

Montgomery County Board of Education
Strategic Planning Community Forum
October 16, 2008

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Good evening. My name is Kelley Eiskant. I am the parent of three boys: a preschooler, a 1st-grader at Bel Pre Elementary, and a 7th-grader at Loiederman Middle School. I am also a member of the MCPS Parent Advisory Council.

I would first like to say, on behalf of the Loiederman community, thank you to the BOE for its decision to continue the Middle School Magnet Consortium funding. Loiederman students are able to expand their studies in the arts, core subjects, and high-school courses with built-in student academic support and caring, committed teachers and staff. Funding for the Middle School Magnet Consortium should be maintained every year as a permanent part of the budget. As a mom of two little guys, I'd love for them to have the same opportunities in middle school that their brother did.

These are tough economic times, indeed, and require tough decisions. One priority that MCPS cannot afford to cut is its efforts on Parent Involvement. I can stand before you and ask for much-needed modernizations for my children's schools, or to increase the family income needed to qualify for free and reduced meals. But the bottom line is that, without parent involvement, our students simply will not achieve their potential.

I looked at the parent survey results from 2006-07 school year. It's important to consider such factors as the percentage of respondents and the school population in my interpretation of these results. I chose 2 elementary schools- Strathmore in Silver Spring, where my son attended during that time-, and Wyngate in Bethesda.

At Strathmore, 25% responded, compared to 44% at Wyngate. When asked, "How often do you volunteer at your child's school?" 91% of the Wyngate parents replied "Almost always" or "Sometimes". At Strathmore, 64% replied "Rarely" or "Never". When asked how frequently they attended Back-to-School Night, 95% of Wyngate parents replied "Always" or "Almost Always", compared to 80% of Strathmore parents. Finally, when asked to agree with the statement "I am satisfied with the overall instruction my child receives", 97% of Wyngate parents agreed. 70% of Strathmore's parents agreed.

In the 2007-08 MSAs, according to Schools-At-a-Glance, Wyngate's 4th grade students scored over 98% proficiency in both math and reading. Strathmore's 4th grade students scored 68.5% proficiency in math, and 78.4% proficiency in reading.

Even with cautious interpretation, it's not difficult to see the discrepancies. I take from this data two things:

1. When parents are involved, students perform better.

2. It is immensely important to get non-involved parents more involved.

Efforts such as the Parent Academy workshops, offering child care, translators, and food for evening meetings, communication by Connect-Ed, Quick Notes, and good old-fashioned flyers, must continue. We need to explore strategies to cross cultural, financial, and literacy lines to reach *all* parents and allow them to understand how important their role is in their children's education. It may be necessary to explore other means of communication. It may be worthwhile to look into holding evening meetings at community centers, or providing a bus for PTA or Parent Academy workshops. All of these details can be discussed in due time.

Parent involvement is a necessity. The Board of Education and everyone involved in MCPS education, *must* continue these efforts. When we consider priorities to improve *all* students' achievement, really, parent involvement is *the* most important one. We owe it to our students.