

TESTIMONY  
OF  
ESTEFANY CARRILLO  
TO THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
COMMUNITY FORUM  
AT  
WHEATON HIGH SCHOOL  
OCTOBER 11, 2007

Estefany Carrillo

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Good evening members of the board:

My name is Estefany Carrillo, and I attended Montgomery Blair High School until my graduation last year. Currently, I attend Montgomery College on a merit-based scholarship.

As students, we feel a great pressure to be prepared for higher education. We know it will benefit us to make the most of our academic experience while in high school. I am one student who understood this.

I consider myself very fortunate to have taken Advanced Placement classes in high school. In my home country of Ecuador, I would not have had the opportunity. However, the process to enroll in these classes was complicated and unclear.

My peers and teachers cautioned me that these classes were especially hard. When I spoke to my counselor about the idea, she was not very receptive. She was worried that I might not be able to handle the workload, and she warned me that I would have to take full responsibility over my grades. I felt intimidated, and to an extent, a little insulted.

I enrolled in two AP courses my junior year. I felt socially isolated since only one or two students were Latinos. Nevertheless, I performed well academically and chose to continue on the AP track into my senior year.

A friend of mine received similar advice from her peers and teachers. Despite having similar grades, her counselor was even more assertive than mine, and my friend decided not to take AP courses.

I believe that our experiences highlight a glaring inconsistency within MCPS. Why are school faculty discouraging capable students from taking challenging courses? Couldn't counselors work to pair students in AP classes with those who are considering a similar path? I firmly believe that successful students make the best mentors for their younger peers.

Advanced courses are not for everyone. But those who express an interest ought to be taken more seriously, and I believe that MCPS needs to make a stronger commitment to these students.

MCPS would benefit from a higher Hispanic participation in its advanced courses for several reasons. First, it would promote diversity in a more rigorous academic environment. As more Hispanic students enroll in advanced classes, they would establish richer cultural connections with students of different backgrounds, which in turn would improve their learning experiences and result in an overall betterment of all MCPS students.

Second, advanced courses would help Latinos to become better prepared for college. With more Latinos pursuing a post-secondary education, my community would be in a stronger position to disprove some of the stereotypes surrounding the academic performance of Latino students.

There are many benefits to helping Hispanic students get into AP and International Baccalaureate classes. However, action must be taken in order to assure that they are given the right opportunities, the right information, and the encouragement they need.

Thank you.