

**Testimony of Stefanie Aramayo**  
**Before the Montgomery County Board of Education**  
**Public Hearing on the Strategic Plan October 12, 2006**

Good Evening,

My name is Stefanny Aramayo. I am a senior at Seneca Valley High School.

On March 8, I attended the Board meeting with the Montgomery County Latino Education Coalition. I came to support their recommendations, including that the school hire more Spanish-speaking counselors and teachers. I am excited that the school formed a special task force to keep working on this important issue. Today, I am asking that you make it a priority for the next school budget.

I am from Bolivia. I came to the United States five years ago. When I started school it was extremely hard for me because I didn't know any English and I couldn't communicate with anyone. It is difficult to learn a new language, meet new friends, and learn a new culture all at the same time. I felt lonely but I couldn't express how I felt because there was no counselor in my middle school who spoke Spanish. Latino students need counselors who speak Spanish so that they can be comfortable expressing their feelings.

In addition, Spanish-speaking teachers are helpful for the students because they also help parents be more involved. The first year I was here, my mom and dad didn't speak any English. They were scared to go to the school because no one spoke Spanish. The next year there was an ESOL counselor who helped my mom with translating and with meetings with my teachers. My grades improved that year because my parents were more involved.

The schools should pay these teachers and counselors more because they have an important skill that others don't have. If the teachers union doesn't already help the Spanish-speaking teachers to receive more money, then they should start to do that right away.

I hope that you will be sure that the school system asks for more Spanish-speaking teachers and counselors for the coming year.

Thank you.