Anita L. Albertson

Dear Members of the Board of Education,

We want to thank you and your predecessors for the wisdom of providing programs like Albert Einstein High School’s Visual Arts Center Magnet. This program engages the hearts and minds of a very diverse group of students. What is really unique to this program is the way that Jane Walsh and Mygenet Harris challenge these High School Students to develop both the creative and logical sides of their brains to solve problems, skills that are critically needed and sought after by employers – now and in the future.

We want to make two points: (1) the pragmatic importance of the kind of thinking VAC teaches, and (2) how the capacity of the VAC to spark kids to embrace learning will be severely compromised if support for VAC is reduced.

**Pragmatic importance of VAC:**

As recently as on April 21st, 2015 there was a story on National Public Radio (Joe Palca interviewing Lonnie Love who runs the OakRidge National Laboratory) about 3 D printers and how they are changing the ways that manufacturing works.

To quote from the transcript:

*At the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, the future of manufacturing is taking shape. At the lab, 3D printers offer some unique design opportunities as well as interesting challenges.*

*...*

**PALCA:** Back in his office, Love told me that in a way, these new printers pose an interesting problem.

**LOVE:** If you can think it, you can create it. So from an engineering standpoint, that's challenging because most engineers think linearly. They think in straight lines, round holes.
Anita L. Albertson

**PALCA:** He says future engineers will need to think more like artists - people who can imagine new shapes in three dimensions.

**LOVE:** That's one of the big challenges - is finding those talented kids that can bring art and design together.

Ms. Jane Walsh and Ms. Mygenet Harris are doing just that! VAC is an amazing program where talented kids can bring art, design, curiosity and creativity together.

In Montgomery County, Maryland there are lots of school programs for linear thinkers to learn, there are very few programs that embrace alternative ways of learning and looking at the world using a blend of right brain/parallel processing with the left brained/linear approaches to solve problems. **Montgomery County needs a strong VAC program to nurture the creative problem-solving our children need for our 21st century.**

**Cutbacks Would Severely Compromise the VAC:**

In 2014, our eldest daughter, Genevieve, graduated from Richard Montgomery High School’s International Baccalaureate magnet program. She worked hard and received a great education. There were three amazing women, Ms. Hoover, Ms. Day and Ms. Montgomery, who administered the IB Magnet program at RM. The IB classes were taught by a host of very talented teachers. Most teachers set a limit on how many students for which they write recommendations because of the time consuming nature of that task. It is truly remarkable that Jane Walsh and Mygenet Harris are in charge of teaching 96 students (2014-5) AND are responsible for doing all of the administrative work: which includes recruiting, interviewing, responding to parents, teaching, career counseling, advocating and writing recommendations for all the Senior students. **This is a Herculean task! Montgomery County should not reduce their hours for a unique and necessary program given the value of the VAC.**

We are pleased that our younger daughter, Patricia, joined the VAC program this year after transferring from Bethesda Chevy Chase High School. Albert Einstein’s VAC drew our daughter because of the program’s depth. We support that decision because of the dedication of
Anita L. Albertson

Ms. Walsh and Ms. Harris and the time they have to nurture each student. We respectfully implore the County to NOT reduce VAC staff next year or in the future.

Sincerely,

Anita L. Albertson and Thomas M. Wall, parents of Patricia Wall 2017