

THE GEORGE B. THOMAS, SR. LEARNING ACADEMY, INC.

**REPORT ON THE SATURDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM
2007–2008**

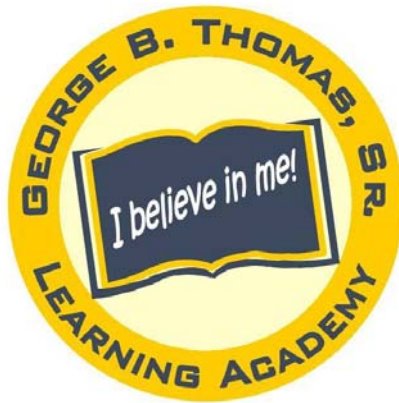


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INTRODUCTION

Program Overview

The George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy, Inc. (GBTLA)—a tutoring and mentoring program—has been in operation since 1986 and has enhanced the academic achievement of thousands of children in Montgomery County Maryland through its signature program, the Saturday School. **The mission of the program is to accelerate students’ mastery of core academic subjects—specifically reading, language arts, and mathematics—and to close the achievement gap.** The goal of the Saturday School program is for all students to demonstrate grade-level proficiency in core academic subjects and to achieve a level of proficient or higher on local, state, and federal assessments, such as the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and the High School Assessment (HSA). As a strategic partner of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), and with the continued strong support of the Montgomery County Government, GBTLA provides students with additional time and instructional support to master the concepts taught during the regular school week. GBTLA is designed to close the achievement gap created by racial and economic disparities. The program not only focuses on students who are having academic difficulty, but also provides support to students in advanced courses of study. Students are expected to attend the program regularly and to demonstrate improved academic confidence and progress. In the past three years, over 9,000 students have been served by the Saturday School program and over 3,000 parents have attended the GBTLA’s parent workshops.

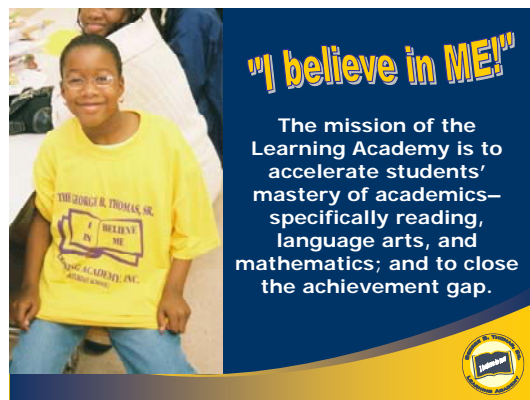
The Saturday School program helps students build a strong academic foundation and develop a healthy and positive self-image. Students’ increased confidence and heightened awareness of “what is possible” encourages them to reach for higher goals and to accomplish more than they ever thought possible. For the past 22 years, the Saturday School program has helped thousands of children (who are at risk of academic failure) to enhance their academic achievement. Students work with certified teachers and volunteer tutors in small-group learning environments. Services are easily accessed and the cost of the program is minimal. The only cost incurred by parents is a \$20 registration fee per student which is used to defray administrative costs. All materials and curriculum resources are provided at no cost to the students.

Each year, the Saturday School program serves approximately 3,200 students in Grades 1–12 in 12 centers on Saturday mornings during the school year. Targeted enrollment for 2008–2009 is 4,000 students. There are 12 centers strategically placed throughout the county (Montgomery Blair, Albert Einstein, Gaithersburg, John F. Kennedy, Magruder, Northwest, Paint Branch, Rockville, Sherwood, Springbrook, Watkins Mill, and Wheaton HS), with a concentration on the mid section of the county designated by School Superintendent, Dr. Jerry D. West as the “red zone.” This core urbanized area, which stretches from Takoma Park to Gaithersburg, includes 49% of all MCPS elementary school students; 69% of MCPS’ African American and 77% of Hispanic students; 79% English language learners and 73% of students receiving Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS).

Program Model

The Saturday School program operates at 12 high school sites in MCPS. Each site enrolls students from the cluster schools (elementary and middle schools) that feed into the high school where the program is housed. Each Saturday School location is staffed with a center director, a lead tutor/trainer, approximately 25 lead tutors (based on enrollment), and volunteers. Center directors administer, direct, plan, and coordinate all instructional program operations of the Saturday School program at the individual GBTLA sites. They recruit, hire, train, and supervise the work of the lead tutors and volunteers. All center directors are either retired administrators or current MCPS teachers in leadership roles. Most have advanced degrees and all have extensive school-based experience and are skilled at working with students and parents.

On Saturday mornings, lead tutors (certified teachers) and volunteer tutors work with students on core academic subjects and teach successful learning/study strategies. A 30-minute motivational session is conducted at the centers by the center director. The motivational session is designed to get the students in the appropriate mind-set for learning and provides a focus to ensure that the mission of GBTLA is fulfilled. The program is highly structured and consistent in its operation at all centers—what occurs at one center occurs at all centers. Parents are encouraged to attend the motivational session with their children, providing



an excellent opportunity for communication between parents and GBTLA staff. To foster building high self-esteem and confidence, the slogan of the Saturday School, “*I believe in me!*” is reinforced in a variety of ways before students are dismissed to their tutoring groups.

After the motivational session, students in Grades 1–8 break into small, grade-level tutoring groups for 60 minutes of academic support in reading/language arts and 60 minutes in mathematics. For the 2008–2009 school year, an additional half-hour of academic support has been added to each tutoring session. Test-taking skills are incorporated throughout the tutoring session. High school students typically work with tutors on specific concepts or course assignments for the entire tutoring session—often in computer labs. Also, each high school student completes a “Student/Parent Agreement for Academic Excellence” plan with a tutor. This plan helps the student with goal setting. It also has the benefit of ensuring a collaborative and productive partnership between GBTLA and the high school students and parents.

Students are tutored by both lead tutors and volunteers. Lead tutors are critical to the quality of the services being provided, and ultimately, the success of the program. Because lead tutors are certified teachers, they serve as teaching models to all volunteers and help volunteers gain an understanding of the curriculum so that their tutoring is in alignment with what is being taught in the classroom. The lead tutors also serve as leaders and ensure that high quality instruction takes place in each of the classroom settings. All tutors, both lead tutors and volunteers, receive professional development training at the beginning of each semester. This comprehensive training is conducted by staff from the Office of Organizational Development (OOD), and is planned and coordinated through the efforts of a planning team consisting of GBTLA executive staff and instructional specialists from OOD and the Office of Curriculum

and Instructional Programs (OCIP). Ongoing professional development helps to ensure that the GBTLA program is aligned and sequenced with the MCPS curriculum and that it is delivered consistently at all 12 GBTLA sites. In addition, GBTLA staff members identify quality professional development as one of the key reasons for low staff turnover.

Although the focus of the Saturday School program is academics, the program is designed to go beyond the books. Issues of self-esteem, social and emotional growth, and motivation are also addressed. These values are exhibited by our center directors, teachers, tutors, and members of the community through their services as mentors and success models. Successful members of the business community serve as motivational speakers and relate what is necessary to achieve success. These values are stressed through the GBTLA slogan, “*I believe in me!*” For participating students and their families, the weekly sessions open the door to success in school—the first step toward success in life.

Going forward, the GBTLA plans to continue to improve the operation of its programs by maximizing the use of funding and resources it receives from MCPS, Montgomery County Government, the Federal Government, and other sources. In the future, the academy will work aggressively with the Office of Shared Accountability (OSA), OCIP, the Department of Family and Community Partnerships (DFCP), and OOD to design an outcome measures system that will show annually how well students are achieving in standardized measures by MCPS.

Program Strengths

- The curriculum resources used in the Saturday School program are designed and recommended by the MCPS OCIP and are aligned with and complement the MCPS Instructional Program.
- The Saturday School program is highly structured and does not tolerate discipline issues.
- Students are tutored in small groups on core academic subjects. Lead tutors, who are certified teachers, are staffed based on providing one teacher for every 15 students. Volunteer tutors help to make this ratio even more favorable at a targeted tutor/student ratio of 1 to 3.
- GBTLA provides a supervised, safe environment for youth—an alternative to participating in crime and delinquent activities in the community.
- The GBTLA staff members have experience working with students and have a strong connection to the school community and the families served.
- GBTLA promotes the involvement of the community by providing opportunities for individuals to volunteer as tutors and businesses to contribute in a variety of ways.
- GBTLA provides opportunities for secondary students to earn required Student Service Learning hours.

2007–2008 DATA SUMMARY

Highlights

GBTLA is an enhancement program that provides support for students who need more time and individualized instruction on the MCPS Monday through Friday program. The primary purpose of this report is to provide data on the contribution of the GBTLA Saturday School program in support of MCPS student outcomes. The highlights present data on the effectiveness of the Saturday School program for fiscal year 2007-2008. More detailed information regarding the data is described below in tables and graphs.

- At the end of the 2007–2008 school year, 3,048 students were enrolled in GBTLA. The tutoring staff included 160 lead tutors, 95 adult volunteers, 41 college volunteers, and 221 high school volunteers, making the student to tutor ratio approximately six to one.
- Partnerships with Bowie State University, Montgomery College, Towson State University, The Universities at Shady Grove, and The University of MD at College Park provide college volunteer tutors.
- Approximately 42% of the students enrolled are African American, 33% Hispanic, 16% Asian American, and 9% white (see Table 1 and Figure 1, page 5).
- Slightly more than one half (53.5%) of the GBTLA students are male (see Table 2 and Figure 2, page 6).
- Slightly more than one half (52.8%) of GBTLA students receive FARMS. Overall, 15% of the GBTLA students receive English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services and 8% receive special education services (see Table 3, page 6).
- Overall, 48.5% of the GBTLA students attended 11 or more sessions out of a possible 22 (see Table 4 and Figure 3, page 7).
- On average, approximately 25% of participants in Grades 3-8 showed improvement of at least one letter grade in both reading and mathematics from marking period 1 to marking period 4 (see Table 5, page 8).
- Students in all race/ethnic groups in both Grade 1 and Grade 2 showed considerable improvements in MCPS Assessment Program in Primary Reading (AP-PR) results from the fall to the spring administration of the assessment. In Grade 1, 6.6% of participants met benchmark in the fall administration as compared with 73.3% in the spring administration of the assessment. In Grade 2, 2.2% of participants met benchmark in the fall administration as compared with 52.6% in the spring administration of the assessment (see Table 6, page 8 and Table 7, page 9).
- All grade levels showed improvement in the spring administration of Measures of Academic Progress-Reading (MAP-R) as compared with the fall administration (see Table 8, page 9).
- In total, 1,108 parents attended the GBTLA parent workshops which were conducted by members of the MCPS DFCP. Workshop trainers noted that the Saturday workshops are especially important for parents who cannot attend workshops on weekday evenings or visit their children's school during the week because of work obligations. Approximately 85% of participants said that the workshops helped them with an understanding of the topic and provided them with information to help their children at home (see Table 9, page 10).
- Parents and students overwhelmingly agreed that the Saturday School program helped their children to improve academic achievement as demonstrated on Parent and Student Satisfaction Surveys (see page 11).

Demographic Information

Grade-level Grouping by Race/Ethnicity. In Grades 1–8, approximately 41% of the students are African American and 34% are Hispanic. More than one half (51.3%) of the students in Grades 9 through 12 are African American and 24.4% are Hispanic.

Table 1
Number and Percentage of Students by Grade Level and Race/Ethnicity

	Grades 1–5		Grades 6–8		Grades 9–12		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
African American	739	39.3	298	44.8	202	51.3	1239	42.2
American Indian	2	0.1	2	0.3	1	0.3	5	0.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	309	16.4	93	14.0	61	15.5	463	15.8
Hispanic	652	34.7	223	33.5	96	24.4	971	33.0
White	178	9.5	49	7.4	34	8.6	261	8.9
Total	1880	100.0	665	100.0	394	100.0	2939 ¹	100.0

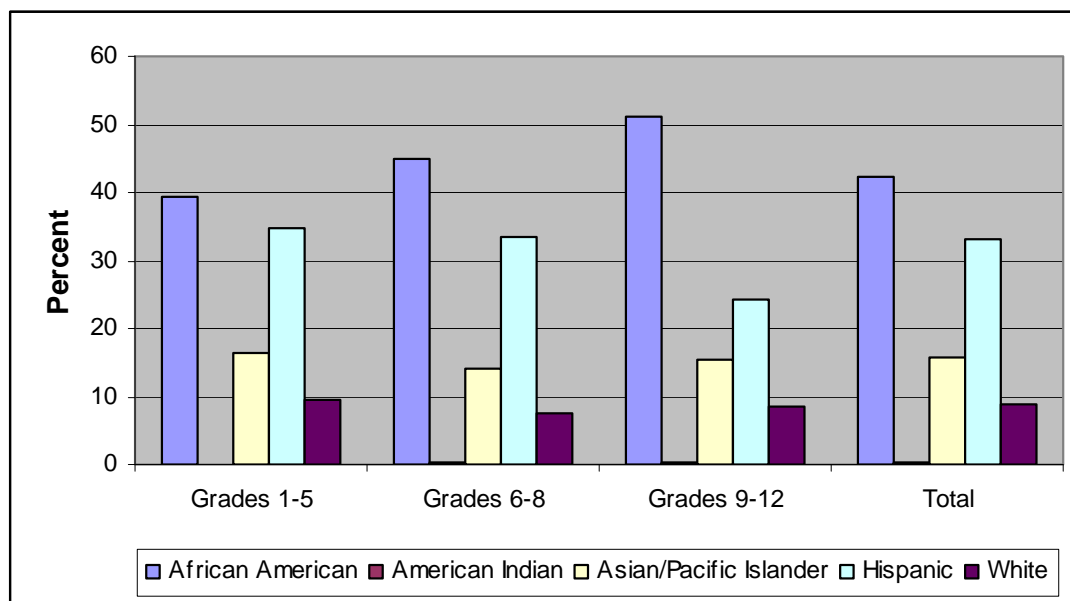


Figure 1. Bar graph shows percent of students by grade level and race/ethnicity.

The tutoring staff includes 160 lead tutors, 95 adult volunteers, 41 college volunteers, and 221 high school volunteers, making the student to tutor ratio approximately six to one.

¹ GBTLA enrollment statistics show enrollment of 3048 students. These are 109 more than the 2939 figure in this report. The difference of 109 represents the private school students and the MCPS students whose academic records were not available.

Grade-level Grouping by Gender. Slightly more than one half (53.5%) of the GBTLA students are male, no matter which grade grouping.

Table 2
Number and percent of students by grade level and gender

	<u>Grades 1–5</u>		<u>Grades 6–8</u>		<u>Grades 9–12</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Female	915	48.7	283	42.6	170	43.1	1368	46.5
Male	965	51.3	382	57.4	224	56.9	1571	53.5
Total	1880	100.0	665	100.0	394	100.0	2939	100.0

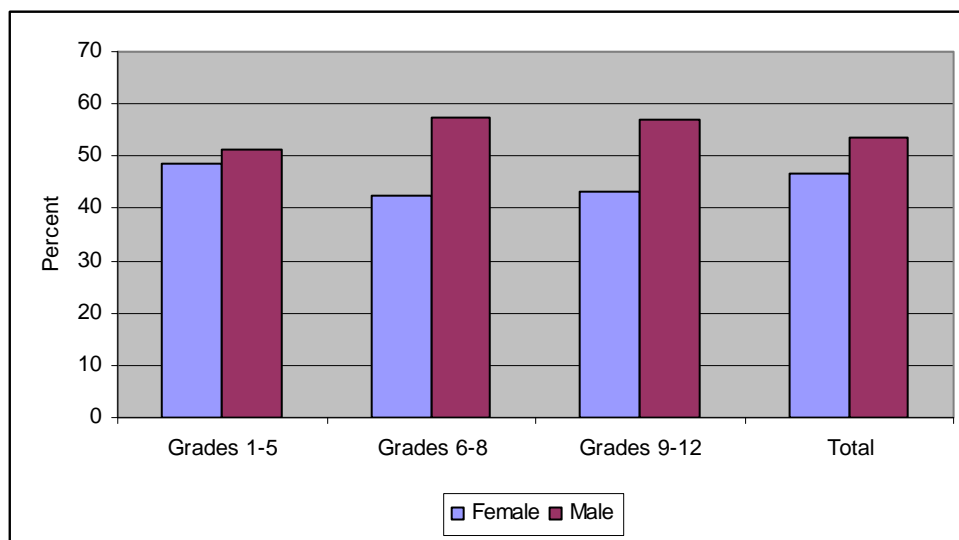


Figure 2. Bar graph shows percent of students by grade level and gender.

Grade-level Grouping by FARMS, ESOL, and Special Education. Slightly more than one half (52.8%) of the GBTLA students received FARMS. Overall, 15% of the GBTLA students receive ESOL and 8% receive Special Education services.

Table 3
Number and Percentage of Students in Special Populations

	<u>GBTLA</u> <u>Special Populations</u>		<u>MCPS</u> <u>Special Populations</u>
	Count	%	%
FARMS	1553	52.8	25.8
ESOL	453	15.4	12.0
Special Education	236	8.0	12.1

Attendance

Attendance by Grade-level Grouping. Overall, 48.5% of the GBTLA students attended 11 or more sessions out of a possible 22. A higher percentage (30.7%) of students in Grades 9–12 attended 16+ sessions compared with 21% of students in Grades 1–8. Even though the Saturday School program is a voluntary program, it provides academic support and rigor to thousands of students who attend.

Table 4
Number and Percentage of Students by Grade Level and Attendance Level

Grade Level	Attendance									
	1–5 Sessions		6–10 Sessions		11–15 Session		16+ Sessions		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1–5	565	69.6	461	65.8	482	63.0	372	56.3	1880	64.0
6–8	169	20.8	162	23.1	166	21.7	168	25.4	665	22.6
9–12	78	9.6	78	11.1	117	15.3	121	18.3	394	13.4
Total	812	100.0	701	100.0	765	100.0	661	100.0	2939	100.0

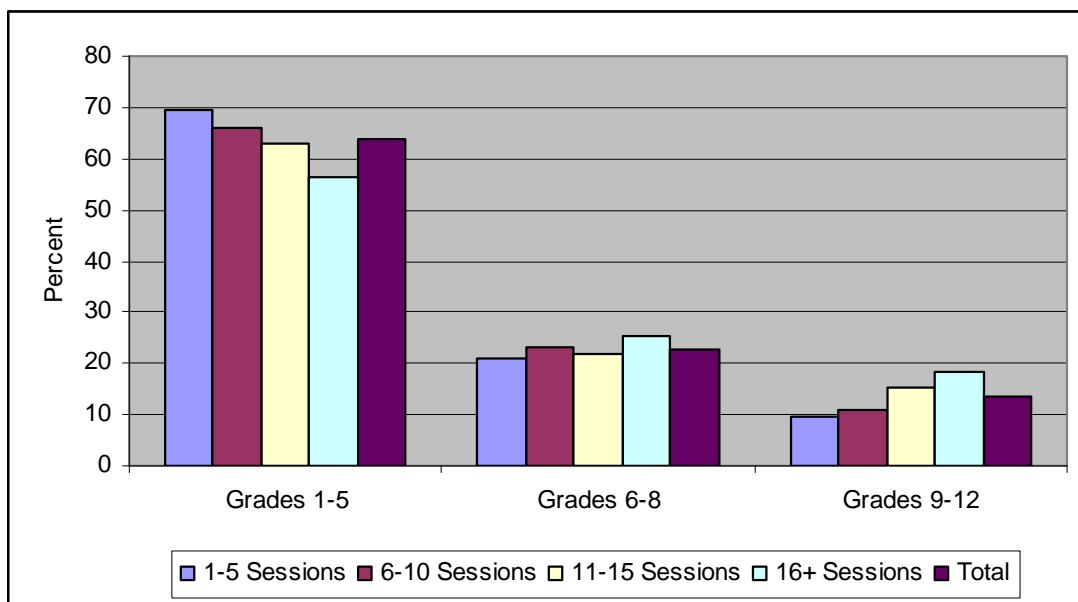


Figure 3. Bar graph shows percent of students by grade level and attendance level.

Student Achievement

The data in this section are the result of assessments administered by school-based MCPS teachers during the Monday through Friday program.

Marking Period Grades. On average, 25% of participants in Grades 3–8 showed improvement of at least one letter grade in both reading and mathematics from marking period 1 to marking period 4. Participants in Grades 3–5 tend to do better in mathematics than reading. Participants in Grades 6–8 tend to perform equally well in mathematics and English.

Table 5
Percentage of Students Who Increased at Least one Letter Grade
From Marking Period 1 to Marking Period 4

Grade Level	Mathematics	Reading/English
3	37	12
4	24	17
5	29	15
6	28	26
7	27	30
8	27	25

MCPS Assessment Program in Primary Reading (MCPSAP-PR). The MCPSAP-PR is administered to students in Grades K–2 and provides data on foundational reading skills, fluency, text reading, and comprehension. There are two components—

- The benchmarking component: Administered three times per year to all students
- The progress monitoring component: Administered periodically to monitor progress

Students in all race/ethnic groups in both Grade 1 and Grade 2 showed considerable improvements in MCPSAP-PR results from the fall administration of the assessment to the spring administration. In Grade 1, 6.6% of participants met benchmark in the fall administration as compared with 73.3% in the spring administration of the assessment. In Grade 2, 2.2% of participants met benchmark in the fall administration as compared with 52.6% in the spring administration of the assessment.

Table 6
Number and Percentage of Grade 1 Students who met and did not meet Benchmark
on MCPSAP-PR by Race/Ethnicity

MCPSAP-PR	Total		African American		Asian/Pacific Islander		Hispanic		White	
	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2007	Spring 2008
	Number									
Did not meet Benchmark	324	93	116	29	57	7	122	45	28	12
Met Benchmark	23	255	7	92	8	59	6	85	2	18
	Percentage									
Did not meet Benchmark	93.4	26.7	94.3	24.0	87.7	10.6	95.3	34.6	93.3	40.0
Met Benchmark	6.6	73.3	5.6	76.0	12.3	89.4	4.7	65.4	0.7	60.0

Table 7
Number and Percentage of Grade 2 Students who met and did not meet Benchmark
on MCPSAP-PR by Race/Ethnicity

MCPSAP-PR	Total		African American		Asian/Pacific Islander		Hispanic		White	
	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2007	Spring 2008
	Number									
Did not meet Benchmark	351	165	135	59	55	20	129	69	32	17
Met Benchmark	8	183	3	74	0	35	2	57	3	17
Percentage										
Did not meet Benchmark	97.8	47.4	97.8	44.4	100.0	36.4	98.5	54.8	91.4	50.0
Met Benchmark	2.2	52.6	2.2	55.6	0.0	63.6	1.5	45.2	8.6	50.0

MAP-R Fall and Spring Proficiency Levels by Grade. MAP-R provides a “snapshot in time” of reading achievement. This assessment is administered three times per year. Results from the fall and spring administration of this assessment follow.

Students showed improvement in the spring administration of MAP-R as compared with the fall administration with students moving from basic to proficient or advanced in all grade levels.

Table 8
Percentage of Students Receiving Basic, Proficient, and Advanced Scores on Fall and Spring Administration of MAP-R Assessment

Grade	MAP-R Fall 2007-08 as compared to Spring 2007-08					
	Basic		Proficient		Advanced	
	Fall %	Spring %	Fall %	Spring %	Fall %	Spring %
3	36.2	30.7	62.0	63.7	1.8	5.6
4	25.1	22.8	66.8	68.8	8.1	8.4
5	31.9	30.6	50.0	46.9	18.1	22.5
6	34.6	31.7	40.8	41.0	24.6	27.3
7	39.5	39.4	52.2	52.4	8.3	8.2
8	46.2	42.4	42.7	46.1	11.1	11.5

*Proficiency levels are based on 2007 NWEA cut scores.

Parent Workshops

Parent workshops were held in October and November 2007 and in January 2008. In total, 1,108 parents attended these workshops which were conducted by members of the MCPS DFCP. Workshops are held at all 12 GBTLA sites simultaneously, and six of the centers also conduct their sessions in Spanish. Each of the three two-hour workshops focuses on providing parents with strategies to help their children at home. Parents also receive information on how to navigate the complexities of the system which gives them the confidence to go to their local school when issues arise. Workshop trainers noted that the Saturday workshops are especially important for parents who cannot attend workshops on weekday evenings or visit their children's school during the week because of work obligations. It was noted that workshop participants were especially appreciative of the opportunity to connect with the school system.

Workshop topics:

- October—*Reading Matters: Helping Your Child Succeed*
- November—*Math Matters: Helping Your Child Succeed*
- January—*Testing Matters: Helping Your Child Succeed*

Table 9
GBTLA parent workshop feedback

Parent Feedback (Compiled from all three sessions)			
	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %
Session helped with understanding of the topic.	87.5	11.0	1.5
Session helped with ability to help child at home.	82.0	16.0	2.0
Information was easy to understand.	88.0	10.0	2.0

Parent comments:

- *“I learned many specific techniques for working on reading with my child.”*
- *“I will pass this information along to others who are not members of this program.”*
- *“I usually feel that workshops are more for teachers than parents. Not this one...”*
- *“Thanks for this meeting. It helps Hispanic families understand more about our children's education.”*

Student and Parent Satisfaction Surveys

Student and parent satisfaction surveys are distributed in the spring of each year. Results show very high levels of satisfaction from both parents and students.

Student survey highlights:

- **85% agreed or strongly agreed** that *“The Saturday School helped me improve my self-esteem and self-confidence.”*
- **88% agreed or strongly agreed** that *“The Saturday School was helped me become a better student.”*
- **84.5% agreed or strongly agreed** that *“The Saturday School made me try harder in school.”*

Parent survey highlights:

- **98% agreed or strongly agreed** that *“The Saturday School helped my child improve in reading and English.”*
- **95% agreed or strongly agreed** that *“The Saturday School helped my child improve in mathematics.”*
- **98% agreed or strongly agreed** that *“Because of the Saturday School, my child’s self-esteem and confidence has improved.”*
- Overall, 73% of parents said that they were *“very satisfied”* with the Saturday School program and 27% were *“satisfied.”* No parents reported that they were *“dissatisfied”* with the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

GBTLA reviews program procedures and outcomes at the end of each school year in order to develop strategies for continuous improvement. The following recommendations are the focus of the Saturday School's improvement strategies for the current year.

Recommendation 1—Establish *short- and long-term outcome measures*.

The GBTLA Administrative Staff meets regularly with an MCPS cross-functional team that includes representatives from OCIP, OOD, DFPC, and OSA. This team's focus for Fiscal Year 2009 will be to *strengthen the short- and long-term outcome measures for the GBTLA Saturday School program*.

Measures of performance will include the following:

- Attendance
- MCPSAP-PR (MCPS Assessment Program in Primary Reading)
- MAP-R (Measures of Academic Progress–Reading)
- Grades comparison (marking period one and four)
- Parent satisfaction survey
- Parent training feedback and attendance
- Student survey
- Pre and post assessments in mathematics (under development)

Recommendation 2—Establish performance indicators that measure academic confidence.

GBTLA will work with OSA *to enhance the annual parent and student satisfaction survey*. This survey could be modified to gather more specific information about student motivation and academic confidence. In addition, issues of attitude and behavior are addressed in the recently implemented GBTLA Academic Plan for high school students. The Academic Plan is being field tested this semester for students in Grades 9 through 12.

Recommendation 3—Increase and sustain Saturday School program student attendance.

The GBTLA administrative staff will work *to increase enrollment and sustain Saturday School program student attendance* by developing an incentive program that recognizes students for their weekly, monthly, and semester attendance. Student incentives will be provided through GBTLA partnering with local businesses and working closely with parents and cluster school staff. Efforts will be made to identify and enroll students who can benefit from the GBTLA.

Recommendation 4—Continue to improve the Online Administrative Student Information System (OASIS) database system.

GBTLA will continue to work with the Division of Student Database Management to *enhance and augment the OASIS data management system to monitor student progress*. The *implementation of a customized data management program* is being considered to better track student and program performance and record data on units completed and goals achieved.