

Diversified Curriculum

I always feel lucky to live in Montgomery County. There must be many people agreeing with me; this county is home to the largest population increase in the state for five straight years¹. Here we have cities among the wealthiest² and at the top of Best Cities for Families list³ in the country. Our public schools are often credited as the reason for these awards⁴.

Yet, just like many Americans, we currently face not only an economic crisis, but also a human crisis. Many young people are dropping out of schools, not equipped with the necessary capabilities to join the workforce. According to Maryland state data, even the county's "traditionally top-performing high schools" do not have 100% graduation rate, while other "seven high schools had 2015 graduation rates less than 85 percent⁵."

In the era of technology in which robots will take many low-skill jobs, most of these people will face unemployment. Not only will this impact them, but also their next generations will inherit economic and opportunity disadvantages. This problem has interested me greatly, because education deficiency is the roots to all the social inequalities that are prevalent. Through the ongoing election campaigns, one can tell that it is imperative to deal with the widespread anxieties from social inequalities.

Former Governor Martin O'Malley once said "there is no such thing as a spare Marylander." To honor this statement, young Marylanders must be well trained before entering society. Montgomery County has made efforts in trying to best prepare its students by offering unique programs at such schools as the Thomas Edison School of Technology.

Perhaps more can be done. Instead of focusing on what they want for students, the county should gear more toward what the students want for themselves.

Our schools teach science and mathematics very diligently. But such courses are more for the preparation of higher education and often are not directly connected to real world. We may want to add technology and engineering type courses in curriculum. While these will not have an impact on students who are not disadvantaged, as they can stick to the "original" courses to get ready for colleges; for those who do not go to college, they will be offered new options of technical education courses and have another route to finish high school requirements. These courses will enable them better prepared to join the workforce right after high schools. Our neighboring state Virginia has moved to reform their educational system-- "aiming to make high school more relevant to the working world⁶."

With residents from different backgrounds, Montgomery County is proud of this diversity. Our educational curriculums can be the same. Senator Barbara Mikulski once said, "Each one of us can make a difference. Together we make change." The change can start with a difference in our curriculum choices.

¹ www.bethesdamagazine.com; May 19, 2016

² www.bethesdamagazine.com; May 24, 2016

³ www.bethesdamagazine.com; May 2, 2016

⁴ www.bethesdamagazine.com; May 2, 2016

⁵ www.bethesdamagazine.com; February 15, 2016

⁶ www.washingtonpost.com; May 12, 2016