

Northeast Consortium Study Circle
Does Race Impact School Choice in the Northeast Consortium?
June 8th, 2006

The participants prioritized three areas for action: Equity, Misperceptions, and High Expectations. They then divided in to work teams to further clarify suggested action steps.

EQUITY WORK TEAM

Equity Work Team Presentation Outline		
Equity Work Team Members: Sabrina Austin, Orit Chicherio, Talia Chicherio, Jeffrey Marshall, Anne Regan and Kathleen Whitman		
Equity	Work Team Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair and balanced distribution of educational load across each of the three NEC high schools • Fair and balanced distribution of resources across the three high schools
Educational Load	MCPS Definition	Demographic features related to academic achievement levels. Relevant indicators include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of school's enrollment that has ever received free and reduced price meals (Ever FARMS rate) • Mobility • Older than "grade age" • ESOL participation • METS • Special Education
Resources	Work Team Items of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating budget • Grants • Strategic Business Alliances • University/College connections • PTSA Funding • Booster Club (Sports, Chorus, Drama) Funds • Community Support • Parent Involvement

RECOMMENDATIONS		
Barriers to Equity	Background	Goal/Recommendation
1. Disproportionate Educational Load	See MCPS Schools at a Glance summaries	More equally distribute educational load across the three schools and proportionally increase resources for schools with higher educational load.
2. Facilities	Concerns about the substantive differences facility quality as well as “curb appeal” have been present since before Blake opened.	<p>Equal opportunities to participate in quality high school functions (e.g. school plays and sports).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve auditorium sound system at both PBHS and SBHS • Sports – SBHS program should be held harmless during condemned field repair, additional transportation costs and borrowed field fees and loss of booster club revenues for home games should be addressed by MCPS • Augment SBHS cafeteria facilities to allow for a single, mixed lunch period • SBHS Up to date TV studio
3. Public Image		
Discipline		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater consistency in disciplinary action (what is a suspending offense at one school may not be at another) at all three schools • Clear communication to the community by all 3 principals about similarities and differences in disciplinary approaches, including public acknowledgement that all 3 schools face the same behavior challenges present across our community
Publicity (External)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consortium wide media specialist to ensure highly visible coverage for all 3 high schools. • Perform analysis of coverage over past 2 yrs in local press; hold meeting with editors to discuss
Publicity (Internally produced)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade SHS website • Strengthen SBHS promotional materials

<p>6. Counseling Departments</p>	<p>Counseling resources need to be appropriate to the student population, accessible, and designed to encourage each student to meet his/her maximum potential</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage counselors to participate in a race/diversity study group (or MCPS Race, Equity and Achievement workshop for school personnel June 27, 28 or 29 with stipend available for teachers) with parents, teachers and students to increase their knowledge about student needs and perceptions • Reduce the number of students each counselor works with in order to allow counselors to be more proactive in meeting complex needs • Identify measurable means for ensuring cultural competence and adequate counselor resources • Collect data and monitor class placements by race/ethnicity vs. achievement measures.
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>This is a preliminary analysis, based on a beginning understanding of the situation and limited information available. We recommend forming a working team to initiate an ongoing dialogue with 3 high school administrations, parent groups, and NEC Office to further define goals and actions needed.</p>	
<p>Team Members Who Would Like to Participate in a Working Committee with the Consortium?</p>	<p>Sabrina Austin, Anne Regan, Kathleen Whitman</p>	

MISPERCEPTIONS WORK TEAM

1. Team members: Malcolm, Mary, Rhonda, Anne, Cindy, Maggie, Sakura
2. Team Spokesperson: Malcom & Cindy
3. Team Liaison: Mary

Problem:

Misperceptions of the schools and racial and ethnic stereotypes affect choice in the NEC. These misperceptions are based on:

- ignorance;
- stereotypes;
- racism;

Some of the perceptions are:

- Perception that Black and Hispanic = "Ghetto";
- diversity = low performance;
- minorities can't lead.

(see chart on stereotypes on page 4 of notes)

Long-term Goal: To ensure that students are making choices for NEC high schools based on factual information and signature programs rather than misperceptions about schools.

Short-term goal (by start of school): To create an NEC campaign to foster positive images/perceptions for each school—MCPS in coordination with PR person at each school.

Action Steps:

MCPS should:

1. Ensure that all communication to media highlights the diversity of the schools.
2. Ensure that coverage in Gazette highlights all schools equally (determine if coverage to date has done this and if there are discrepancies meet with editor from Gazette to discuss).
3. Provide accurate information, to counteract misperceptions, to media outlets (i.e. Gazette, Washington Post, Out and About in the NEC and school list serves).
4. Establish a communication plan and strategy, designed to enhance the reputation of the NEC as a whole, including the positive emphasis on the importance of diversity. A key focus of this communication plan could be to encourage the diverse community media to provide balanced and fair information about the NEC community as a whole—highlighting the successes of the consortium as a whole and emphasizing the importance of maintaining the preferred choice process.
5. Establish a committee of representatives from the schools, MCPS and parents to provide guidance and input into this issue.
6. Develop an outreach strategy to get information into minority media outlets. i.e. Latino papers; Asian newspapers, etc.
7. Provide support to the designated media liaisons of the high schools.
8. Start in elementary schools to talk about the preferred choice process and the strengths of all of the high schools.
9. Involve parents in choice presentations to middle schools; ensure that parents represent the diversity of the NEC.
10. Ensure that school reps who present in middle schools mirror the diversity of the NEC.

11. Provide information on high schools to the middle schools and encourage them to broadcast the information throughout the year. Focus on accomplishments of high school students, ensuring that diverse student populations are represented.
12. Convene more study circles in the community (including diverse groups with parents, school reps and students) that are focused on the impact of race and ethnicity. Develop plan to convene study circles in Spanish for Spanish speaking high school and middle school parents.
13. Create a video of study circles about race and ethnicity and misperceptions that can spark discussions in schools and community

High Schools should:

1. Designate a staff member to provide information about their high school to the media outlets; coordinate development and release of press releases.
2. Ensure that their signatures are designed to attract a broad array of students, including non-academically oriented students---particularly important for Springbrook and Paint Branch.

Parent Groups

1. PTSA's and others in parent community should work to ensure that information is circulated about the successes at the high school they represent. Ensure that they work in collaboration with each of the staff liaisons to get information for the NEC Out & About and to provide accurate information, to counteract misperceptions, to media outlets (i.e. Gazette, Washington Post, Out and About in the NEC and school list serves).
2. Write letter to editor of Gazette about misperceptions of schools in NEC and the effect that these misperceptions have on the community.
3. NEC incorporate Study Circle suggestions in testimony and other advocacy efforts.

High Expectations Work Team

1. Team members: Jemina, Marie, Tuwana, Michelle
2. Team Spokesperson: Jemina Cornejo
3. Team Liaison: Michelle Patterson

Problem

- Too many teachers and counselors do not have the cultural competence to work with such diverse students.
- Too many parents and students do not have the information they need to succeed in school.

Long-term goal:

To maintain school's high vision for success for all students

Short-term goal(s):

What should be accomplished by the start of school?

- Ongoing training session on diversity issues for teachers/staff
- Parent liaison implemented at each school

What should be accomplished by the end of next school year?

- Develop a peer mediation program at each school
- Hire more counselors (academic/guidance)

Action Steps

- Administrators set high expectations for all teachers
- Train teachers to accept all students and treat them equally
- Educate teachers about how stereotypes affecting students
- Create a parent liaison to link community groups to all parents
- Hire more counselors (academic)
- Hold more class meetings to let students know that people are available in the school.
- Create peer mediation programs