

**The Arc of Montgomery County Education Committee
And
The Autism Society of America Montgomery County Chapter (MCASA)**

Community Forum Testimony, October 15, 2008

By: Liz Roth, Chair of The Arc MC Education Committee
Co-President of the ASAMC (MCASA)

Good Evening Ms. Navarro, Dr. Weast and Board Members: We have decided to jointly address you tonight in order to save time for everyone. Many things financially have changed not only locally, but in the state and the United States as well as the world in the last couple of weeks. We all realize that it is going to be very hard to hold services where they are and only provide for added enrollment. You are going to have many tough decisions again this year. It is important in these times that initiatives that are going well continue and be improved.

Members of The Arc Education Committee have visited a number of schools during the past year in order to see how some of the MCPS initiatives are being addressed in different schools. We visited elementary, middle and high schools.

We are going to address areas and issues that we feel are very important for students in both General and Special Education.

- Hours Based Staffing – We would recommend continuing this. It seems in most cases student needs are being addressed with this type of staffing.
- Count Special Education Students in General Education Classes – This is a must that the SPED Students be counted as attending General Ed Classes. ALL students must be counted as attending the same classes in order for appropriate staffing be allotted to all classrooms and the proper services be given to ALL students.
- Transition Support Teachers (TST) – The TST is most important for ALL students to give the support needed for Planning and Transition to higher education and to adult service providers.
- Training for Para-educators – Para-educators are an integral part of each class, giving the support to the teachers and being a “teacher” to the students. It is important for the training of para-educators for them to help provide the appropriate education for all students.
- UDL (Universal Design for Learning) – An initiative that will help all teachers to provide better help to students.

As MCPS has a large continuum of services that is provided to students, it is Important that the resources that are already available in MCPS be used in the best possible way for all students. It is important that in each school for the staff know the resources that are available to them and that teachers and other staff know how to use these resources and technology that is at their fingertips. Don't try to reinvent the wheel without looking at what is available.

Somewhere I heard the three (3) E's – Efficient, Effective and Equitable. With principles like these applied to the resources available, we can continue to be a winning school system for all students.

Thank you very much.....