budget reductions is to eliminate the 8th period at TJHSST, which will adversely affect many student programs and, correspondingly, reduce the teachers' salaries.**

**a. Do you support this potential budget reductio**n? Yes X No

** If elected, I will defend TJHSST's 8th period and will make a motion to strike any elimination of the 8th period from any budget plan. As an alum, I understand the importance of TJHSST's 8th period and will explain and convince the other members of the board and the community that this proposed reduction is extremely damaging to TJHSST's students, staff, mission, and community. The 8th period schedules provides a place for students to delve into other shared interests with their peers and to take advantage of community engagement opportunities such as tutoring at local elementary schools. While all programs and curricula need review in order to continue improving, it´s important not to ruin a good thing. TJ leads the nation in excellence and student engagement, and we need to continue the eighth period.

** The proposed elimination of 8th period would be devastating. Activities and classes in the 8th period build community for students and teachers, many of whom live far apart, and otherwise would not be able to

interact after the traditional school day. Additionally, the 8th period is an incentive to attract the best teachers to TJHSST because of the unique time and programs it provides.

** The morale of the current faculty would plummet if this proposed reduction were enacted. Educators would rightfully feel that their contributions to TJHSST's unique mission do not matter. TJHSST would stand to lose faculty to other jurisdictions, and longtime teachers who mentor students and younger teachers would choose to retire, rather than being faced with salary reductions and drastic moral problems in the school.

**Do you support any reductions to the funding of TJHSST?**

Yes XNo

** TJ already struggles to fully fund its programs. I will oppose any reductions to funding TJHSST. TJHSST is the leader in public education in Fairfax County, our region, and our nation. Teaching techniques developed at TJHSST are brought to every other school in Fairfax County, and we need to fully fund and acknowledge TJHSST's important position as an education incubator.

** TJHSST provides a world class education, a unique opportunity for students in our community to learn and thrive in a STEM-focused environment, and to lead the country in these efforts. I am fully committed to continuing the work that I, and so many of our students, have been able to take advantage of and that is unique to
Fairfax.

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## SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT – No Response

## SULLY DISTRICT -- *Tom Wilson*

Instead of answering your questions one by one, I hope you don't mind if I make a general statement explaining my current thoughts about TJ and also telling you a little bit about myself. I am a graduate of Lake Braddock High School. I married my wife, Kerry and we had four kids, all of whom have attended or are attending FCPS schools.

I am familiar with raising gifted students. I fully understand that just because a student is gifted in certain areas does not mean that they have no difficulties in life. I also understand the logistics involved in trying to be involved in extracurricular activities and pursuing challenging coursework in school. For that reason, I am in support of the 8th period at Thomas Jefferson. It seems critical to have that period to allow for students who are commuting a long distance to participate fully in the life of the school.

In general, I support gifted education in Fairfax County and support the mission of TJ. Someday in the future, when we are not facing an enormous budget deficit, it might make sense to look into funding a second TJ, on the other side of Fairfax County. I know that for my family, we did not consider TJ for our kids due to the distance they would have to travel each day. In the meantime, obviously efficiencies are needed everywhere, but in my view it is wrong to look to the classrooms and to teacher pay to cut costs. We should first look at expensive consultants, extra layers of unnecessary bureaucracy, sole source contracts, unhelpful teacher trainings, technology that is purchased and sits unused, and poorly thought out logistics.

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## AT LARGE MEMBER -- *Ryan McElveen*

** We need to continue to monitor the math performance of incoming TJ students. While this does not necessarily entail a change to the TJ curriculum, it means we must ensure middle school students are learning what they need to learn in order to succeed at TJ.

**One of the FCPS Budget Task Force proposed potential budget reductions is to eliminate the 8th period at TJHSST, which will adversely affect many student programs and, correspondingly, reduce the teachers' salaries.**

**a. Do you support this potential budget reduction?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

** The 8th period provides activity and club offerings that excite our students about going to school, and these offerings allow them to become more well-rounded students. Most importantly, this embedded time in the school schedule multiple times per week provides students with the opportunity to engage in activities without having to arrange their own transportation. We absolutely should embrace every opportunity to ignite all of the passions our students, which is what 8th period allows us to do.

** Any program cut is going to hurt the morale of both students and teachers. But a cut to 8th period would be on top of years of cuts to school-based and non-school based support and lagging teacher salaries. It wouldn't be a surprise that teachers at TJ—and all over the county—would be unhappy with continued cuts and look elsewhere for a more supportive work environment with more funding for programs that engage and inspire students.

** We must continue funding programs like TJ's 8th period, because they are what make Fairfax County unique in its offerings and what help make TJ the top-ranked school in the country. This program provides a model that we can share with our funding authorities to prove that our budget is being used for stimulating activities that teach real-world skills, which in turn helps us advocate for a more sustainable budget.

**Do you support any reductions to the funding of TJHSST?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

** I have been proud to support TJ's renovation, its curriculum, and its status as a governor's school during my years on the School Board. TJ continues to be the crown jewel in the Fairfax County School system, and we must do everything possible to support it and help it remain such a special place.

## AT LARGE MEMBER -- *Ilryong Moon*

** As a parent of two TJ graduates (2006 and 2009), I know firsthand how TJ's mission, curriculum, and programs have inspired my own children and helped them develop their keen interest in math, science, technology, be prepared for college and beyond, and pursue their life dreams.

** Working with like-minded, talented, and inspiring students from the other school districts helps all students grow. There is just so much for the students to learn from each other.

** I would love to see more internship and real world experience opportunities for all students.

**One of the FCPS Budget Task Force proposed potential budget reductions is to eliminate the 8th period at TJHSST, which will adversely affect many student programs and, correspondingly, reduce the teachers' salaries.**

**a. Do you support this potential budget reduction?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

** That would have devastating effects on attracting to, and retaining at, the school the kinds of faculty members that TJ needs to have. That will also have impacts on the bus transportations for students as well.

** That will represent a huge cut in their current salary and many of the school's highly recruited teachers will not be able to stay. It will be very difficult to recruit teachers from the private sectors, colleges, or research institutes in the future.

**Do you support any reductions to the funding of TJHSST?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

I can only support funding reduction that is applicable to all schools and not just TJ, if such reduction is needed to balance the budget.

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## AT LARGE -- *Jeanette Hough*

** I will always support the mission to challenge students in their specific areas of strength. This is necessary for the bright future of our county and our country.

** As a Virginia Governor's School, TJHSST receives additional funding from the state. It also adds to the attraction of the school, being competitive area wide.

** TJHSST is known for its rigor in math, science and technology. We need to insist this rigor be upheld for the students granted admission in this prestigious school. With that, remedial math classes should not be part of the TJHSST curriculum.

**One of the FCPS Budget Task Force proposed potential budget reductions is to eliminate the 8th period at TJHSST, which will adversely affect many student programs and, correspondingly, reduce the teachers' salaries.**

**Do you support this potential budget reduction?**

☒ Yes ☒ No

** The School Board is responsible for the administration of a $2.68 billion operating fund. With this comes the responsibility to strategically plan without suggesting whole sale cuts of proven programs. The cuts should be based on impact and effectiveness. I am not prepared to suggest any cuts based on cost savings alone, bias

and popularity in a way that pits community member against community member. If elected, I will look at the budget as a whole, line by line and offer suggestions with input from the community based on information, metrics and educational impact. The projected shortfall is less than 2.5% of the total operating budget. This School Board took five years to hire an auditor general, in time for an election, but not in time to do the work that needed to be done so we could eliminate waste instead of threaten to eliminate proven programs.

** I understand educators seek out the opportunity to teach at TJHSST for its unique offerings and motivated student population. The 8th period adds to its uniqueness. The increase in salary allows TJHSST to hire specific professionals to serve the mission of TJHSST.

**Do you support any reductions to the funding of TJHSST?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

** As stated earlier, I do not support any reductions of any program based on a last minute need to balance a budget that was created by poor budget assumptions and lack of planning. I will commit to looking at the budget from a zero-base and evaluate our programs based on effectiveness, metrics and impact, not bias and popularity.

** I am committed to fully funding all of our programs in FCPS based on impact and effectiveness. TJHSST has been a long-proven entity that contributes greatly to our school systems reputation. My two brothers graduated from TJHSST and it challenged them in a way specific to their needs. Its proven programs contributed greatly to their success today. TJHSST was not a perfect fit for me and, instead, I was able to excel at my base school, Oakton. We need to continue meeting the different needs of the students in our diverse county, providing everyone with an excellent education.