

"Magnet Program at Blair"
Testimony by Dipak Oza, Montgomery county resident
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Respected members of the Board of Education, good evening.

We live in a competitive global world. As we prepare our children for the future, they will be increasingly competing with and contributing to not only the county and state, but to the nation and the world. While we want to provide the best education to all students in the county, this is not the time to reduce the investments and the resources for the brightest and the best our county has. These are the students who will be the global leaders for tomorrow and they need to be challenged during their formative years to maximize their potential.

Students in the highly-selective Blair magnet are smart kids, but they also work very hard. They prepare for a very rigorous instructional program and they practice for extracurricular academic competitions, just like elite athletes spend time in the weight room. In addition to their rigorous coursework, many magnet students also study and prepare for regional and national math competitions and computer science competitions, where they usually excel against their peers. Some computer science modeling competitions require a team of magnet students to devote a continuous 48-hour period in a single weekend to writing sophisticated computer models. Magnet students also participate in regional and national biology and physics competitions. In all of this work, magnet students challenge and support each other. The Blair magnet program operates at an incredibly high level because it attracts highly-able, highly-motivated students. It succeeds because Magnet teachers provide a rigorous, interdisciplinary academic program that challenges students to work at the highest level of their ability. The results -- whether measured by the number of Intel or Siemens Semifinalists, or math or computer science competitions won -- are simply not achieved at many other high schools in the nation. Without the Blair Magnet, they would not be achieved here in Montgomery County. As it is, the Blair Magnet sets a very high standard that other County high schools try to emulate, by offering more rigorous courses and encouraging their students to obtain summer internships in Federal laboratories.

The magnet program at Blair has been very successful due to the wise investment decisions of the county leadership in the past. The program offers a challenging curriculum and advanced courses that are offered in only a handful of high schools in the country. I am a proud parent of two magnet program students at Blair - a 2000 and a 2010 graduate. Both my children undertook a vigorous curriculum and were challenged by the class material. I see them and their peers succeed in getting admitted to the top colleges in the country. They graduate from the Magnet Program and proudly represent MCPS at colleges that continue to develop them for future leadership in the world.

The achievements of Blair's magnet students are also the achievements of the Montgomery County student body. Especially in difficult economic times, it is important to maintain the focus on the magnet programs to continue to improve the achievement of the student body as a whole and magnet program is an important part of it. The unique nature of the Magnet Programs is an immense incentive to live in Montgomery County, and without proper funding, it will not continue to draw the best and brightest students. Thank you for your time and attention.