

FY 2007 QUESTION NUMBER: 18

QUESTION:

Clarify what is meant by a “magnet” program.

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: 3-26

ANSWER:

MCPS staff is reviewing terminology related to magnet and center programs for the highly gifted. MCPS has followed the United States Department of Education definition of magnets as programs that draw students from outside the established boundaries of a school to decrease socioeconomic and minority isolation. In establishing programs for the highly gifted, but not for the express purpose of decreasing socioeconomic isolation, MCPS has used the term “center,” such as the elementary Centers for the Highly Gifted, or the Roberto Clemente Upcounty Centers. However, parents have come to associate the term “magnet” with programming, not necessarily only involving attendance areas. The Upcounty High School Magnet Programs Association specifically requested “magnet programming” in reference to programs for the highly gifted and a replication of the “Blair Magnet Program at Poolesville.”

This variation in terminology for programs for the highly gifted has led to confusion among parents and staff. The introduction of whole school magnets in 2004 with the establishment of the Middle School Magnet Consortium has further blurred definitions. The new program at Poolesville High School will open as a whole school magnet model. Staff is reviewing terminology to develop a consistent approach to facilitate clear communication.