



Tonight I am presenting this testimony on behalf of the Least Restrictive Environment Access Group (LRE Access Group). The first thing we want to do is to thank the Board of Education for the commitment it showed to the implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) during the last budget cycle. This commitment is critical to making the attainment of the Seven Keys to College Readiness a realistic goal for many students, while ensuring the acceleration for which other students may be ready.

On September 10, 2009 the U.S. Department of Education issued a new guidance document (see <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/idea-b-reform.pdf>). In addition to outlining specific strategies for using IDEA Recovery Act funds to implement UDL, the guidance makes the following statement: “Since the strategies that follow apply to children with and without disabilities, strategically coordinating a variety of funding sources (e.g., *IDEA Part B ARRA*, regular *IDEA*, *ESEA*, *SFSF*, and State and local funds), consistent with program requirements, is essential to support their implementation.” As you continue to support UDL implementation here in MCPS, we request that a cross departmental team work together to do the strategic planning required and that various funding streams be applied, in addition to IDEA funds.

Last year IDEA Recovery Act funds were committed to UDL in MCPS. However, as the guidance states, funding must come from a variety of sources to benefit all students. Also, there should be strategic planning on funding use by leadership from all the relevant departments in MCPS.

It is important to note that UDL is not necessarily about buying more technology. It also can be implemented with low tech means and materials. Knowledgeable and well staffed media centers and lists of alternate and supplemental materials in curriculum guides are critical for UDL. Technology only furthers UDL if it is paired with the application of UDL principles, guidelines and checkpoints to curriculum design, instructional material selection and professional development regarding how to deliver the curriculum and use the technology to benefit all students (see <http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines>). We have heard there is a UDL pilot and hope that it meets this standard.

The LRE Access Group used half of the funding it received for the 2008-2009 school year to pay for UDL staff developers from the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) to meet with MCPS curriculum specialists. We hope that MCPS will commit

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some of its funds to continue this staff development process, which will support the application of UDL to curriculum development-an essential component of UDL. UDL will improve the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of MCPS education. Savings will occur because UDL addresses the needs of all students from the beginning instead of retrofitting for each subgroup.

With the help of UDL the LRE Access Group hopes to see an increase in the number of students with disabilities who are educated appropriately in the general education classroom. Hours based staffing will also help meet this goal. Improved LRE should be happening from pre-k through age 21. LRE applies just as much in the transition years as it does at any other time. In fact, for many students who still have IEPS between ages 18-21, the LRE may be a college program, with access to regular college courses. These opportunities should be increased to accommodate more students.

Even on-the-job-training programs should consider the restrictiveness of the job options. Too many students, especially those with intellectual disabilities are offered jobs in the back room, the stock room and the laundry room. Transition teachers need more support to find quality employment options in the LRE for their students.

As always, the LRE Access Group looks forward to collaborating with MCPS leadership and staff to improve the education experience for students and teachers. I look forward to seeing most of you at the dinner tomorrow night to discuss UDL further. Thank you.