

Thank you for soliciting comment on the priorities that should guide expenditures during these difficult economic times. As we all know, resources matter for student achievement, and the decisions of MCPS about resources matter. The MCPS strategic plan is our long range operating guide for accomplishing the 3 cornerstones of our mission:

- To provide a high-quality, world-class education
- to ensures success for every student, and
- To have excellent teaching and learning

The strategic plan has provided us with data that allows us to view how every school and student in our system is performing against a set of quantitative measures. We have reached this plateau under the talented leadership of our Superintendent, Jerry Weast, and the vigilance of you, our elected Board of Education. Thank you for all you have done.

This evening I'd like to focus on the single milestone being used at the high school level to measure accomplishment of our mission: "an increase enrollment and performance of all students in gifted, Honors, Advanced Placement, and other advanced programs." MCPS has enthroned the Honors, traditional college prep curriculum, and AP and IB tests as the new standard for educational success. We embrace of these measures on the basis of the theory of change. If MCPS raises/changes the bar by having more students take tough AP and IB tests, performance will improve. Unfortunately, our change theory is fatally flawed. It does not take into account the fundamental fact that, measuring whether a student passes IB and AP tests, does not measure whether he has developed the ability to think. Nor does our change theory take into account the fact that no causal relationship exists between a student's ability to pass an AP or IB test and his ability to be successful.

As you are aware, a growing number of experts believe as a general rule AP classes simply cover more academic content at a faster pace. They assert that the principal skill mastered in an AP or IB class is the how to memorize copious amounts of information for regurgitation on a test For example, a 2002 review by the National Research Council, part of the National Academy of Sciences, found that AP math and science courses lack depth, cram in too much material at the expense of understanding, and fail to keep up with developments in the subjects. I agree with these experts. MCPS measures rigor and continuous improvement by the increase in the number of students passing AP, IB and Honors courses. These courses almost entirely focus on factual recall. Setting a goal of increased participation in these classes does nothing to measure whether a student has received a world class education. Instead it pegs our analysis of student achievement to mindless, test-based measures.

I recommend that we begin our analysis of how to allocate our increasingly scarce resources to high schools by reexamining our current measures in light of our Critical Questions:

- What do students need to learn?
- How will we know they have learned it?
- What will we do when they haven't
- What will we do when they already know it?

And replace these measures with research-based measures that make a difference for student achievement. Education is a top priority in Montgomery County with over half of the County budget going to public education. For that investment in return MCPS should provide the county with graduates to retain and grow a healthy and globally competitive economy.