MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Hiring for Excellence and Equity

Executive Summary

As the nation experiments with educational reforms to improve student learning and close the achievement gap, there is consensus around the importance of one factor—the ability of the teacher to create effective learning experiences. At the core of the reform efforts in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is the importance of having a high quality employee in every position in the school system. Our Call to Action: Pursuit of Excellence, the district’s strategic plan, reflects this notion in the milestones and data points of Goal 4: Create a Positive Work Environment in a Self-renewing Organization. MCPS, in collaboration with the three employee associations, has spent the last decade designing, implementing, evaluating, and improving the professional growth systems for all employees. We believe these efforts have contributed to the district’s outstanding academic and organizational results. Our professional growth systems have been studied by private organizations, school districts, and highlighted in the media both nationally and internationally as models of district/employee association collaboration.

As we continue to address the achievement gap, particularly as it relates to racial and ethnic disparities, MCPS is intent on accelerating the creation of an organizational culture committed to excellence and equity. The Framework for Equity and Excellence and the Board of Education’s revised core values, added to the strategic plan in June 2009, clearly articulate that to foster an organizational culture that advances success for every student, the district must establish comprehensive support systems that promote high expectations, positive relationships, and cultural competence. The Hiring for Excellence and Equity Project is focused on transforming the selection and the orientation processes to ensure that every employee assumes 100 percent responsibility for the success of every student. This work is based on industry training that emphasizes the importance of bringing onboard, or “onboarding,” employees who share the organization’s core values, mission, vision, and goals (Attachment A).
Background

Although MCPS has valid, reliable, and effective professional growth systems for all employees, our commitment to continuous improvement compelled the district to examine its recruitment, selection, and onboarding processes. Could a more strategic approach result in improved outcomes for all students? Could we accelerate the reform work by reshaping our hiring and onboarding processes to hire new employees with a passion for the mission that MCPS is pursuing?

These were the questions that the MCPS team explored during the summer 2009 Public Education Leadership Program (PELP) at Harvard University. The team researched other successful educational reform organizations as well as the best practices used in the private sector to fashion a strategy that could be adopted in MCPS. The team highlighted both the short-term tasks that needed to be accomplished as well as the long-term items that needed to be pursued to fulfill the superintendent of schools’ and the Montgomery County Board of Education’s vision of creating a school system that provides every child the best possible education. The MCPS PELP team returned and became part of larger cross-functional teams from across the organization dedicated to creating a model selection and onboarding process for the system.

To assure that the best candidates are selected, the Hiring for Excellence and Equity Selection Team is revising current hiring practices to evaluate whether job candidates come prepared with the beliefs, values, motivation, and perseverance to meet our high expectations and deliver for our students each and every day.

Once hired, we want to make sure that our newest employees are introduced to the MCPS culture of high expectations for all students; therefore, it is especially important that they receive a high-quality orientation to the organization and the support they need to succeed at the beginning of their MCPS career. The onboarding process will help new employees understand the story of MCPS—a system that is dedicated to teamwork, joint problem solving, and support for each other and every student. This work is being done by the Hiring for Excellence and Equity Onboarding Team. The Hiring for Excellence and Equity Project is the next logical step in the strategic management of the most essential assets in the school system, its employees.

The Hiring for Excellence and Equity Project was launched with the formation of a steering committee led by Ms. Jody A. Leleck, chief academic officer, Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Schools; and Dr. Susan F. Marks, associate superintendent, Office of Human Resources (Attachment B). The steering committee began its work last summer and continues to meet monthly to support the work of its two teams—Selection and Onboarding.

The Selection Team is facilitated by Ms. Bonnie L. Cullison, former president, Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA); and the Onboarding Team is facilitated by Mr. Christopher W. Lloyd, vice president, MCEA. Both teams report monthly to the Hiring for Excellence and Equity Steering Committee. All meeting notes are shared with the presidents of
the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 500, MCEA, and the Montgomery County Association of Administrators and Principals (MCAAP); Dr. Frieda K. Lacey, deputy superintendent of schools; and Mr. Larry A. Bowers, chief operating officer.

Selection Team

The Hiring for Excellence and Equity Selection Team is a multistakeholder group comprised of central office and school-based staff members (Attachment C) and is chaired by MCEA’s former president. This team is charged with developing hiring processes that will result in employees who have job expertise and can articulate and demonstrate a total commitment to and responsibility for student learning that will result in achieving excellence and equity—college and career readiness for every student. The group has met monthly since August 2009. Specific components of the work include the following:

- Research, identify, and define the competencies that MCPS seeks in employees
- Determine a means to assess the competencies
- Create instruments to measure the competencies
- Develop a training and implementation plan for the selection process
- Develop a means to evaluate the effectiveness of the new hiring process

The goal is to have tools and structures in place to pilot components of a new process for hiring a group of teachers for the 2010–2011 school year with a rollout plan for use in hiring all teachers and eventually all MCPS staff.

The Selection Team began its work focusing explicitly on the hiring of new teachers, which would be the foundation for the future development of new hiring processes for support professionals and administrators. The first task was to determine which attributes were most fundamental to a highly skilled teacher. The team examined characteristics sought in current hiring practices and examined literature and efficacy surveys to determine which attributes occurred most frequently in successful teachers. The team then asked focus groups of teachers at the middle and high school levels to identify characteristics evident in effective teachers. Students at all three levels also were asked “what makes a teacher good?” The results of the literature review and the information from teachers and students were used to develop a set of attributes that could be observed and assessed prior to hiring. These attributes fell into the following four categories:

- Job Skills—Exhibits positive interpersonal relationships, values diversity and multiculturalism, is accountable for student learning, sees the big picture and makes connections, communicates effectively, and has awareness of self including body language

- Pedagogy—Challenges students appropriately, actively engages students, articulates various approaches to planning and preparing including collaboration
• Personal Attributes—Problemsolver, sense of efficacy, flexibility and agility, reflective about self and practice, lifelong learner

• Attitudes, Beliefs, and Commitment—Believes all students can succeed, values diversity, has high expectations for students and self, is able to work with others, and makes connections with students

Once the attributes were identified, the team began to enumerate how each attribute could be assessed. Different hiring practices were reviewed, including current MCPS practices and the processes used by the New Teacher Project and Teach for America. Through this review, the team identified several practices, each with a set of measures and rubrics, to be phased in over time. While this work is being finalized, the group plans to pilot components with some teacher candidates for the 2010–2011 school year. Currently, the group is discussing the following elements.

**Phase I—Prescreening**

The first decision about whether a candidate would move to the next level would be made by trained staff in the Office of Human Resources who would collect information online, and review and rate the following components through the use of rubrics:

- Electronic profile completed through MCPS Careers
- Official transcripts
- Resume
- Self-administered survey related to desired attributes
- Writing sample
- Submission of references and contact information

Candidates who are successful in the prescreening will advance to the screening phase. The prescreening information and the ratings candidates received, along with the rubric used for rating, would be available to principals.

**Phase II—Screening**

The second phase also will be implemented by trained staff in the Office of Human Resources as well as others trained to assess teacher competencies aligned with the desired attributes. Components including rubrics are in development for the following elements:

- Standardized set of screening interview questions (this could be done in person, via telephone, or via the Internet)
- Portfolio including a lesson plan, video of the lesson, assessment of student learning, and teacher reflection
- Review and rating of two references
Phase III—Performance Assessment

The elements of the performance assessment will be administered by a trained team of MCPS staff members, including administrators, teachers, and support professionals during a half-day session. Specific rubrics for assessing performance are in development by the Selection Team. The following activities are being considered for candidates who move to Phase III of the selection process:

- Video or simulated lesson—Candidates’ previously submitted video of teaching, or simulated lesson, and reflection will be reviewed and rated
- Group lesson planning—Candidates will be given a task to create and deliver a product as part of a team
- Second writing sample—Candidates will be given 30 minutes to review a set of student data and develop a written plan to address the data
- Reflective interview—Candidates will be asked by a pair of raters to reflect on their performance in each of the tasks and identify areas in which they would operate differently
- Final reference check—References will be contacted to address any specific questions related to the candidate and affirm the conclusions drawn from the selection processes

Onboarding Team

The Onboarding Team is a multistakeholder group comprised of representatives from all three employee associations including school-based and central office staff members, as well as the executive director of the Montgomery County Business Roundtable for Education (Attachment D). This team is chaired by MCEA’s vice president and has been meeting monthly or more frequently since August 2009.

The Onboarding Team is charged with designing an orientation program for prospective and newly hired MCPS employees that clearly articulates the culture and expectations of the school system and emphasizes each employee’s contribution to achieving excellence—college and career readiness for every student. This onboarding process will include the following:

- Incorporate the district’s focus on excellence and equity
- Celebrate employee success achieved through leadership at all levels
- Emphasize shared ownership and shared responsibility
- Articulate the value of diversity and multiple perspectives in driving excellence

Following a review of secondary research on corporate onboarding programs, the team identified and reviewed primary source material from select programs of partners in the Montgomery County Business Roundtable for Education. In this review, the Onboarding Team was able to identify characteristics of successful onboarding programs, as well as draft an implementation timeframe.
The common characteristics of successful onboarding programs include the following:

- A focus on the “big picture” of the organization, including vision, mission, and values
- A celebration of the new employee’s entrance into the organization
- Effective involvement of new hires, honoring their voices and commitment to the organization
- An overview of how employees can grow within the organization, building a multifaceted career

The common phases of successful implementation include the following:

- A pre-hire phase, where potential employees are introduced to the guiding tenets of the organization
- A post-hire phase, up to the first day on the job, where employees are greeted and can access information about the organization
- A 180-day employment phase, where employees are supported and develop an understanding of their role within the work location

Based upon this information, the Onboarding Team is developing materials for each of these phases, aligned with best practices culled from the research. The team is in the process of developing a course to be implemented by fall of 2010. The course will be provided to new hires from all three employee organizations, and it will be taught by employees from all three employee associations as well as by students. The course will contain the following themes:

- The story of MCPS through the last six decades, with a focus on learning
- The values of MCPS and its commitment to the community
- The career lattices within the organization
- The evolution of hiring and onboarding practices

Next Steps

Over the next two months, the members of the Selection Team and the Onboarding Team will continue to complete the deliverables and begin to phase in components of the hiring and onboarding processes.

The Selection Team recommends that the elements of Phase I Prescreening and the necessary training be developed prior to summer 2010. This would allow for a pilot of the new processes with some teacher candidates this summer. The elements of the other two phases will require additional time to develop. The target for readiness of a pilot with teacher candidates using all phases of the new selection process is late fall/early winter 2010–2011. Data collected during Phase I Prescreening with teachers will be used in the process design for hiring support professional staff, nonschool-based teacher level staff, and administrative staff.
The onboarding course will be mandatory for all new MCPS employees. The course is anticipated to begin in August 2010 and continue as needed throughout the school year as employees are hired. Quarterly sessions may be offered during 2010–2011, pending the number of newly hired candidates. Based on the feedback collected, the course will be evaluated and revised.

Additionally, work will continue on developing an evaluation process that will be used to determine the effectiveness of these protocols. The evaluation will link the selection and onboarding processes to employee competency, and student outcomes, the ultimate measure of our success.

Present at the table for today’s discussion are Ms. Jody A. Leleck, chief academic officer, Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Susan F. Marks, associate superintendent, Office of Human Resources; Dr. Paulette L. Smith, principal, Cabin John Middle School; Ms. Bonnie L. Cullison, former president, MCEA; and Mr. Christopher W. Lloyd, vice president, MCEA.

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Attachments
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td>Competencies—A set of skills, the knowledge base, and the set of behaviors that are required to meet the responsibilities of and to succeed in a given role.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture—The aggregation of beliefs, attitudes, habits, values, and practices that form a view of reality. These patterns function as a filter through which a group or individual views and responds to the environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Competence</td>
<td>Cultural Competence—The personal awareness, sensitivity, knowledge, and skills that allow individuals to effectively interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially cultures other than their own, in a variety of social settings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Equity—High expectations and access to meaningful and relevant learning for all students so that outcomes are not predictable by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, or disability.</td>
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<td>Excellence</td>
<td>Excellence—Having the highest quality staff with high levels of engagement and commitment in the work of teaching and learning and the operations of the school system that result in all students being college or career ready as high school graduates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>Induction—The process of orienting new staff to the norms, values, and beliefs of the organization.</td>
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<td>Onboarding</td>
<td>Onboarding—The process of integrating new employees into the organization, preparing them to succeed at their job, and becoming fully engaged, productive members of the organization. It includes the initial orientation process and the ensuing 3–6 months (or however long it takes to get an employee &quot;up to speed&quot; in a particular workplace or discipline).</td>
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<td>Selection</td>
<td>Selection—Finding right-fit talent</td>
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Montgomery County Public Schools  
Hiring for Excellence and Equity  
Steering Committee Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bonnie L. Cullison</td>
<td>Former President, Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Brian K. Edwards</td>
<td>Chief of Staff, Office of the Superintendent of Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Christopher S. Garran</td>
<td>Principal, Walter Johnson High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Jody A. Leleck</td>
<td>Chief Academic Officer, Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Christopher W. Lloyd</td>
<td>Vice President, MCEA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Susan F. Marks</td>
<td>Associate Superintendent, Office of Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Heather Schwager</td>
<td>Executive Director, Montgomery County Business Roundtable for Education (MCBRE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Adrian B. Talley</td>
<td>Community Superintendent, Office of School Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. James J. Virga Jr.</td>
<td>Associate Superintendent, Office of Organizational Development</td>
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Montgomery County Public Schools
Hiring for Excellence and Equity—Selection Work Plan

Transform selection and induction processes to result in an extraordinary workforce in which every employee assumes 100 percent responsibility for academic gains for students of all backgrounds

**Charge Statement:** Develop hiring processes that will result in effective employees who have job expertise and articulate and demonstrate the total commitment to and responsibility for student learning that will result in achieving excellence—every student is college and career ready.

The team will research, identify and define the competencies MCPS is seeking in employees. They will identify a means to assess the competencies to create an applicant profile and develop instruments to measure the competencies. The team also will develop a training plan for all MCPS staff responsible for hiring and develop a means to measure the effectiveness of the new hiring process.

**Deliverables:**
(SMART Goals—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time specific)
By September 30, 2009, the group will have met, established a regular meeting schedule, and created an action plan.
By the end of September and through the end of July, the project manager will provide the initiative managers with copies of meeting agendas, notes, updated action plans, etc.
By October 30, 2009, an impact statement will be completed.
By December 18, 2009, the competencies will be established, the applicant profile created and the measurement instrument developed.
By December 18, 2009, the phase-in plan for the selection process, beginning with teacher-level candidates, will be developed.
By January 29, 2010, the training plan will be developed for the phase-in.
By February 26, 2010, the first phase of MCPS staff responsible for hiring teachers will be trained.
By late spring, the new hiring process will be implemented for a group of teachers. Beginning in August 2010, the team will analyze ongoing feedback from staff responsible for hiring teachers.
By January 2011, the team will analyze feedback related to teachers hired using the new process.
By spring 2011, the new hiring process will be implemented for all employees.

**Project Scope:** Hiring and selection only.
Recruitment and placement are not within the scope of this work.

**Critical to Quality:**
Ongoing communication and collaboration with employee associations, school system leadership, school and office-based staff.

**Initiative Managers:** Ms. Jody A. Leleck, Dr. Susan F. Marks

**Project Manager:** Ms. Bonnie L. Cullison

**Team Members:**
- Mrs. Donna L. Graves, director, Equity Training and Development Team, Office of Organizational Development (OOD)
- Mrs. Ruth P. Green, acting principal, John F. Kennedy High School
- Mrs. Niki T. Hazel, principal, Gaithersburg Elementary School
- Dr. Ursula Hermann, community superintendent, Office of School Performance
- Ms. Rachel Hickson, evaluation specialist, Office of Shared Accountability
- Mr. C. Michael Kline, director, Leadership Development Team, OOD
- Mr. Jae W. Lee, teacher, Watkins Mill High School
- Mrs. Ebony Y. Langford-Brown, director, Elementary School Instruction and Achievement, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs
- Mr. Frank J. Lipscomb, professional growth consultant, OOD
- Mrs. Elizabeth W. Povtak, professional growth consultant, OOD
- Mrs. Donna M. Sagona, assistant principal, Great Seneca Creek Elementary School
- Mr. Stephen C. Whiting, principal, Rocky Hill Middle School
- Mr. Travis J. Wiebe, staffing coordinator, Office of Human Resources

**Critical to Quality:**
Ongoing communication and collaboration with employee associations, school system leadership, school and office-based staff.
Montgomery County Public Schools
Hiring for Excellence and Equity—Onboarding Work Plan

Transform selection and induction processes to result in an extraordinary workforce in which every employee assumes 100 percent responsibility for academic gains for students of all backgrounds

**Charge Statement:** Design an onboarding program for prospective and newly hired MCPS employees which clearly articulates the culture and expectations of the school system including employee contributions and roles in achieving excellence—every student is college and career ready.

The content will incorporate the MCPS focus on excellence and equity, and a celebration of MCPS employee successes achieved through leadership at all levels—shared leadership, shared ownership, shared responsibility. It will articulate recognition and value of diversity of thoughts and perspectives in our workforce. It will convey through themes and stories who we are, where we have been, and where we are going together. Ultimately, onboarding will inspire pride in the work and professional fulfillment resulting in the new employee believing, “I am MCPS.”

The team will develop the plan for the implementation of the onboarding program.

**Deliverables:** (SMART Goals—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time specific)

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<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
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<td>By October 30, 2009, an impact statement will be completed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>By December 18, 2009, the outline for the celebrations component will be developed.</td>
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<td>By March 30, 2010, the celebration course and implementation plan will be developed.</td>
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<td>By May 28, 2010, the prospective employee component will be developed.</td>
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<td>By September 1, 2010, the prospective employee component will be implemented for applicants (multi-media marketing tool).</td>
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<td>By September 1, 2010, the celebrations component for all newly hired staff will be implemented.</td>
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<td>By January 2011, the team will analyze feedback on both components for continuous improvement.</td>
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**Project Scope:**
Prospective and new employees only.

**Critical to Quality:** Ongoing communication and collaboration with associations, school system leadership, school and office-based staff. Focus groups to include employees with less than 5 years in MCPS.

**Initiative Managers:** Ms. Jody A. Leleck
Dr. Susan F. Marks

**Project Manager:** Mr. Christopher (Chris) W. Lloyd

**Team Members:**
- Dr. James L. Berry Jr., lead consulting teacher, Office of Organizational Development (OOD)
- Mrs. Eva Brooks, administrative secretary, Thurgood Marshall Elementary School
- Mrs. Judy K. Brubaker, principal, Spark M. Matsunaga Elementary School
- Mr. Christopher C. Cram, ITV operations manager, Department of Public Information
- Ms. Gail A. Epps, program instructional specialist, New Teacher Induction, OOD
- Ms. Amanda Froom, teacher, Bethesda Elementary School
- Mr. Peter A. Hammond, instructional technology systems specialist, Montgomery Blair High School
- Mrs. Dianne Jones, director, Division of School Plant Operations
- Ms. Ann B. Kamenstein, coordinator, Department of Performance Evaluation and Compliance
- Mrs. Michelle E. Schultze, assistant principal, Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents
- Ms. Heather Schwager, executive director, Montgomery County Business Roundtable for Education
- Dr. Paulette L. Smith, principal, Cabin John Middle School
- Mr. Todd M. Watkins, director, Transportation Central Administration