
Board of Education Community Forum
Budget Testimony by Least Restrictive Environment Access Group
of Montgomery County

I represent the LRE Access Group of Montgomery County, a project of the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, Montgomery County educators, parents and citizens. Our mission is to increase access to the least restrictive environment by promoting best practices in education.

The next school year will require difficult budget choices in implementing the MCPS Mission and Strategic Plan. The system must focus on proven practices, essential skills, and efficient use of personnel, materials and funds. The LRE Access Group sees priorities in five areas: staff allocation, staff development, maintaining support staff , technology and use of resources.

Good staff allocations decrease stress for students, promote effective accessible instruction, and increase employees' job satisfaction.

- Hours-based staffing assigns staff on the basis of hours of service each child needs instead of a simple head-count.
- Inclusive classroom counts in the elementary schools record not only the number of general education students in a given class, but also the special education students present..

Embedded staff development pays huge dividends for teachers, para-educators, and students. Basic information should include technology in education, LRE accessibility, and Universal Design for Learning principles. UDL will be covered in greater depth by Ricki Sabia at the October forum.

MCPS must maintain the following critical support staff in the schools and in Central Office:

- Para-educators
- Itinerant resource teachers,
- Behavior support specialists
- Technology support specialists and
- Transition teachers

These MCPS employees are worth their weight in gold. Their support is

essential for optimal access to a rigorous curriculum.

Technology is used in almost all facets of modern life and it dissolves barriers to learning. MCPS must find ways to increase the number of computers, peripherals and learning applications in our schools. We dare not fall behind in this area.

A system-wide online inventory of existing resources is needed, along with a simple method for teacher access. This will reduce unnecessary duplication of effort and expense, while maintaining excellence in curriculum delivery. Educators who create inclusive learning materials should receive recognition for their contributions to MCPS Strategic Plan Goals #1 and #4.

The LRE Access Group will continue its partnership with MCPS in support of student achievement and academic excellence, consistent with the Strategic Plan. We look forward to providing more educational opportunities for administrators, staff and stakeholders, as well as recognizing leadership and excellence in Least Restrictive Environment Access in Montgomery County Public Schools.

Thank you for your time.

This testimony is supported by LRE Access Group members :

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