

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Rockville, Maryland

November 11, 2010

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Patricia B. O'Neill, President 

Subject: Community Forum Feedback

In the fall, the Montgomery County Board of Education invited a broad spectrum of the community to participate in Community Roundtable discussions that were held in two geographic locations. The first event was held on Wednesday, October 13, 2010, at the Carver Educational Services Center auditorium in Rockville, and the second event was held on Thursday, October 28, 2010, at Wheaton High School, in Wheaton. The Board's goal was to hear from the community ideas on how to make our world-class school system better and incorporate those ideas in our strategic planning process, even as we confront challenging issues ahead. The Board recognizes that in these difficult economic times, it is more important than ever that we hear directly from the community about what matters to them in our school system. The Board felt that using a new roundtable format this year would allow community members to engage in deeper conversations around three key questions:

- What do you value about Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)?
- We can't do it all. So, what should our top priorities be, and what are the things that MCPS cannot do without?
- What do we need to do to continue improving education over the next five to 10 years, and beyond, in Montgomery County?

In order to assure broad-based participation, local schools were urged to invite their community members and leaders. Sign language and foreign language interpretation services were made available to community members. Childcare also was provided. The result was overwhelming; community members responded enthusiastically to the invitations and provided excellent feedback, both on the process and on the strategic direction of the school system.

The data collected at both roundtable event has been transcribed and analyzed and, as the Board promised, is being made available to the public for review and additional feedback, if necessary. Attachment A shows the results of the feedback from the community on the strategic direction of the school system in general and is further

broken down within broad categories and strategic plan goals. As you can see, the community members displayed great insights and connectedness with the work of the school system and the Board of Education. I am very pleased with the work of the community during the roundtables.

The community members who participated provided extremely helpful feedback on the process. Their ideas and feedback included the following: They thought the roundtable discussions were an innovative approach that fostered increased sharing of ideas and concerns in a collaborative manner. They were appreciative of the positive learning environment of the informal setting and the opportunity to share ideas and concerns about the strategic direction of the school system. They liked the diversity in perspectives. Participants remarked on the racial and ethnic diversity of the participants and applauded the fact that students had been invited to the events. In terms of special needs and gifted and talented issues, a participant was "intrigued by the specific experiences shared by parents of special education services and children in gifted programs." One participant shared that the event allowed community members to learn a lot more about all the programs that MCPS has, especially programs that target diverse populations. Community members urged the Board to consider making the sessions longer and doing the roundtables more frequently and in many more locations around the county. They also requested that the Board include more students in the future. They asked for more information on the school system and requested that Board members be active participants next time rather than observers. In general, participants offered several excellent ideas for improving upon the process next year.

In terms of next steps, the Strategic Planning Committee will be working with staff on further reviewing and analyzing the information from these documents. Their recommendations will be considered during the Board's work on the FY 2012 Operating Budget and the strategic plan. I would like to thank Montgomery County Public Schools staff and Board staff for working closely with Ms. Kitty Blumsack, the Maryland Association of Board's of Education's director of Board Development, to implement two highly successful roundtable sessions. In the meantime, I have asked staff to share the results of the roundtable discussions on our web site immediately.

#### Attachments

#### Copy to:

- Dr. Weast
- Mr. Bowers
- Dr. Lacey
- Mr. Ikheloa
- Mr. Edwards
- Ms. King
- Ms. Steinberg

"What do you value about Montgomery County Public Schools?"

Attachment A

	Strategic Plan Goal	Themes	Votes			Percent Total Votes
			13-Oct	28-Oct	Total	
<b>Curriculum/Programs</b>			<b>40</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>38.0%</b>
	2	Variety of special programs (including magnets, immersion, GT & other)	14	17	31	12.7%
	2	Rigorous curriculum/high expectations	9	11	20	8.2%
	2	Variety of academic courses	4	5	9	3.7%
	2	Free, high-quality education	0	7	7	2.9%
	2	Extracurricular activities	0	7	7	2.9%
	2	Special Education programs and supports	4	4	8	3.3%
	1	Counselors, reading/math specialists (student support)	3	0	3	1.2%
	1	Pre-K program	2	2	4	1.6%
	2	Fine Arts	4	0	4	1.6%
<b>Staff</b>			<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>22.9%</b>
	4	Dedicated and caring staff	5	0	5	2.0%
	4	Diversity of students and staff	10	14	24	9.8%
	4	Highly qualified teachers	12	12	24	9.8%
	4	Professional development for staff	0	3	3	1.2%
<b>Communication and Engagemet</b>			<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>13.9%</b>
	3	Parent/school communications (4 specific references to Edline)	7	10	17	6.9%
	3	Parent/community involvement	7	10	17	6.9%
<b>Partnerships</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
	3	MCPS has a good reputation	3	1	4	1.6%
	3	Resources/funding	2	6	8	3.3%
<b>Technology</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4.5%</b>
	2	Technology	3	8	11	4.5%
<b>Leadership</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3.7%</b>
	4	Effective school leadership (administrators)	5	4	9	3.7%
<b>College/Career</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3.3%</b>
	1	College & career readiness	0	8	8	3.3%

**"What do you value about Montgomery County Public Schools?"**

	Strategic Plan Goal	Themes	Votes			Percent Total Votes
			13-Oct	28-Oct	Total	
<b>Business Services</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2.4%</b>
	5	Transportation	0	3	3	1.2%
	5	Well-managed school system	0	3	3	1.2%
<b>Instruction</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
	2	Differentiation/individualized instruction	2	3	5	2.0%
<b>Class Size</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1.6%</b>
	1	Small class size	1	3	4	1.6%
<b>Safety and Security</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1.6%</b>
	4	Safe schools	2	2	4	1.6%
<b>Students</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
	1	Success for every student	0	3	3	1.2%

**"What do you value about Montgomery County Public Schools?"**

Themes	Votes			Percent Total Votes	Category	Strategic Plan Goal
	13-Oct	28-Oct	Total			
Variety of special programs (including magnets, immersion, GT & other)	14	17	31	12.7%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Diversity of students and staff	10	14	24	9.8%	Staff	4
Highly qualified teachers	12	12	24	9.8%	Staff	4
Rigorous curriculum/high expectations	9	11	20	8.2%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Parent/school communications (4 specific references to Ed Line)	7	10	17	6.9%	Communication/Engagement	3
Parent/community involvement	7	10	17	6.9%	Communication/Engagement	3
Technology	3	8	11	4.5%	Technology	2
Variety of academic courses	4	5	9	3.7%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Effective school leadership (administrators)	5	4	9	3.7%	Leadership	4
Special Education programs and supports	4	4	8	3.3%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Resources/funding	2	6	8	3.3%	Partnerships	3
College & career readiness	0	8	8	3.3%	College/Career	1
Free, high quality education	0	7	7	2.9%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Extracurricular activities	0	7	7	2.9%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Dedicated and caring staff	5	0	5	2.0%	Staff	4
Differentiation/individualized instruction	2	3	5	2.0%	Instruction	2
Pre-K Program	2	2	4	1.6%	Curriculum/Programs	1
Fine Arts	4	0	4	1.6%	Curriculum/Programs	2
MCPS has a good reputation	3	1	4	1.6%	Partnerships	3
Small class size	1	3	4	1.6%	Class Size	1
Safe schools	2	2	4	1.6%	Safety and Security	4
Counselors, reading/math specialists (student support)	3	0	3	1.2%	Curriculum/Programs	1
Professional development for staff	0	3	3	1.2%	Staff	4
Transportation	0	3	3	1.2%	Business Services	5
Well-managed school system	0	3	3	1.2%	Business Services	5
Success for every student	0	3	3	1.2%	Students	1

**We can't do it all, so what should top priorities be and what are things MCPS can't do without?  
What do we need to do to continue improving over next 5-10 years and beyond?**

	Strategic Plan Goal	Priorities	Votes			Percent Total Votes
			13-Oct	28-Oct	Total	
<b>Curriculum/Programs</b>			<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>28.2%</b>
	2	Wide range of services for ESOL & special education	16	55	71	7.1%
	2	Wide range of academic programs & opportunities for all learning levels	22	49	71	7.1%
	2	Specials—Art, music, SSL, and extracurricular activities	25	22	47	4.7%
	2	Physical fitness, PE & extracurricular sports programs	7	22	29	2.9%
	2	Increased enrollment in GT, honors, AP, IB, & college-level courses for all students	10	7	17	1.7%
	2	Wide range of arts programs	9	5	14	1.4%
	1	Middle school reform	9	0	9	0.9%
	2	Equality of programs based on geography	0	5	5	0.5%
	1	Greater focus on social & emotional development	5	2	7	0.7%
	1	Teacher support (academic, ESOL, special ed staff & academic intervention)	9	0	9	0.9%
	2	Support for students in GT program	1	0	1	0.1%
	2	Before school day programs	1	0	1	0.1%
<b>Staff</b>			<b>107</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>26.2%</b>
	4	All staff well trained and knowledgeable	67	71	138	13.8%
	4	Staff that believes all students can learn	22	56	78	7.8%
	4	Teachers who care about students	14	27	41	4.1%
	4	Higher expectations for teachers	4	0	4	0.4%
<b>College/Career</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>9.8%</b>
	1	High college attendance	2	5	7	0.7%
	1	Students who graduate and are prepared for college & post secondary employment	9	82	91	9.1%
<b>Class Size</b>			<b>57</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
	1	Small class size	57	38	95	9.5%

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	Strategic Plan Goal	Priorities	Votes			Percent Total Votes
			13-Oct	28-Oct	Total	
<b>Communication and Engagement</b>			<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>7.4%</b>
	3	Effective two-way communication	29	31	60	6.0%
	3	Increase stakeholder input	3	4	7	0.7%
	3	Opportunities for parents to be involved, collaborate, and feel welcome at school	3	1	4	0.4%
	3	Assistance for Latino parents	3	0	3	0.3%
<b>Leadership</b>			<b>20</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>6.6%</b>
	4	Strong principal	20	46	66	6.6%
<b>Safety and Security</b>			<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
	4	Safe, well-maintained schools	31	31	62	6.2%
<b>Technology</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
	2	Technology	11	10	21	2.1%
<b>Climate</b>			<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
	1	Decrease suspension rate for African American and Latino students	15	1	16	1.6%
	1	Well-disciplined classrooms	1	3	4	0.4%
<b>Partnerships</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
	3	Mentoring and tutoring	3	10	13	1.3%
<b>Students</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
	1	Achieve or exceed proficiency on state tests	0	3	3	0.3%
	1	Zero dropout rate	0	3	3	0.3%

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Small class size	57	38	95	9.5%	Class Size	1
Students who graduate and are prepared for college & post secondary employment	9	82	91	9.1%	College/Career	1
Staff that believes all students can learn	22	56	78	7.8%	Staff	4
Wide range of services for ESOL & special education	16	55	71	7.1%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Wide range of academic programs & opportunities for all learning levels	22	49	71	7.1%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Strong principal	20	46	66	6.6%	Leadership	4
Safe, well-maintained schools	31	31	62	6.2%	Safety and Security	4
Effective two-way communication	29	31	60	6.0%	Communication/Engagement	3
Specials—Art, music, SSL, and extracurricular activities	25	22	47	4.7%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Teachers who care about students	14	27	41	4.1%	Staff	4
Physical fitness, PE & extracurricular sports programs	7	22	29	2.9%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Technology	11	10	21	2.1%	Technology	2
Increased enrollment in GT, honors, AP, IB, & college-level courses for all students	10	7	17	1.7%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Decrease suspension rate for African American and Latino students	15	1	16	1.6%	Climate	1
Wide range of arts programs	9	5	14	1.4%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Mentoring and tutoring	3	10	13	1.3%	Partnerships	3
Middle school reform	9	0	9	0.9%	Curriculum/Programs	1
Teacher support (academic, ESOL, special ed staff & academic intervention)	9	0	9	0.9%	Curriculum/Programs	1
Greater focus on social & emotional development	5	2	7	0.7%	Curriculum/Programs	1
High college attendance	2	5	7	0.7%	College/Career	1
Increase stakeholder input	3	4	7	0.7%	Communication/Engagement	3
Equality of programs based on geography	0	5	5	0.5%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Higher expectations for teachers	4	0	4	0.4%	Staff	4
Opportunities for parents to be involved, collaborate, and feel welcome at school	3	1	4	0.4%	Communication/Engagement	3
Well-disciplined classrooms	1	3	4	0.4%	Climate	1
Assistance for Latino parents	3	0	3	0.3%	Communication/Engagement	3
Achieve or exceed proficiency on state tests	0	3	3	0.3%	Students	1
Zero dropout rate	0	3	3	0.3%	Students	1
Support for students in GT program	1	0	1	0.1%	Curriculum/Programs	2
Before school day programs	1	0	1	0.1%	Curriculum/Programs	2