

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

October 16, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education  
From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools  
Subject: Personal Statements for College Applications (09-10-19-02)

**Question**

During the Board/Superintendent Comments section of the meeting, Mrs. O'Neill requested information regarding how pervasive the practice of including the drafting of personal statements for college applications as an assignment for high junior or school senior English classes. Could this practice become a system-wide practice?

**Response**

The English curriculum in Grade 12 offers students an opportunity to complete a personal narrative or essay reflecting on a question that is important to them. This [task](#) invites students to generate compelling questions they would like to answer, and then reflect deeply on their personal experiences before beginning to write. While this is not specifically restricted to composing a college essay, students may choose to answer a question (or prompt) from the College Common App or a required essay from the school to which they are applying, and the work students produce may be the foundation of their eventual application essay.

Students have the opportunity to review sample personal statements in order to compose their own strong personal statement. This task requires students to develop a substantial piece of writing that transitions through all stages of the writing process. Instruction for this task may include a time frame of one to three weeks, which will include time for studying author's craft, planning the writing, developing writing skills, acting on feedback, and completing the final product. To support this Common Task, teacher-created resources guide the instruction and scoring of the personal narrative.

This Common Task is the centrally collected writing task in the first marking period. According to the data collected on Performance Matters, all schools with students enrolled in English 12 implemented this Common Task and reported student data as part of the Montgomery County Public Schools' Evidence of Learning Framework.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. Maria V. Navarro, chief academic officer, at 240-740-3040.

JRS:MVN:NTH:ar

Copy to:  
Executive Staff  
Mr. Murphy  
Ms. Webb