

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

December 9, 2014

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Teacher Workforce Diversity Strategic Plan

In our District Implementation Plan for *Building Our Future Together: Students, Staff, and Community*, we established five core strategies—Academic Rigor and Culturally Proficient Instruction; Equitable Funding and Support; Human Capital Management; Community Engagement; Operational Excellence and Continuous Improvement—that will help us fulfill the mission, values, and core purpose of the Strategic Planning Framework. Under each core strategy, we enumerated our key focus areas for this school year.

Core Strategy III, Human Capital Management, entails recruiting, retaining, and developing the best workforce in public education. In our plan, we emphasized specifically: “We must build a workforce that enhances the diversity of our schools and holds the collective belief that all students can learn at high levels and thrive in their future.” That is why our first focus area of our human capital management strategy is to increase the diversity of our teacher workforce. Specifically, we indicated in our plan that we will revise and refocus our recruitment, selection, and retention processes to prioritize workforce diversity, and that we will expand and redesign local teacher pipeline programs that develop the internal talent within MCPS.

The attached Teacher Workforce Diversity Strategic Plan presents in detail our work to increase the diversity of our teacher workforce and address this critical focus area of our overall human capital strategy. We look forward to discussing this plan with the Board of Education.

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Attachment

Montgomery County Public Schools Teacher Workforce Diversity: Strategic Plan

Introduction

In Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), we recognize that our success today and in the future requires us to recruit, retain, and develop the most talented workforce in public education. Under our strategic planning framework, *Building Our Future Together*, we have sought to enhance the cultural proficiency of *all* staff to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student body. Equally important, we have been working to increase the diversity of our teaching corps to include the best teachers of all backgrounds, and especially to attract teachers of color and others with backgrounds and experiences that are underrepresented in our current workforce. But to achieve real gains and promote our core value of equity, we must develop a new, bolder vision and plan for teacher workforce diversity.

At MCPS, we believe in the power of diversity. As articulated in Board of Education Policy GBA, *Workforce Diversity*, a core purpose of diversity is:

To enrich the educational experiences of all students by providing exposure to adults from many backgrounds reflecting the pluralistic nature of the community, thereby providing settings for education that promote understanding of diversity and contribute to the quality of the exchange of ideas inherent in the educational setting.

In the classroom, each of our teacher's unique backgrounds and life experiences enrich our work. Teacher diversity manifests in many ways—such as the cultural backgrounds our teachers bring to the classroom, their racial and ethnic identities, their fluency in multiple languages, their academic skills and other interests, the varied jobs they may have held prior to teaching, the places in which they have lived and neighborhoods in which they grew up, and other distinctive experiences they have had in life.

As our county, state, and nation become more diverse, we need to cultivate teachers from all of these varied backgrounds and experiences to strengthen our work as a district as a whole. Numerous researchers have shown that when individuals work together in broadly diverse teams, they produce more creative and more effective results.¹ This is why employers from small businesses to Fortune 500 corporations and the military have prioritized broad diversity and inclusiveness in their workforces. Moreover, to promote diversity, we need to address the challenge that it is often difficult to recruit and retain talented staff when they face the isolating experience of being one of only a very few employees of a particular background.

Diversity is even more fundamental to public education. It plays a key role in building supportive learning communities and preparing all our students to succeed and thrive in our increasingly global world. We believe our students need to experience the rich variety of perspectives that

¹ See, for example, Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Society* 131-238 (2007).

comes from having a diverse teaching force. The breadth of unique viewpoints and experiences that our teachers bring to their classrooms will help our students succeed in such a diverse community as Montgomery County and the world beyond.

In our efforts to attract the best teachers of all backgrounds and experiences, we believe that a particular focus of our work must be to expand opportunities for teachers of color and others with backgrounds and experiences that are underrepresented in our current workforce. As United States Supreme Court Justice Sandra O'Connor has recognized, "Just as growing up in a particular region or having particular professional experiences is likely to affect an individual's views, so too is one's own, unique experience of being a racial minority in a society, like our own, in which race unfortunately still matters."² In today's global community, we know that race still matters, and we need to acknowledge this in building a diverse workforce. We believe that our student diversity demands that we recruit more teachers, especially teachers of color, who share their students' backgrounds or life experiences. While all teachers can and should serve as role models for their students, we believe that teachers who share their students' backgrounds have the potential to support and engage students in additional meaningful ways based on their own personal experiences.

Exposure to a broad diversity of viewpoints and experiences also helps promote cross-racial interactions that are beneficial for *all* students. As the Center for American Progress noted recently in a report about teacher diversity, "It is important for all students to interact with people who look and act differently than they do in order to build social trust and create a wider sense of community."³ In order to break down the damaging racial and ethnic stereotypes that often inhibit opportunities, we believe that all of our students must learn from committed, passionate, and highly qualified teachers of diverse backgrounds working successfully together on their behalf.

For a number of years, we have worked to recruit and develop teachers of color and others underrepresented in our current workforce, but our teacher diversity has increased only slightly, with white teachers comprising more than 76% of the total teacher workforce in 2014.⁴ This data is not unlike that of other large suburban districts, a sign of the broader teacher workforce that is overwhelmingly white at about 82% of all teachers nationally⁵. Moreover, while a number of our teachers grew up in Montgomery County and graduated from MCPS high schools, not all of our schools and neighborhoods are well represented among our recent teacher hiring classes. In FY2014, for example, 22 graduates from Sherwood High School and 20 graduates from Damascus High School entered the MCPS teacher workforce, as compared to 1 from Wheaton High School and 3 from Kennedy High School, respectively.

² *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306, 333 (2003).

³ Ulrich Boser, "Teacher Diversity Revisited," May 4, 2014, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/report/2014/05/04/88962/teacher-diversity-revisited/>.

⁴ In FY2004, 80.4% of the teacher workforce was white; in FY2014, 76.7% of the teacher workforce was white, marking a 3.7% increase in teachers of color over a 10 year period.

⁵ Rebecca Goldring and Amy Bitterman, "Characteristics of Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the United States: Results From the 2011-2012 Schools and Staffing Survey," August 2013, available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

We must—and we can—do better. That is why we have made enhancing teacher diversity a priority area. We are closely reviewing every aspect of our human capital management practice with an eye towards rapid and dramatic improvement. What is clear is that to remain competitive in attracting the best teachers of all backgrounds and experiences to MCPS, it is not enough to redesign our recruitment efforts. Equally, if not more important, we must redesign our selection processes. To achieve the highest standards of merit in teacher selection and attract the most qualified teachers of all backgrounds, we must increase the diversity of the candidate pool for teaching positions across the district. We also must accelerate our staffing timeline so that we do not lose top talent to other school systems in the greater metropolitan area. Moreover, we must strengthen our retention practices and, perhaps most significantly, build new pipelines of diverse cohorts of teacher candidates through our own robust talent development programs that lead to certification in teaching, especially for our own students.

These four critical areas—recruitment, selection, retention, and internal talent development—comprise the four pillars of our plan to significantly increase teacher workforce diversity in MCPS. When implemented, this plan will thoroughly revise and refocus our work in these four areas, and we will monitor our work to hold ourselves accountable for progress. While racial and ethnic diversity is critical, our efforts will extend more broadly to recruit the best teachers of all backgrounds. We believe this is the path to an equitable and inclusive future in Montgomery County Public Schools.

Strategies

Strategy 1: Design and implement an innovative recruitment program focused explicitly on attracting highly effective teachers with diverse backgrounds, especially teachers of color.

At MCPS, recruitment must be a year round process that taps into the deep college and university alumni networks and partnerships that exist in our school system to advance the recruitment of teachers with diverse backgrounds. MCPS must maintain an ongoing program of recruitment to ensure that we are able to successfully compete for promising candidates of all backgrounds. Everyone must consider themselves a recruiter in MCPS because every interaction with potential teaching candidates can make the difference in attracting talented new teachers to Montgomery County.

Initiatives:

- 1.1. Launch a new marketing campaign that reframes why people should teach in MCPS over other districts and raises awareness about the diversity of our school system, our county, and the opportunities to inspire students by joining the next generation of teachers in MCPS.
- 1.2. Establish an MCPS ambassador program that leverages a diverse spectrum of MCPS teachers and principals to recruit teachers of color and others with diverse backgrounds and experiences, through alumni relations, college and university visits, campus organization partnerships, and direct networking.
- 1.3. Develop new incentives that encourage teachers to choose MCPS, and strengthen and promote the existing benefits and opportunities that MCPS has to offer its employees.

- 1.4. Create opportunities for students from a broader array of colleges and universities, including minority serving institutions, to participate in professional learning opportunities in MCPS that support their teacher preparation while highlighting the opportunities that exist to teach in our schools.
- 1.5. Overhaul the schedule and itinerary of recruitment activities to pursue a deliberate approach to increasing the diversity of our teacher candidate pool.

Strategy 2: Redesign the teacher selection process and timeline to ensure MCPS is competitive in today’s teacher job market.

To ensure we remain competitive in today’s teacher job market and enhance the diversity of our teacher workforce, MCPS must take steps to hire both new and veteran teachers as early as possible or risk losing talent to other school systems. To do this, we must overhaul our selection processes—from the way we make hiring decisions, to when we offer candidates positions with our system, to when and where they are assigned. Selection is not solely the responsibility of human resource staffers and a redesigned process must reflect a collective and shared responsibility to this critical function of human capital management.

Initiatives:

- 2.1. Accelerate the selection timeline for new and veteran teacher candidates to MCPS.
- 2.2. Increase the number of open contracts to high-quality candidates in hard-to-fill certification areas, as well as candidates who demonstrate a commitment to our core value of equity.
- 2.3. Create an interview process for new teachers that utilizes a diverse array of principals and teacher leaders to participate in school system hiring.
- 2.4. Create a diverse applicant pool for every open teaching position in MCPS.
- 2.5. Audit MCPS’ hiring process to identify and eliminate any systemic barriers to successfully hiring teachers of diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Strategy 3: Establish MCPS as a desirable, diverse, and sustainable place to work and build a career through a systematic retention program.

Retention is a critical component to our overall strategy for human capital management. We must be intentional in cultivating the cultural proficiency of our workforce to ensure that teachers of all backgrounds experience a positive place of work and a shared understanding of each other and our students. This is a major focal point for MCPS and will continue to be in the years ahead. We must also acknowledge the institutional barriers that can work against teachers of color and others with backgrounds and experiences that are underrepresented in the teacher workforce nationally and locally. We must seek to eliminate these barriers through deliberate action.

Initiatives:

- 3.1. Implement comprehensive cultural proficiency training and development for all MCPS employees.

- 3.2. Enhance formal mentoring and expand networking programs that offer support networks, within schools and across the school district, for all new teachers, and especially those with backgrounds and experiences that are underrepresented in the MCPS teacher workforce, including teachers of color.
- 3.3. Establish partnerships with the local real-estate and business community that will promote affordable housing options for MCPS teachers.
- 3.4. Provide and promote opportunities for professional growth and teacher leadership to ensure teachers access the many resources available through MCPS.
- 3.5. Design a systematic exit interview process to capture data on why departing teachers choose to leave MCPS, in order to inform future retention practices.

Strategy 4: Create a robust talent continuum that develops our own teachers from within Montgomery County.

As MCPS builds its workforce in the years ahead, developing the talent within our own county will play a critical role in ensuring that our teaching workforce reflects the diversity that will serve our educational mission. Local teacher pipeline programs will be essential to diversifying our workforce and providing a sustained talent pool for MCPS for years to come. We must capitalize on the talent we have and the commitment to equity that exists in developing our own pathways to teaching within MCPS. We can expand this pipeline dramatically by expanding opportunities for students who grow up in neighborhoods that are underrepresented among our MCPS alumni teachers, as well as for promising talent among the ranks of MCPS paraeducators and support services staff.

Initiatives:

- 4.1. Enhance and expand our current university partnership teacher development programs so they are focused on supporting the development of a diverse teaching workforce.
- 4.2. Expand programs such as CITE—Creative Initiatives in Teacher Education—to support yearly cohorts of paraeducators and support services staff to pursue their teaching certification.
- 4.3. Grow the MCPS resident teacher program, an alternative teacher certification program for hard-to-fill certification areas or for those who have degrees in content areas who want to become teachers.
- 4.4. Develop a new STEP program—Student To Educator Pathway—that establishes a career pathway for a yearly cohort of MCPS graduating seniors, which will lead to a career teaching in MCPS, focusing on students with backgrounds and experiences that have been underrepresented in the MCPS teacher workforce.