

President of the School Board, Ms. Shirley Brandman, school board members, good evening. My name is **Preston Rico**, president of AAPAC. It stands for Asian American Parent Advocacy Council. Our group mission is to support and speak on behalf of Asian American children and youth. Encourage Asian American parent involvement in their schools and their community.

There's a myth in the county that have the perception that since Asian Americans work hard, keep to themselves, are quiet that all is well. Silence means consent. Silence means agreement. With that silence comes some unintended results. Some might want to take advantage of that silence. Some might want to ignore the needs of the community because of that silence. As a community, we haven't done a good job of making ourselves be heard.

Recently, there was much debate in the community on MCPS's decision to someday drop the label of "Gifted and Talented." The Asian community is not so much concerned about the labeling per se, but what they are concerned about is, is this a start of something more? Is MCPS doing this for political reasons? Is MCPS thinking of marginalizing the program? Is it because of budget constraints? Asian Americans comprise 40%-to 60% of the GT population. Why would MCPS try to change written policy? Does the replacement have the same rigor? As a community, we believe in closing the gap through raising the bar. Keeping what we have now and improving it.

Therefore I am here to ask you to fully fund MCPS budget for the upcoming year. Your commitment to education throughout all your careers should be commended and praised. The gains have to be sustained even in tough economic times. We know that students of all backgrounds, regardless of ethnicity who are currently achieving at the highest levels may appear to be less in need. However, appearances can sometimes be deceiving. Who can measure the loss of a child who is not motivated in school? Who can measure a child that doesn't reach his or her potential? Who can measure a child's progress without necessary resources?

Funding spent on Gifted and Talented programs goes a long way and supports many more students than just those labeled "gifted and talented." Highly gifted centers and programs serves as a great tool for challenging instruction. I know you have to look at the budget as a whole and probably can not make specific recommendations to MCPS as to what areas to fund. But I know you can review the budget and ensure that gifted and talented programs are not shortchanged.

Thank you for listening and have a good evening.