

## MCPS 2009 BUDGET

**Karen Leggett, Transition Work Group, October 11, 2007**

I am Karen Leggett, speaking on behalf of the Transition Work Group: parents, community service providers, and school and county representatives, all of whom are concerned about the often difficult transition of students with disabilities from school to the uncertainties of life in the adult world.

Between 900 and 1,000 students with educational disabilities graduate from our schools each year. Some go on to succeed in college. Some need supports in getting further education and employment. Some require significant assistance. The job of our Transition Support Teachers is to help these young people through this transition – and we still have a ratio of more than 200:1 TSTs per high school, plus one part-time TST for students in all 38 middle schools.

We applaud the addition of six Transition Support Teachers in the 2008 budget. These teachers are now working with students ages 18-21, helping them gain the work experience and real world savvy that they will need in years ahead. These are the students who usually have the greatest need for transition supports.

**As a most urgent need, we see the addition of six more Transition Support Teachers and nine more transition paraeducators to work intensively with these students before they exit school at 21.**

We also believe in the need to broaden curriculum options for all students who are choosing employment rather than a 4-year college or university. Many of our young people - even those with significant disabilities – can be productive employees and citizens if we are creative and committed to supporting them in

school through on-the-job training, job development, and academics that acknowledge their different ways of learning.

We strongly support the recommendations of the Special Education Staffing Committee. Hours-based staffing, counting special education students for whole school staffing, and professional development for general and special educators and paraeducators - all of these can make our schools provide a better chance for students who have disabilities.

The passage from school to the world is an important point in a student's life. For students with disabilities, the classroom teacher can seldom guide the student and family through the intricacies of possible adult services for which they may be eligible. Our school counselors are overbusy helping the general education students get into the college of their choice. For our students with disabilities, adequate support from the transition staff is critical and requires additional Transition Support Teachers and more transition paraeducators.

Thank you!

Karen Leggett