

MEMORANDUM

October 23, 2014

TO: Government Operations & Fiscal Policy Committee

FROM: *JZR* Leslie Rubin, Senior Legislative Analyst
Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: Office of Legislative Oversight Report 2014-4, *Montgomery County Data Innovation Committee*

The Council released Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) 2014-4, *Montgomery County Data Innovation Committee*, on December 3, 2013. The report responds to the Council's request to examine the feasibility of creating an advisory board with the expertise to conduct in-depth data analytics related to the County Government and County-funded agencies. The Executive Summary for the report is on ©1-2.

This worksession comes so long after the report's release because Councilmembers and staff and Executive Branch representatives agreed that the discussion of this report would tie in closely with discussion of the Executive's Open Data Implementation Plan, which was released in the summer of 2014 and is the first item on the Committee's agenda today.

The purpose of this worksession is to brief the Government Operations & Fiscal Policy Committee about the report and facilitate a discussion among the Committee and representatives from the Executive Branch and the County-funded agencies about an advisory board. At the worksession, OLO will have a brief presentation describing the background of data analytics and its place in government. The following representatives of the County Government and County-funded agencies will be available at the worksession to provide comments and answer questions:

Organization	Representative
Office of the County Executive	Fariba Kassiri, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Daniel Hoffman, Chief Innovation Officer David Gottesman, Manager, CountyStat
Montgomery County Public Schools	Sherwin Collette, Chief Technology Officer
Montgomery County Planning Department	Christopher McGovern, GIS Manager, Center for Research and Information Systems
Montgomery College	TBD

This packet is organized as follows:

- **Section A** provides background information;
- **Section B** describes on possible structure for an advisory board, and
- **Section C** identifies issues relevant to the discussion.

A. Background

Over the past decade, the scope and content of data related to government activities has changed dramatically. The sheer quantity of data available for public consumption, the way in which it is structured and how datasets are used has the potential to impact program planning, analysis and evaluation at the local government level.

Data analytics refers to “a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making.” A current buzzword in the world of data analytics is “Big Data” – referring to the vast quantities of data that are created in today’s world by businesses, local governments, and individuals.

Many reports estimate that the amount of data created annually is expected to double every year. Data come from sources as varied as financial transactions, emails, sensor readings, and social media, and often are too big and diverse to analyze with traditional data analysis tools. Business experts and academics contend that analyzed and used strategically, data can help government agencies:

- Identify and reduce inefficiencies,
- Improve productivity,
- Reduce security threats and crime, and
- Create or improve transparency.

In jurisdictions that use advanced analytics, many use the data for predictive analytics – to look forward and predict future events or behavior to help shape decision-making.

The County Government and County agencies generate and maintain large amounts of data. And, in the past year, the Executive has launched dataMontgomery – a platform for publicly publishing disaggregated County Government datasets. Currently, over 200 datasets are publicly available through dataMontgomery.

The County Government, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Montgomery College, and the Montgomery County Planning Department all use advanced data analytics, in one form or another, to aid decision-making. The Department of Transportation, Department of Technology Services, and Department of Permitting Services, for example, recently partnered with WSSC to develop a digital, map-based platform for compiling County Government, WSSC, and other jurisdictions’ data on planned construction projects in County rights-of-way. The system allows the parties to coordinate projects and identify potential conflicts in a digital, map-based platform.

Similar examples exist of advanced uses of data by MCPS, Montgomery College, and the Planning Department. A September 2014 MCPS memo, for example, describing a new predictive analytics tool that MCPS developed to help identify students at risk of dropping out of school is attached at ©9.

B. Possible Advisory Board Structure

For this report, the Council asked OLO to describe how to structure a committee of volunteers to engage in advanced data analytics with County Government and/or agency data. The table on the next page describes one possible structure – a committee of 10-15 data experts drawn from regional government, academic, non-profit, and private sector entities.

Of note, the structure includes an Executive Committee to identify and oversee projects for the advisory board. The Executive Committee would be charged with identifying the issues or projects for the committee as a whole. In the research for this report, OLO found that jurisdictions and organizations that use advanced data analytics first identify problems, questions, or issues and then determine how to analyze data to help address or answer those questions. OLO found no examples of organizations mining through data without first identifying a question.

Components of Committee	Options
Number of Committee Members	10-15
Examples of Representation on Committee	Data experts from (examples only): Montgomery College Montgomery County Public Schools Montgomery County Planning Department The University of Maryland The Universities at Shady Grove Johns Hopkins University Non-Profit organizations Private sector businesses using data analytics The Federal Government
Executive Committee	Office of Legislative Oversight representative County Council representative County Executive representative(s) Representative rotating between MCPS, Montgomery College, and the Planning Department Data Innovation Committee Chair Data Innovation Committee Vice Chair
Executive Committee Responsibilities	Development of Work Program Oversight of Committee work/progress Recommendation to Council of Committee Chair and Vice Chair
Committee Work Program Input	OLO County Council County Executive MCPS Montgomery College Montgomery County Planning Department
Selection of Committee Chair and Vice Chair	Recommended by the Executive Committee representatives from OLO, the County Council, and the Office of the County Executive; approved by the Council
Selection of Committee Members	Recommended by the Executive Committee; approved by the Council
Terms of Service	2 years, with the possibility of reappointment by the Council
Data Privacy	Ensure compliance with federal, state, and local privacy laws

C. Issues Relevant to the Discussion

This section briefly identifies some points that are relevant to the Committee’s discussion.

- All of the County-funded agencies currently use advanced data analytics to advance pieces of their mission.
- OLO Report 2014-4 does not include examples of the use of advanced data analytics in the County Government because there were no available examples in December 2013. In the ten months since the report’s release, however, several departments have affirmatively begun using data or are in the process of taking steps to use data in new and advanced ways.
- OLO has not found any examples of other jurisdictions using volunteers to perform this type of work.
- In November 2013, the Executive Branch had publicly released 34 datasets through dataMontgomery. Today, 222 datasets are publicly available through dataMontgomery today.
- Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer and County-funded agencies (attached at ©3, 5 and 7) included questions about the committee structure described, such as how much time would be required for volunteers to perform this type of work and what level of expertise would be necessary for members of the Executive Committee described in the report.
- In written comments on ©5, Montgomery College identified several ideas outside of a committee structure to support the enhanced use of data analytics in the County Government and County-funded agencies.

OLO received written comments from the Chief Administrative Officer, Montgomery College, and the Montgomery County Planning Board. They are attached.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Item	Begins at:
Executive Summary of OLO Report 2014-4 – <i>Montgomery County Data Innovation Committee</i> , December 3, 2013	©1
Memorandum from Timothy Firestine, Chief Administrative Officer, November 25, 2013	©3
Memorandum from Stephen Cain, Chief Strategy Office, Montgomery College, Oct. 14, 2014	©5
Memorandum from Rose Krasnow, Deputy Director, Montgomery County Planning Department, October 20, 2014	©7
Memorandum from Joshua Starr, Superintendent of Schools, to the Board of Education, September 22, 2014	©9

Montgomery County Data Innovation Committee

OLO Report Number 2014-4

December 3, 2013

Over the past decade, the scope and content of data related to government activities has changed dramatically. The sheer quantity of data available for public consumption, the way in which it is structured and how datasets are used has the potential to impact program planning, analysis and evaluation at the local government level.

This report responds to a request from the Council to examine the feasibility of creating an advisory board with the expertise to conduct large scale data analytics.

Data and Data Analytics

Data analytics refers to “a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making.” A current buzzword in the world of data analytics is “Big Data” – referring to the vast quantities of data that are created in today’s world by businesses, local governments, and individuals.

Many reports estimate that the amount of data created annually is expected to double every year. Data come from sources as varied as financial transactions, emails, sensor readings, and social media, and often are too big and diverse to analyze with traditional data analysis tools. Business experts and academics contend that analyzed and used strategically, data can help government agencies:

- Identify and reduce inefficiencies,
- Improve productivity,
- Reduce security threats and crime, and
- Create or improve transparency.

In jurisdictions that use advanced analytics, many use the data for predictive analytics – to look forward and predict future events or behavior to help shape decision-making. For example:

New York City combined data on illegal property conversion complaints, foreclosures, tax liens, and neighborhood demographics and found that certain factors correlate with a high risk of residential fire. A team then created a risk assessment model to prioritize illegal conversion inspections. Before creating the model, inspectors found seriously hazardous fire conditions in 15 percent of inspections. Using the model, inspectors found seriously hazardous fire conditions in 75 percent of inspections.

Data Use in the County Government and County Agencies

The County Government and County agencies generate and maintain large amounts of data. And, in the past year, the Executive has launched dataMontgomery – a platform for publicly publishing disaggregated County Government datasets.

A few County Government departments are exploring ways to use complex data analytics or predictive analytics to further their missions. No departments currently use these advance practices regularly.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Montgomery College, and the Montgomery County Planning Department all use advanced data analytics, in one form or another, to aid decision-making. MCPS, for example, created a model using attendance, behavior, and course failure data to identify students with an increased likelihood of dropping out of school – to help target resources. Additionally, the Planning Department combined various data to predict where demand for bicycle use will be greatest – to help prioritize where to build bicycle routes and other relevant facilities.

Montgomery County Data Innovation Committee

If the Council would like to pursue creating an advisory board to conduct large scale data analytics, this report describes how OLO would recommend structuring a **Data Innovation Committee** to advance the use of innovative data analytics in the County Government and County agencies.

The key components of the proposed structure for a Data Innovation Committee are:

Data Innovation Committee Members	10-15 data analysis experts
Data Innovation Executive Committee	Separate from the Data Innovation Committee – this group would monitor the work and progress of the Data Innovation Committee, develop an annual work program, and recommend individuals to the County Council to sit on the Data Innovation Committee
Executive Committee Members	Representatives from: Office of Legislative Oversight County Council County Executive Rotating between MCPS, Montgomery College and the Planning Department Data Innovation Committee Chair Data Innovation Committee Vice Chair
Data Innovation Committee Work Program Input	From: OLO, County Council, County Executive, MCPS, Montgomery College, Montgomery County Planning Department
Selection of Data Innovation Committee Chair and Vice Chair	Recommended by the other Executive Committee representatives, approved by the Council
Selection of Data Innovation Committee Members	Recommended by the full Executive Committee, approved by the Council
Terms of Service	2 years, with the possibility of reappointment by the Council
Data Privacy	Ensure compliance with federal, state, and local privacy laws

Other Considerations. If the Council establishes a Data Innovation Committee, OLO strongly recommends taking steps to ensure that the Committee remain free from both internal and external political pressures to avoid hindering agency willingness to participate in the Committee.

Timing of Council Consideration

In December 2012, the Council enacted Bill 23-12 on open data. The legislation requires the Chief Administrative Officer to develop an Open Data Implementation Plan within 18 months that describes public datasets under the control of the County Government and that prioritizes publication of the datasets on the County Government's open data portal. Executive Branch representatives report that the Open Data Implementation Plan will be completed by the summer of 2014.

In order to have a fuller understanding of available County Government data, OLO recommends that Committee and Council formation of a Data Innovation Committee coincide with discussion of the Open Data Implementation Plan when the Chief Administrative Officer releases it next summer.



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Timothy L. Firestine
Chief Administrative Officer

MEMORANDUM

November 25, 2013

TO: Chris Cihlar, Director, Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Timothy L. Firestine, Chief Administrative Officer *Timothy L. Firestine*

SUBJECT: Draft Report - Montgomery County Data Innovation Committee

I am in receipt of your draft report dated November 6, 2013, recommending a new Advisory Board identified as a "Montgomery County Data Innovation Committee." The report's recommendation is in response to the Council's request for OLO to examine the feasibility of creating an advisory board with the expertise to conduct analytics on large scale, complex data ("big data").

We appreciate your efforts in examining the potential methods by which Montgomery County could strengthen its efforts around "big data" by tapping into the pool of County residents and businesses with a data science background.

In general, having a pool of talented County residents and businesses could provide useful contributions to data analytics within County agencies. On the other hand, a formal committee approach is not consistent with the main purpose of the "open data" concept which is to democratize the use of both structured and unstructured information/data, and provide it to individuals or groups who would make use of it for the public good.

As to the structure of OLO's recommended Data Innovation Committee, the proposed Executive Committee does not include permanent representatives from all County agencies (MCPS, MNCPPC, WSSC, Montgomery College, HOC), municipalities, and the State, which could limit its effectiveness/influence.

Also, I would like to highlight the following points:

- Since the referenced work program for this proposed cross-sector cross-agency committee seems to be the key to its usefulness, there needs to be defined guiding principles, unified desired outcomes, and dedicated resources for this group. Although we cannot speak for the other County agencies, currently the appropriate resources for staffing this committee are not

Chris Cihlar, Director, Office of Legislative Oversight

November 25, 2013

Page 2

available and an adequate inventory of meaningful and easily accessible/analyzable datasets is not yet available.

- If the purpose of this committee is to provide a skill set(s) not currently available in County government, it would be helpful if the skill set(s) could be identified. CountyStat is evolving to address the opportunities and challenges of “big data” and it is entirely possible to add the necessary skill set(s) and/or tools to its current process.

We recommend that the Council postpone considering this recommendation until the County’s Open Data Implementation Plan has been in place for at least one year and aspects of it have been effectively integrated with our existing systems such as ERP, MC311, and other departmental service-focused databases/systems and social media tools.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this draft. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Fariba Kassiri.

TLF:dh

cc: Fariba Kassiri, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Sonny Segal, Director, Department of Technology Services
David Gottesman, Manager CountyStat
Dan Hoffman, Chief Innovation Officer
Dieter Klinger, Chief Operating Officer, Department of Technology Services



October 14, 2014

Chris Cihlar, PhD, Director
Office of Legislative Oversight
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 5th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Dr. Cihlar:

Montgomery College has reviewed the Office of Legislative Oversight report dated November 6, 2013, which recommends the new "Montgomery County Data Innovation Committee." We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this report and to engage in a dialogue about efforts to strengthen the use and efficacy of "big data" within the county.

We applaud the report's overarching goal of using data analytics to enhance the means to collect, analyze, and transform the multitude of county-level data into useful and actionable information. There is no doubt that many agencies and constituencies within Montgomery County would benefit from a robust data analytics approach and enhanced guidance on data collection and analytics to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of operations and to advance creative problem-solving. However, we are uncertain as to the efficacy of a structured and formalized entity for this purpose and are concerned that such a formalized structure could limit, and possibly stifle, the effective use and influence of data analytics.

We would however suggest the following to support the enhanced use of data analytics not only by county agencies but the array of organizations in the county that seek to improve the quality of life in our community:

- Creation of a data analytics affinity group within the county made up of representatives from all interested county agencies and or organizations that would meet regularly to discuss new practices and methodologies.
- Development of a centralized, online portal that provides access to data analytic resources, case studies, and related skills training available.
- Hosting of an annual symposium on "big data" and data analytics to highlight the work being done by county agencies and other entities as well as new accessible datasets, such as CountyStat.
- Creation of a volunteer cadre of skilled professionals from government and business that could serve as a resource to agencies and individuals in developing data analytic methodologies.

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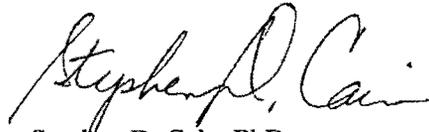
Germantown Campus, 20200 Observation Drive, Germantown, MD 20876
Rockville Campus, 51 Mannakee Street, Rockville, MD 20850

Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, 7600 Takoma Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912
Workforce Development & Continuing Education, 51 Mannakee Street, Rockville, MD 20850

Chris Cihlar, PhD
October 14, 2014
Page 2

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this report. We look forward to working with our fellow agencies to enhance our use of data analytics and further collaboration to—as our mission says—enrich the life of our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen D. Cain". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "S" and "C".

Stephen D. Cain, PhD
Chief of Staff/Chief Strategy Officer
Office of the President



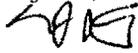
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

October 20, 2014

TO: Leslie Rubin, Senior Legislative Analyst

FROM: Rose Krasnow, Deputy Director, Montgomery Planning Department 

VIA: Christopher McGovern, GIS Manager, Information Technology & Innovation and
Roberto Ruiz, Research Manager, Research and Special Projects,
Montgomery County Planning Department MNCPPC 

SUBJECT: Comments on the Montgomery County Data Innovation Committee Report

The Montgomery County Planning Department is supportive of the Data Innovation Committee structure proposed in a December 3, 2013 Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report, but suggests that the competency level of the Executive Committee and the level of work effort expected of Data Innovation Committee members be further specified.

The Planning Department understands the importance of harnessing “big data” through data analytics which, in turn, could lead to the delivery of better and more efficient government services. Likewise, the Planning Department also supports this initiative because it has the potential to foster better cooperation between the county departments and government agencies and outside data experts and analysts. We understand that such a complex endeavor necessitates an organizational structure, and OLO’s proposed Data Innovation Committee structure seems sound because it is based on proven precedents from other organizations, such as the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

Although the Planning Department supports the Data Innovation Committee structure, OLO needs to address the level of expertise required of members of the proposed Executive Committee. The knowledge base of the Executive Committee is important because it will establish the annual work program through the formulation of a “question or an issue” that can be answered by the Data

Innovation Committee. It is the Planning Department's opinion that in order to formulate questions that can be answered through "big data" and data analytics, the Executive Committee members must be familiar with the forms or types of data available, have experience with analyzing such data, and understand data's limitations. Otherwise, the Executive Committee might propose a charge that is beyond the scope of what can be answered through data analytics. Similarly, familiarity with data analysis will assist the Executive Committee in providing appropriate oversight of the Data Innovative Committee as they work through their iterative process.

Another area that needs further clarity is the anticipated amount of time that will be required from members of the Data Innovation Committee as they go through the process of formulating a data analysis strategy, processing the data, interpreting results, and communicating the results through a report or presentation. Potential members of the Data Innovative Committee, as suggested by OLO, hail from County government and agencies, the federal government, academia, non-profits, and the private sector. In all likelihood, however, these people have full-time employment responsibilities and balancing day-to-day work with Committee assignments could prove challenging. Thus, the Planning Department asks that the time and work commitment expectations of Data Innovative Committee members' be specified. We would also suggest that if these expectations exceed a certain threshold, it might be necessary to seek compensation to the government agencies to make up for the diversion of significant staff resources to the data analytics work needed by the Data Innovation Committee.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to comment.

Cc: Rose Krasnow, Deputy Director, Montgomery County Planning
Department MNCPPC
Henry Mobayeni, Chief of Information Technology & Innovation,
Montgomery County Planning Department MNCPPC

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

September 22, 2014

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Early Warning Indicators

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Board of Education with a summary of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) efforts toward developing a systemwide early warning monitoring tool to support all students and ensure their academic success by identifying factors that may impede their academic progress. The tool—Early Warning Indicators (EWI)—allows school and central services staff members to identify students who may need interventions and enable us to mobilize the necessary supports. MCPS will use the tool to inform resource allocation, staff actions, and accountability. This tool will provide critical information allowing the school system to provide the differentiated supports that will ensure equity.

Background

In fall 2012, I requested that the Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) analyze cohort data to determine what common patterns may be evidenced in students who have positive academic outcomes versus those who do not; specifically, what are differences between students who graduate and students who drop out. The intent of this research was to study the characteristics of students and isolate common behaviors as soon as they begin to emerge, so that we can determine which schools may need additional support and whether there are patterns across our community. These student behaviors may be thought of as EWIs (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2010), as they occur in advance of students dropping out. As such, OSA attempted to address the following research questions:

1. What are the attendance, behavior, and coursework patterns at the end of marking period three for Grade 1 students and at the end of marking period one for Grades 3, 6, and 9 students who eventually drop out of high school?
2. For each of the time points, what is the likelihood of students dropping out by each EWI?
3. Are the EWIs for identifying the MCPS Class of 2011 dropouts reliable at identifying the Class of 2012 dropouts?

After analyzing the academic history for all 11,241 students in the Class of 2011 and then validating this work by analyzing the subsequent Class of 2012 (11,306), researchers were able to isolate outcome predictors as early as Grade 1. By placing emphasis on attendance, behavior, and

coursework, and the cumulative effect these variables have on student learning, we now may quantify with a high degree of accuracy the level of support our students need. In March 2013, OSA published these findings in the report, *Just the Right Mix: Identifying Potential Dropouts in Montgomery County Public Schools Using an Early Warning Indicators Approach*¹.

From Research to Action

Following the release of the study, I charged OSA with designing a system with comprehensive Kindergarten through Grade 12 predictive analytics. During the course of the 2013–2014 school year, models for monitoring were developed and tested, and pilot schools and cross-sections of stakeholders provided feedback. This undertaking resulted in a tool that may calculate for each student the degree of support he or she needs through the weighting of critical success factors. In addition to attendance, behavior, and coursework, a fourth factor of mobility was observed to have a strong correlation to student outcomes and thus added to the model to strengthen its accuracy. The results yielded a tool that may diagnose in real time whether a student is making sufficient progress toward on-time graduation. Once the logic models were finalized, the next undertaking was to design a web interface that would automate this process and make the information available to all adults responsible for the learning of our students.

Online Tool

A collaborative team in the offices of the chief technology officer (OCTO) and OSA worked to develop the online tool. The team was tasked with finalizing the calculations and designing the web interface that will be available to school and central services staff members. The resulting tool provides multiple reports delineating students in high, moderate, and low support categories. The data display allows for disaggregation on both the system and school levels. Additionally, a display will show the various data points used in the calculations to determine the level of support designation for each student.

Use of Data in MCPS

The Montgomery County Board of Education core values encourage the use of data to inform instructional practices. Our core values of equity, learning and relationship drove the work of developing this tool. The core value of learning states that we must "... analyze and reflect upon evidence to improve our practices." The core value of relationships indicates "... we will get to know student and staff members as individuals to better serve them ...". The core value of equity requires that resources are distributed according to need. The EWI tool is critical to identifying need and is therefore an essential component in helping us ensure that we are focused on closing the achievement gap. The EWI tool allows us to use data to truly know students, ask appropriate questions, and then make informed decisions to improve our practices and services for children.

The EWI tool represents advancement in the data displays available to staff members. The tool places multiple data points in one place, but also it provides information about the relationship of those data points. The models use these data relationships to suggest levels of support for each student. This holistic student data may be used to prioritize programs and supports.

As the EWI tool allows for multiple data points to be displayed in a manageable way, school teams will work more efficiently. For example, a common middle school practice is to discuss student information at the grade-level team meeting, where teachers share concerns (behavior, academics, etc.). It is expected that the tool will enhance this practice by enabling teams to prioritize student assistance based on the identified level of support. Once a student is identified as needing supports, the team will then drill down to ask “why” questions and ultimately align practices/interventions/supports to meet the specific needs of students. Furthermore, schools may identify a hierarchy of interventions and/or supports for students at all identified levels.

The data provide insight that will inform multiple areas within schools to support the needs of students. For example, EWI information will be used by coordinated student support teams to design specific interventions for students; inform student learning outcomes for teachers; and identify students who may benefit from outside partnership activities such as mentoring programs, etc.

Joint data review meetings, scheduled with staff members from both offices of school support and improvement and the chief academic officer, are a concrete example of how data will inform central services priorities. The regular meetings will focus on examining prioritized data points and the implications for central services actions. EWI data will be one of the data points reviewed in the meetings and will provide meaningful insight into the support needs across the district.

Feedback from Practitioners to Improve the Tool

Extensive feedback will be collected on the EWI tool available during the 2014–2015 school year. The feedback will be used to improve future versions of the tool to better meet the needs of all users. Central services staff members will collect anecdotal information throughout the year during conversations with school staff members. Additionally, we will use structured feedback mechanisms—taking advantage of existing meetings and gatherings of stakeholders as much as possible—to collect suggestions and recommendations. We also will convene focus groups to gather more detailed feedback.

Connections to County Services

EWI data will provide the opportunity to identify schools or regions with higher percentages of students needing support. MCPS will use the information to adjust practices to serve our students better. The tool also will provide a vehicle to initiate conversations with Montgomery County agencies about aligning multiple levels of service. By using data to identify the locations needing higher levels of support, a dialogue may be established for the purposes of aligning school and county services to ensure the needs are met for the children of Montgomery County.

JPS:MVN:aa

¹ West, Thomas C. (2013). *Just the Right Mix: Identifying Potential Dropouts in Montgomery County Public Schools Using an Early Warning Indicators Approach*. Rockville, MD: Montgomery County Public Schools.