

Testimony before the Board of Education October 15, 2009

There is an alarm at the gate. We have violence in our schools with bullying and racial clashes, disproportionate suspensions and expulsions among African American and Latino students, the dropout rates for African Americans and Latinos are still high and scores in reading, math and the sciences are still low, and graduation rates are disappointing. Let's not forget the labeling of our children in the school system for what reason; to show where they should be, what they are capable of, or how to teach them. We are placing unqualified, frustrated and dejected individuals into society with little chance to succeed.

We can not allow the school environment to include racial incidents that are unchecked and not addressed immediately. Keeping all students productively engaged can only benefit the citizens of Montgomery County. We have to have more of a sense of urgency and provide a broader perspective to this matter. Inclusion is important to resolving any concern. The community is contributing and would like to do more with programs of mentoring and tutoring students such as the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.'s Brotherhood of Super Stars Program, the George B. Thomas Sr. Learning Academies, Inc., Gapbuster Learning Centers, Inc., the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's Ivy Academies, the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's History Activities and Mentoring Programs, the NAACP's Youth Councils, Identity, and Impact Silver Spring, just to name a few. More examples of Positive Behavior Intervention Systems, such as the work of Kim Johnson at Briggs-Chaney, Lee Evans at Magruder High School, and Dr. Ou Yang and his team at Parkland Middle School should be replicated in some form or fashion in the school system.

Who am I to speak? Not only am I the President of the Montgomery County, Maryland Branch of the NAACP, I am a retired executive from the retail food industry that as a child, I was labeled as one who was not college material and should be taking remedial courses. That was not accepted by my math teacher nor my coaches. That is why this situation is not being accepted by this community.

We need to turn a bleak situation for African American and Latino students around now. Our children can't wait. Let us work with you to resolve this important situation in our school system. Give us a seat at the table, now.