

DRAFT FOR CONSIDERATION
Submitted during BOE Meeting Public Comment Period
June 14th, 2012
By Brenda Platt, parent co-leader, Piney Branch ES Young Activist Club

Montgomery County Public Schools
Board of Education
RESOLUTION 2012

**CONCERNING A TRIAL PROJECT AT PINEY BRANCH ES TO EVALUATE THE COSTS
AND POTENTIAL SAVINGS FROM REPLACING SINGLE-USE POLYSTYRENE LUNCH
TRAYS WITH REUSABLE TRAYS**

~~WHEREAS, MCPS has a duty to protect the natural environment and the health of its student population; and~~
~~WHEREAS, polystyrene is made from the monomer styrene, which is a known neurotoxicant and in 2011 was elevated from a suspected human carcinogen to reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen; and~~
~~WHEREAS, according to the World Health Organization, the ability of styrene to migrate from polystyrene packaging to food probably accounts for the greatest contamination of foods by styrene; and~~
~~WHEREAS, MCPS polystyrene lunch trays are burned in the county trash incinerator; and~~
~~WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, despite recent toughening of emission standards for municipal solid waste combustion, the process creates significant emissions, including trace amounts of hazardous air pollutants; and~~
~~WHEREAS, county, state, and federal policy prioritizes “reduce and reuse” above “recycling and composting,” which in turn are above incinerator and landfill disposal; and~~
~~WHEREAS, the U.S. Food & Drug Agency has failed to take any action restricting the use of polystyrene for foodservice ware; and~~
~~WHEREAS, due to environmental and health concerns, dozens of U.S. cities have banned polystyrene foodservice ware; and~~
~~WHEREAS, the body of knowledge linking plastics use to health related problems continues to grow and is alarming, including evidence that chemicals in plastics play an important role in the global epidemic of obesity; and~~
~~WHEREAS, reusing foodservice ware is an effective way to reduce the negative environmental impact of throw away foodservice ware; and~~
~~WHEREAS, compostable lunch trays are known to be more expensive than polystyrene trays and there is no existing composting site available to accept compostable trays; and~~
~~WHEREAS, finding alternatives to disposable polystyrene lunch trays will advance MCPS’s green school goals; and~~
~~WHEREAS, it has been at least 25 years since MCPS evaluated the costs of reusable trays, and since that time warewashing technology and efficiencies have improved; and~~
~~WHEREAS, schools, which serve the most vulnerable population, should lead on finding alternatives to polystyrene in foodservice by piloting solutions; and~~
~~WHEREAS, the Piney Branch ES PTA has raised more than \$10,000 through its Young Activist Club to pilot a dishwasher trial project and is committed to raising additional funds as needed; and~~
~~WHEREAS, the Piney Branch ES PTA’s Young Activist Club paid for an independent study to assess the feasibility and costs of its pilot dishwasher project that indicated the project could be completed for under \$12,000 for the first full year of operation; and~~
~~WHEREAS, the Piney Branch ES PTA’s Young Activist Club is now proposing to lease instead of purchase a dishwasher; and~~
~~WHEREAS, the leased dishwasher arrangement will include maintenance and all soaps and cleaning chemicals; and~~

~~**WHEREAS**, the Piney Branch ES kitchen does not require any major kitchen redesign or ventilating system to operate the leased dishwasher; and~~

WHEREAS, the goal of the Piney Branch ES trial program is to test the economic feasibility of and gather data on using reusable lunch trays at an elementary school, especially accurate data on labor time and costs, and on water and electricity use; and

WHEREAS, with this data, MCPS could be better informed about whether dishwashers should be part of the solution or not; and

WHEREAS, if dishwashers are found to incur significant unforeseen costs or problems, this result will be equally useful spurring development of alternative solutions to the styrene issue; and

WHEREAS, the Piney Branch ES PTA is committed to covering all costs associated with the trial program, which in no way will increase operating costs to MCPS or student meals; and

WHEREAS, if at any time, for any reason, the funding runs out or the pilot hits any other insurmountable problem, the Piney Branch ES PTA will have the leased dishwasher removed, and Piney Branch ES will go back to using polystyrene trays; and

WHEREAS, the MCPS Board of Education has acknowledged that polystyrene is problematic and that alternatives should be identified;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION to support Piney Branch ES PTA's demonstration trial project to evaluate the costs and potential savings of washing reusable trays as an alternative to single-use polystyrene trays; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the MCPS Board of Education supports the Piney Branch ES staff working with the PBES PTA to implement the pilot project (with a leased dishwasher) before the start of school year 2012-13, with oversight as needed from appropriate MCPS staff (e.g., Facilities and Food & Nutrition Services Division staff).