

**Testimony of Corinna Shen on Behalf of CCACC  
Before the Montgomery County Board of Education  
Public Hearing on the Strategic Plan October 12, 2006**

Dear Dr. Weast and Members of the Board:

My name is Corinna Shen and I am representing CCACC, Chinese Culture and Community Service Center. I would like to bring to your attention regarding the concerns of the Chinese community.

As we are well aware, there is a large number of Chinese students in MCPS and not every parent is fluent in English. I know recently there is a newly added division called the Translation Unit under the ESOL department and I must applaud their effort in producing quality translations in different languages. But I must also say there are many more documents needed to be translated such as letters coming from the principals, teachers, etc, so parents are fully aware of what is going on in their children's schools. I hope that the Board can look into new strategy and technology to keep improving in this area.

Secondly, the community would like to see more Chinese speaking staff in MCPS. I know one of the goals of MCPS is to create a partnership with the parents and to get them involved in their children's education. The language line and providing interpreters at school meetings are good resources but only limited ones because when it comes to serious issues, Chinese speaking parents, regardless of whether their children are in ESOL or not, would always prefer to talk to a person face to face who understands their culture and their needs. Chinese parents have to resort to speaking to the same few available Chinese staff in MCPS, so having more bilingual and bicultural outreach staff would definitely help to reach out to many more parents.

The third issue is that some parents have expressed concern over their experiences while visiting their child's school, especially with some of the front desk staff. Parents felt that the staff were unhelpful and did not display willingness to listen to their needs. These bad experiences have made parents reluctant to voice their opinions or raise any further issues. It is important that parents, whose main concern is ensuring a quality education for their children are not prevented by the actions of school front desk staff in offering suggestions to the school. The community hopes that the Board will remind school staff that they need to be more patient with the needs of parents.

The last issue is that for some reason, the data for Chinese students do not adequately reflect the real number of students in MCPS. For example, it shows more Cantonese speaking students than Mandarin and we all know that it is not true. The community suggests that all Chinese speaking students should be recorded under one language category instead of subdividing into different dialects. There are way too many dialects under the Chinese language and putting students under different languages will not truly reflect the needs of the students. Chinese written language is the same regardless where a Chinese family come from or what dialect they speak.

Thank you for giving me the time to express these issues and concerns.

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