

**Testimony of Evie Frankl for the  
Montgomery County Board of Education Strategic Planning Forum  
October 16, 2008**

Good evening. My name is Evie Frankl, and I am the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Education Forum (MCEF). MCEF recommends the development of an overarching equity policy to help drive and actualize MCPS' commitment to equity and excellence. We make this recommendation in these trying economic times, for something that doesn't cost a penny yet could be priceless.

MCPS no doubt is committed to equity, and that is illustrated in the priority it gives to many excellent and far-reaching efforts—from the Early Success Performance Plan, Middle School Magnet Consortium, to the tireless (and I mean tireless) work of the Equity Training and Development Team. However, despite its commitment and initiatives, system-wide equity continues to be difficult to achieve. An overarching equity policy could drive the system toward overcoming the persistent achievement gap including disproportionalities in suspension/expulsion rates, gifted and talented identification, graduation rates, special education identification and recommendations for challenging course work. MCPS is committed to eliminating these barriers to equity. Its strategic plan makes this commitment clear – MCPS fully intends to be a school system where student achievement is no longer predictable by race.

What would an equity policy do to move this intention forward? It would codify the intention and capture what is a belief system into a more permanent articulation of this vision. It would set the course, create a road map to hold other policies and practices up against to make sure the system is consistently moving in the right direction. It would help to prioritize so that ALL areas of policy and practice are moving in the same direction—curriculum, methodology, grouping practices, staff development, assessment, recruitment, hiring, evaluation—all moving consistently, purposefully, intentionally, efficiently and effectively toward greater engagement challenge and success for ALL children.

For example:

An equity policy might help to prioritize a restructuring to create a full (and fully staffed) Office of Equity Affairs to coordinate system-wide efforts in professional development, human resources, curriculum and instruction, special education, and assessment, so that equity initiatives and practices reflect a systemic approach and are ensured the capacity to succeed.

A few initiatives that this new office might put in place:

An equity office could move forward a system-wide staff development focus on high quality differentiated instruction so that teachers have the skills they need to use the best, most engaging curriculum and methodologies for all children while differentiating instruction for all types of learners. Where schools are already doing this, it could help to evaluate and disseminate successful practices.

An equity office could up the ante to recruit and hire more teachers of color. It could move MCPS to develop and implement innovative solutions such as an enhanced “Grow Your Own” program in partnership with community-based organizations and local colleges and universities as they are doing in Illinois.

This year, at our Equity in Education Coalition Policy, Practice and Pizza Forums (formerly Best Practice and Policy Breakfasts), we plan to focus on these issues and more. As always, we invite your participation in these forums. Together with the constituencies represented there, we will continue our work to raise and discuss equity-related issues in order to discover and move forward best practices to help move us toward a school system where student achievement is truly no longer predictable by race.