

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMUNITY FORUMS (2004)

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' INPUT

1. What strategies and initiatives are on target to achieve the goal?

EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

All-day kindergarten—targeted to the neediest schools

Early Success initiatives

Focusing resources on early childhood

Focusing on quality and depth of what goes on in the early childhood education initiative and intervention programs; everyone gets it. Reading

Range of reading strategies

Pre-Kindergarten initiative

Extended time for reading and mathematics at targeted elementary schools

CLASS SIZE REDUCTION

Class size reduction—very important to many parents

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Strides made in standards-based curriculum, grading and reporting

Increased rigor in classrooms

Systemic reform in instructional programs

Formative assessments aligned with the revised curriculum

SIGNATURE PROGRAMS AND CONSORTIA

Northeast and Downcounty Consortia working as planned

High school signature programs/academies are very effective

Initiatives creating smaller learning environment

Middle and high school magnets, highly gifted/language immersion programs

Increase in gifted/talented programs countywide

Middle School Audit was on target and will provide focus and connection

ESOL

Initiatives for ESOL students

Adult ESOL programs

SAFETY & SECURITY

Safe and Drug-free Schools

Security initiatives are effective

Gang prevention and awareness

Children feel safe since major crises like 9/11 and the sniper attacks

Central office support of local school crisis plans

Systemwide emergency response plan and local crisis plans

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' INPUT

EXTENDED TIME AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Extended time—after school, evening programs
Summer school, Extended Learning Opportunities program
SAT interventions

STAFF DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

Staff development initiatives
The Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program
Skillful Teaching courses, university partnerships for staff, and staff development substitute teachers

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Mandatory training for general education teachers to work with students with disabilities
Improvements in alternative programs
Special education continuous improvement committee

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, INFORMATION SHARING, AND COMMUNICATION

Forum sessions
Community superintendents participating in cluster meetings
Study circles
Baldrige quality improvement process
Disaggregated test data
Web site and MCPS Call Center
Technology in schools

MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT

Focus on minority students and students with disabilities

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS & PARTNERSHIPS

Linkages to Learning
Collaborative efforts with employee organizations
Partnership with Montgomery College
Family and community partnerships
Business partnerships
Volunteer initiatives like Connection Resource Bank

2. What is missing or falling short?

MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT AND BRIDGING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

- Closing the gap—gap still exists
- Access to signature, magnet, gifted/talented programs for minority students
- More culturally friendly schools
- High expectations for every student—staff needs to know how to believe in students
- Leadership and supervision of persistently under-achieving schools
- Report the successes of minority students
- Programs for developing self-esteem in Hispanic students

SIGNATURE PROGRAMS & CONSORTIA

- Evaluation of consortia, high school signature programs, smaller learning communities
- More gifted/talented options in elementary schools
- Provide equal access to challenging curriculum for all students

MIDDLE SCHOOL INSTRUCTION

- Lack of special after school programs for middle school
- More targeted initiatives for middle schools to address weak performance
- Middle schools must better prepare students for movement to consortium schools

CLASS SIZE

- Staffing guidelines too high at all three levels
- Gradual increase of class size over time

STAFFING ALLOCATION

- Paraeducators, elementary administrative secretaries, building service workers, security staff
- Parole officers in high schools
- Counselors, psychologists, pupil personnel workers
- Need staff for new program implementation, e.g., technology modernization
- Assistant principals in elementary schools, and administrative support in secondary schools
- Speech pathologists
- Increase special education staffing so students receive Least Restrictive Education

ESOL

- Increase ESOL support

STAFF DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

- Need human relations/cultural training
- Need training on how to work with all students—special education, ESOL, etc.
- English training for supporting services staff
- Paraeducators need to have strategies and training for ESOL students

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' INPUT

FACILITY/MAINTENANCE ISSUES

Need to maintain physical plant because poor facilities impact instruction

SPECIAL EDUCATION & ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Gap in achievement for students with disabilities

Middle school students who need resource support—too many students for resource teacher

Reaching 80 percent target of students in Least Restrictive Environment

Re-entry from alternative programs back to comprehensive high school

Not all initiatives include special education

Evening high school and alternative programs need to be revamped to address diverse student needs, including students with disabilities

Pre-K programs for students with disabilities need more non-disabled peers

Students with disabilities do not have adequate access to reading interventions

Frequent movement of special education programs (school to school)

Feeling by parents in special education community that they are not welcome

Bus drivers of special education students need to know medical issues of students

Over-representation of African Americans in special education

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, INFORMATION SHARING, AND COMMUNICATION

Parents need to be involved and be participants

Parent resource centers

Add language accommodations for parents

Initiate more discussion within the community about the school system's priorities

Report to public where MCPS is not meeting goals

Parent outreach team is falling short

Community superintendents/principals can make greater effort to reach out to community/approach ministers of Black churches

More effective communication regarding parent centers

Effective input into budget process

Timeliness of student data for schools from state and MCPS

Need for more information on effectiveness of initiatives and student success

Schools are overwhelmed and cannot properly communicate; outreach coordinator needed

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Expand Linkages to Learning to high school

Provide guidance counselors with more administrative support

Provide additional mental health services

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Provide consistency across schools with curriculum implementation

Not enough emphasis on general education/humanities for middle and high school students

Eliminate number of pullout programs

Need to integrate all reading programs

Limited access to vocational programs

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' INPUT

Staff is not given flexibility in curriculum implementation to consider diverse needs of students

Concerns about "Direct Instruction"

Content areas losing when more time is devoted to reading and mathematics in elementary schools

Limited data on content other than reading/mathematics

Inadequate training/prep time for teachers to teach new curriculum

Time and opportunity for electives

Lack of writing curriculum

Enhance fine arts options at elementary schools

Provide more time for social studies and science in elementary schools

More extended learning for all grades, including tutoring for secondary students at risk for High School Assessments

EXTENDED TIME AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Extended Learning Opportunities or other summer school opportunities need to get adequate funding

Summer school, extended day/year expanded to all areas of county

DIVERSITY ISSUES

Diversity of school staff needs to reflect diversity of school

Exclusion of non-English speaking families—MCPS needs to commit to ESOL and multiculturalism

Need for greater multicultural instruction—sensitivity training

CAPACITY ISSUES AND OTHER RESOURCES

TIME: (capacity issue) teacher planning

- Supporting services to work with teachers
- Administrators to lead schools
- Students to learn

Staff burnout—new curriculum, Baldrige

Not enough textbooks and instructional materials for students

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' INPUT

3. How can we communicate the goals and objectives of the strategic plan more effectively to the community?

Teach PTA leadership to spread the word
Share data about what is working (best practices) and not working
The strategic plan needs to be more closely aligned with the budget
Board of Education should have meetings in other areas more accessible to the community
Use various media to inform parents about MCPS—language and ethnic media
Ask community about their needs
Continue and expand community forums
Simplify language—make it more accessible
Need more compelling communication
Need more translated information
More/better information to non-school community
Allow televised testimony to continue
Create opportunities for face-to-face meetings
Simplify structure of strategic plan, and make it more engaging
Use executive summaries to simplify presentations
Create forums related to particular issues
Use TV more effectively
Make the communication real to parents—so they can see how initiatives impact students
District has to be more honest, i.e., SAT scores and achievement gap
Listen carefully to what parents are doing and saying
Create smaller groups for ease of communication
Engage in more communication with secondary school students—to get their input of what is working
Publicize which initiatives are not working
Admit that there is a problem and work together to develop plan/solutions
Use radio to communicate
Use more relationship/trust building opportunities like study circles to create welcome for diverse community members
Explain how the strategic plan impacts your school—individually
Translate documents into various major languages
Provide interpreters at meetings
Summary flyers
Be sure of consistency in message sent
Communicate through local newspapers by using articles written by MCPS staff to showcase ongoing initiatives
Use PTA newsletters/school-based newsletters to deliver intended messages
Engage businesses to help get out the message to the community
Involve students in communication of strategic plan
We need clear and simple communication

Comments Received via the Web

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: very_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY:

Q3 SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: Four

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: Diversity training needs to be improved. I attended a county-wide training earlier this year and found it to be misleading and unhelpful.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: very_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY:

Q3 SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: Three

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: Family/Community Involvement. Better access to teachers is needed as is a sense that MCPS wants genuine involvement, as distinct from a "rubber stamp" for MCPS approached, no matter how well-intentioned these approaches may be.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: very_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY:

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: Two

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: Curriculum and Instruction.
The elementary math curriculum is incomprehensible to many parents at my daughter's school, even parents with substantial post-secondary education. This makes it difficult for parents to be involved in their children's math education in almost every area -- from helping with/reviewing homework to providing other math supports.

Formative Assessments are not communicated regularly (and on a timely basis) to parents (nor are evaluative assessments, which MCPS has concluded are strong predictors of performance on the MSA and CTBS).

Reading Recovery at my daughter's school is understaffed and cannot (almost like ESOL) follow students who "graduate" from the program but who may need follow-on supports.

System of Shared Accountability . . . fails to communicate test data and analytical tools to parents on its Internet site, relying instead on the State site. This approach robs parents of any useful CTBS analyses and limits the MSA analyses as well.

Technology At my daughter's school, there has been NO improvement in the children's technology nor has there been any effort to close the "digital divide." (Our PTA has worked to publicize Blair HS's program, but on-site access is critical in this area.)

Data Warehouse . . . tis initiative has been little publicized and I have not heard of any effort to do outreach for the input of minority parents.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: very_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY: Meetings at local schools, perhaps as part of regularly scheduled PTA or NAACP Parents Council meetings

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: One

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: Early Success
No significant narrowing of the Achievement Gap between White students, on the one hand and African American and Hispanic students, on the other in two critical areas: percentage of "Advanced" scores by race and ethnicity at Downcounty title 1 elementary schools and persistent gender differences at the school level, and by race and ethnicity, at

my daughter's school. Similarly, admission to county-wide elementary school, middle school, and high school magnet programs continue to reflect the failure of MCPS to "Aim High."

Support Program Improvements

... are hard to discern at my daughter's school, especially with respect to Asian language minorities. For example, little information is provided in languages that the prents of these children can read.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: somewhat_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY:

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: One

Q3 SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: Four

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: Attn: Dr. Marshall Spatz

I am sure that the Board of Education and Dr. Weast are aware that Montgomery County ranks at the bottom four school districts in the state of Maryland for placement rates of students in their neighborhood schools.

That is why it is vital that the initiatives that the Department of Special Education regarding these placement rates be supported. Furthermore, the recommendations from the MCPS Staffing Committee, which address these very issues of placement rates, be supported financially. There are too many children who are not able to attend their neighborhood schools because of the lack of teacher education, lack of supports and a lack of commitment by

MCPS. The commitment to least restrictive environment, a requirement in state and federal law, must be made by MCPS in its entirety, not just by the special education department. There needs to be a commitment to training

in addition to the committement to neighborhood schools. Teachers will require ongoing professional development in the areas of curriculum modifications, adaptations as well as differentiated instruction. This training is required by all general education teachers who will teach students with diverse needs in their classroom. Special education teachers as well as general education teachers will require time for collaborative planning in order to facilitate success for all students.

Thank you.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: somewhat_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY:

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: Though I am unable to attend forums in the evenings, I wanted to make sure my voice was heard in regards to the large class size issue. It is clear to me after volunteering several times in my daughters kindergarten class at Beverly Farms that a full time aid is needed in her class. Though the class sizes not above the guidelines, they are too large for one teacher to give the attention to each student that is needed. Not only is it difficult on the student, but it must also be stressful for the teachers. I hate to think that good teachers may leave because they are over worked. Ms. Mason is doing a wonderful job with her kindergarten class though she clearly needs help from the county on a day to day basis. Currently she has been receiving a good response from the parents as far as volunteering goes, but she should not have to rely on the parents for help. The parent classroom help should be in addition to the standard number of teachers in the class. I think you should either split the classes up and make a fourth kindergarten class or add aids to all three classes. Anyway, these are my thoughts. I don't have time to respond to all of the questions above. If you wish to contact me, please call me at my home number. (301)983-0557

Regard,
Meghan Smith

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: very_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY: you're doing a fine job in this area of communicating to the community!

Q3 SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: Four

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS IN HIGH POVERTY AND HIGH MINORITY SCHOOLS!!!!!!!! NOT JUST SCHOOLS LABELED "TITLE 1" Why would any teacher stay at one of this more challenging

schools, where teaching is much harder when they can go to an "easier" school for the same amount of money and less hassle especially with all the focus on teacher quality via student achievement??????????

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: very_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY: See item 3c for comment.

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: Two

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: Regarding Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan, I strongly suggest the addition of school aides at Beverly Farms ES. Class size has significantly increased. So too have taxes increased, and as a resident in the Regency Estates community of Potomac, I would like to see greater attention given to our young students at Beverly Farms.

Just yesterday I volunteered in my son's kindergarten classroom. Class size in his classroom and each of the other kindergarten classes has gone from 18 to 25 students. Though I was truly amazed at veteran teacher Diane Golden's ability to work with a small group of students while others groups moved through "centers", I was very much aware of the absolute need for an aide in my son's classroom. Parental support through classroom volunteerism is a positive aspect in our Beverly Farms ES community, but it is not enough. Surely it is known that young children benefit from additional one-to-one instruction from professionals.

I must also voice my concern in combination with the half-day kindergarten program at Beverly Farms ES. In order for my child to attend a full-day program with afternoon learning (as children who attend full-day kindergarten do), I must pay approximately \$4500 to supplement a kindergarten complement program. Again, as a resident of Montgomery County, I have had to pay higher taxes in this community, and now I must pay out of pocket for the complement program when other children are able to benefit from FULL-DAY kindergarten learning. ALL of our young children need full-day programs, and it is unfair to make this discrimination without giving Beverly Farms ES much-needed aides in classrooms.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: not_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY:

Q3 SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: Three

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET: I think I picked the right goal - anyway - definitely more work on providing information to non-English speaking parents. We just had a back to school night with an extremely helpful video on the change in the grading system, and we want to make that information available to non-native speakers in our school community. Anything that could be done to facilitate the ease of providing translations would be invaluable.

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT:

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: somewhat_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY: Hold meetings by topic in local middle/high schools within the Blair cluster.

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: One

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET: Middle school audit; funding for after-school program coordinators; programs that help low-achieving students make the necessary large gains

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: Reduced class size or additional instructional support for grades 3-8 to continue the gains made in grades K-2.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: somewhat_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY: I feel you all are doing just about everything you can. Putting it on tv and sending home info with the kids.

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET: We pay a lot of taxes to live in potomac and our classe sizes at Beverly Farms are way to high. What are

the plans? If we cant add more teachers we need to add some more aids. To succed we need smaller classes or more help in each.

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: The arts program.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: not_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY: school handouts

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: One

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: My son is a kindergartener at Beverly Farms Elementary and I am absolutely appauled by what I see occurring. He is in a half day kindergarten with 25 children. The same teacher teaches a second class of 25 children the other half of the day, for a total of 50 kindergarteners a day. It is nice that you've set targets for certain, I assume more needy, schools, but how can our children be expected to be able to learn the same material in half the amount of time with nearly twice the number of children? How can children so young be expected to learn in such large classes with only one teacher? How can a teacher be expected to teach such a large class without an assistant? I understand that it only gets worse in 1st grade. To add to the insult, we will be one of the last in the county going going full day (not scheduled until 2007/2008 year). We certainly are not the most affluent school in our cluster, so I am baffled by this decision. Please look at the problem of ridiculously large class sizes in schools other than the "targeted" schools.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: not_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY: Newsletters to the community and through backpack mail.

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: Two

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET: I feel the concentration on math and reading is taking away the other subjects as science and social studies. Why not apply these subjects into the reading curriculum without taking away those subjects?

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: The schools are growing with more portable each year. Why can't we concentrate on the the size of the classrooms and also the curriculum

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Please incorporate into the comments/testimony made on the Strategic Plan.
Thanks, roz

Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2004 12:00 PM
Subject: MCPS strategic plan and operating budget

In response to the MCPS call for comments on the strategic plan and operating budget, I am writing to express my concern over the increasing number of children being placed in already crowded classes.

I am the parent of two children at Wood Acres Elementary School, which has seen explosive growth since its renovation two years ago. Our enrollment is at capacity this year, indicating children will be in portable classrooms next year. With the rollout of full-day kindergarten in 2007, even more children will be pushed out into these temporary buildings. The size of the lot on which Wood Acres is located is among the smallest in the county, with very little outdoor play space for the children. The portables will eat into that already limited space, leaving much less room for important physical activity by an increasing number of children.

When Wood Acres welcomed the Learning and Academically Disabled children in our cluster a few years ago, we did so with the understanding that MCPS resources would be available to support these children. Calculating class sizes without accounting for mainstreaming these children into each grade presents an inaccurate picture and negatively impacts all the children. Class sizes must take into account all the students, teachers, and aides, and all necessary physical equipment and space.

More children attending our school, more children in each classroom, less space in each classroom to move about and learn, less space outdoors to play, all adds up to an unacceptable situation at what should be a school MCPS points to with pride.

Now add in the new reading and math curricula, the layers of new testing, the Baldrige philosophy and related record-keeping, and I cannot fathom how teachers are going to do their jobs. How can an elementary school teacher instruct 30 students in basic reading and math in these conditions? How can we as parents hope that these conditions allow our children to learn at the levels we expected when we moved into this county and agreed to pay the associated taxes? We chose this elementary school, in this cluster, because we believed it would provide the best public education possible for our children. If MCPS lessens the quality of instruction by adding more children and providing fewer resources and less space, then our family will not be alone in reconsidering whether we should choose another place to educate our children.

This combination of circumstances can be fixed by limiting the number of students in each class, counting ALL students (including LAD) in that number, and providing adequate resources for the schools to house and educate them. If the County hopes to continue attracting businesses and taxpayers, they should recognize that providing a truly top-notch public education system is the highest priority.

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: very_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY: Describe them more simply with less educational jargon.

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: One

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET: Full day kindergarten, reading interventions (balanced literacy), HS signature programs

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: A smaller size class with a weaker teacher is not of benefit to students. The district has fallen far short in providing good, experienced teachers to the schools in the eastern part of the county. These schools with greater needs are the training ground for new teachers who then transfer out after several years- just as they are becoming good. The schools in Rockville are now quite balanced - economically and ethnically-- but unless the district does a better job of providing challenging instruction to the average and high students- instead of only focusing on the lowest ones-- the middle class parents will leave the schools and then the downward spiral will begin. These elementary schools need teachers who know how to effectively differentiate instruction and meet the needs of a wide range of students-- and most beginning teachers are not yet proficient in this.

ESOL programs should be more integrated with regular classroom instruction and pull out programs should be used only for students with very limited English. All teachers

should receive professional development so they are able to effectively teach ESOL students within the regular program - particularly as students who've achieved speaking fluency need additional support for reading and writing in English.

The term "red zone schools" is offensive and should not be used.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: County_Resident

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: very_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY:

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: One

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET: None are on target for meeting the needs of kids with Autism Spectrum type disorder. Because of the rigid delimitation between Diploma and Certificate... The kids that need some services from each are left floundering and come out of MCPS with less skills than what they need. MCPS goals are entirely academic and need to focus on those kids that are not college bound as well.

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: transition support (\$0.1 m) is far too little to spend. We have been working on special education services for our son for 18 years and MCPS has fallen short of providing the supports that our son now. Making it worse are the lack of transition support and lack of knowledge of what is out there for kids in the Autism Spectrum. NOT only is he unprepared to go out into the world... we are also faced with the lack of supports once our son goes out as a young adult. Much more needs to be spent on training staff about transition support as well as informing parents what is out there and how to get those services as well as helping the kids be better prepared.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent

Q1 FAMILIARITY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN: very_familiar

Q2 HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY:

Q3A SELECT A GOAL FOR COMMENT: One

Q3B WHAT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES ARE ON TARGET:

Q3C WHAT IS MISSING OR FALLING SHORT: Special Education Improvements. I see little improvement in services for kids with Autism Spectrum in the 15 years we have been working to get services for our son. My son has been in an ED program which does not fully meet our son's needs for the last 5 but was better than other things MCPS. The only better choice was to go to a program at Kennedy Krieger which is an hour and half commute each way. The problem with services for the Autism Spectrum kids is the rigidity between the Diploma and Certificate track. Kids on the Diploma track can not get living skills, job supports while kids on Certificate track are limited to a third grade education. Also transition support services need more money, more staff, and more training. These kids are surely being left behind and MCPS is not meeting the goal of NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND! The real test of an excellent school system is how well it handles its most needy kids. If MCPS can help kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder be successful that is a true measure of a great school system.

Q4 IDENTIFIER: Parent