



## The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

Good evening, my name is Jane de Winter and I am testifying on behalf of the Montgomery County Council of PTAs. This evening I am going to address Goal Three of the Strategic Plan: Strengthen Productive Partnerships for Education in support of the MCCPTA goal of increasing the number of local-school based Parent Community Outreach Coordinators.

This goal has four milestones. The first states that *"the district and local schools communicate with parents regularly about the MCPS educational programs and students' academic progress"* The third milestone is *"all schools are welcoming to our diverse community and provide varied opportunities for engaging parents as partners."*

The recent staff report to the Board of Education notes that parents are a child's first teacher and that MCPS has a vested interest in supporting and engaging parents as true partners in the educational process. When parents are engaged they can support their child's education at home. When parents are engaged they can advocate for their child. When parents are engaged they can volunteer in schools and support the education of other children. When parents are engaged they can become leaders in their schools, PTAs, and community.

The school system has many ongoing programs to engage parents such as Study Circles, Conquista tus sueños, and the Parent Academy. Many publications are translated into other languages; staff can request interpreters for meetings. However, there is a fundamental gap in all these programs and that is at the local schools. These efforts can and do encourage parents to become involved with their child's school and education but they do not provide the resources to support parents as they take their first steps towards implementing what they learned from these programs.

How does a parent who does not speak English take his desire to become involved to a school where no one on the staff speaks his language? How can a small group of parents finishing the Study Circles program turn their enthusiasm into a local program where they are the outreach workers who can draw in other parents?

Parents want their children to succeed in school. Parents have high expectations for their children even when they don't know how to support these expectations. Many parents of MCPS students have left their own country to provide better opportunities for their own children. Many parents are unfamiliar with the customs and culture of the US educational system. Many parents were not successful as students or were unable to complete school themselves due to lack of community or family support. These parents and students would be better served if there were more bilingual local-school based Parent Community Outreach Coordinators.

With me tonight is my friend Liliam Eguino whom I met at Conquista tus sueños two years ago. Liliam is going to share some of her experiences with you.