

HHS/ED COMM #1
May 2, 2014
Worksession

MEMORANDUM

May 1, 2014

TO: Health and Human Services Committee
Education Committee

FROM: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst *ny*

SUBJECT: **Worksession: FY15 Operating Budget
Review of Items Assigned Jointly to the Health and Human
Services and Education Committees: Kennedy
Cluster Project and Public Private Partnerships: George B.
Thomas Learning Academy**

The Health and Human Services Committee and the Education Committee will continue its review of the FY15 Operating Budget issues that involve the Department of Health and Human Services and Montgomery County Public Schools.

Those expected to participate in the worksession include:

Department of Health and Human Services
Uma Ahluwalia, Director
Stuart Venzke, Chief Operating Officer
Patricia Stromberg, HHS Budget Team Leader
JoAnn Barnes, Acting Chief, Children, Youth,
and Family Services

Office of Management and Budget
Pofen Salem

Montgomery County Public Schools
June Zillich, Office of Community Engagement
and Partnerships, MCPS
Don Kress, Project Coordinator, Kennedy
Cluster Project
Thomas P. Klausung, Director, Department of
Management, Budget and Planning

George B. Thomas Learning Academy
Dr. George B. Thomas, Founder and President,
Board of Directors
Michael Thomas, Executive Director
Dr. Clare Keller, Evaluation Consultant

I. SUMMARY OF HHS AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The HHS and Education Committees held a worksession on April 23 to review budget items related to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The Joint Committee recommended the following:

- **Kennedy Cluster Project:** The Joint Committee recommended deferring the decisions on HHS budget items relating to the Kennedy Cluster Project so that the Committee could request and review additional information about the initiative. The Committees requested a copy of the recently published case study on the initiative as well as a description of what full implementation of the Kennedy Cluster project would entail.
- **Head Start and Prekindergarten Services:** Recommended approval (5-0) of the Executive's proposed budgets for Head Start Services. Recommended adding \$249,165 to reduce the waiting list for Prekindergarten services through Centro Nia and \$80,000 for a full-time coordinator to support Prekindergarten services at Centro Nia.
- **Early Childhood Services:** Recommended approval (5-0) of \$142,830 for the Early Childhood Advisory Council grant as proposed by the County Executive. Deferred a decision on the recommendation to expand early childhood services in conjunction with the Kennedy Cluster Project. Recommended adding \$6,900 to the Reconciliation List to support PEP Inclusive Child Care Training for child care providers.
- **Child Care Subsidies:** Recommended approval (5-0) of the Executive's proposed FY15 budget for the Child Care Subsidies Program. Because of the volatility of Working Parents Assistance (WPA) subsidy use in recent years, the Committees requested periodic reporting in FY15 on WPA use and available balances in FY15. The Committee recognized the need for the Department to complete a comprehensive analysis of the WPA work group recommendations and requested a written report by October 2014. Councilmember Navarro expressed interest in using County funding to close the gap in subsidies received by WPA and State Child Care Subsidy Program participants that would result from implementation of WPA Work Group recommendations. Councilmember Branson requested consideration by DHHS of implementing a grant to providers who agree to take State Child Care Subsidy Program participants.
- **Infants and Toddlers:** Recommended approval of the Executive's proposed FY15 budget for the Infants and Toddlers Program.
- **School Health Services:** Recommended approval of the Executive's proposed FY15 budget for School Health Services.
- **Linkages to Learning:** Deferred the decision related to the addition of a Linkages to Learning site at South Lake Elementary School linked to expansion of the Kennedy Cluster Project. Recommended adding \$240,882 to the Reconciliation List to provide full staffing of Linkages to Learning programs at schools with Ever FARMS rates higher than 85% including New Hampshire Estates, Harmony Hills, Wheaton Woods, Weller Road, and Highland Elementary Schools.
- **High School Wellness Center:** Recommended funding High School Wellness Centers at Northwood, Gaithersburg, and Watkins Mill High Schools, but also recommended adding funding of \$65,496 to provide oversight for High School Wellness Centers and other functions in the Positive Youth Development Program.

- **Public Private Partnerships:** The Committee deferred a decision on increased funding for the George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy pending additional information about the program. Committee members expressed interest in reviewing data related to the academic achievement of participants, including FY14 honor information as a comparison point, grades, academic ineligibility, and program attendance based on FARMS eligibility. Additional service information related to the number of participating MCPS and non-MCPS, e.g., private or home school, students was requested. The Committee also wanted information about the number of nonprofit development directors the County funds, the rationale for providing this support, and the amount on average that these positions raise in new funding annually. Committee members expressed concern that funding for these school-based academic support services are included in the DHHS budget. Committee members also inquired about increasing fee revenue from families that are able to pay and questioned the use of County funding for non-MCPS students. The Committees otherwise recommended approval of other contracts in Child and Adolescent School and Community Based Services that are educational in nature.
- **Children’s Trust:** The Committees did not recommend approval of \$100,000 in funding to implement a Children’s Trust. Committee members did not support adding funding without a similar commitment from MCPS.

II. KENNEDY CLUSTER

Joint HHS and Education Committee Discussion:

The Joint Committee recommended deferring the decisions on HHS budget items relating to the Kennedy Cluster Project so that the Committee could request and review additional information about the initiative. The Committees requested a copy of the recently published case study on the initiative as well as a description of what full implementation of the Kennedy Cluster project would entail.

Councilmember Andrews expressed concern about the lack of data on the impact of services on project participants and did not support expanding services before such information became available. Councilmember Navarro and Council President Rice expressed the need to develop a robust model of the Kennedy Cluster before expanding the model to other clusters. Council President Rice felt the need to develop a robust program in Kennedy Cluster before expanding the program to Watkins Mill. Council President Rice and HHS Committee Chair Leventhal emphasized the need to collect outcomes information on the impact of services, but would not predicate the decision to fund services that help people on the availability of data that shows the positive impact of those services. Councilmember Branson agreed with the need to evaluate the program, but felt that efforts to measure program impact would not be meaningful until all program components are in place.

The case study was transmitted to the Council and is attached at ©1-26. Anecdotes included in the report suggest that Kennedy Cluster Project activities contributed to some positive academic results for individuals. Although the case study states that “[s]tatistical and anecdotal evidence suggests that the Kennedy Cluster Project contributed directly to higher

achievement,” the statistical information presented does not evidence a direct relationship between the services offered by the initiative and higher academic achievement.

For example, some of the statistics cited compare the Kennedy Cluster African American and Hispanic student populations against the MCPS population, and in cases where the measurement for the Kennedy Cluster African American or Hispanic student categories is favorable or comparable to the MCPS population, the inference is drawn that Kennedy Cluster Project interventions may contribute to a narrowing of the achievement gap. In one case, where the report cites a lower drop-out rate over a two-year period for Hispanic students at Kennedy High School compared with the MCPS rate, the drop-out rate for Hispanic students over the two-year time period actually increased. See ©10. Nevertheless, the case study describes a number of experiences where the Project connected youth and families with services that helped them.

A description of full implementation was not made available at the time of packet publication; however, Council staff has attached the comprehensive service plan that was considered by the Joint Committees in 2008 at ©27-30. The following table summarizes the recommended program elements with cost implications, and the 2nd table provides activities in the implementation plan that did not require additional costs.

Objective/Activity	Cost Estimate	Timeline	Responsible Agency
Expand activity bus services: 1 bus to each ES and 2 to MS for 3 days/week for 4 weeks	\$28,649	ASAP	MCPS
Expand summer meals program: summer open lunch at all sites with MCPS circulator buses	\$115,000	2009	MCPS
Provide refurbished computers to qualifying families	\$20,000	1/09	MCPS
Increase universal preschool-opportunities for all 3 and 4 year olds	\$516,522	FY09	HHS/ESC/MCPS
Housing support for families collaborating w/ HHS Homeless Svcs	\$101,757	FY09	HHS
Conduct resource fairs for 150 participants			HHS lead with participation from other providers or agencies
Printing, refreshments, giveaways	\$800	11/2009	
Printing, equipment rental, food, promotional needs, overtime pay to process extra applications	\$43,800	Fall 2010	
Operationalize Excel Beyond the Bell: ES coordination & partner building (300) New slots to serve children and youth (100-125) Professional development & accountability (30 providers)	\$345,330	FY09-FY10	Collaboration Council, Rec, DHHS, CUPF & others
Expand Linkages to Learning (prevention, case management and mental health services) to Project Middle and Elementary Schools	Year 1: \$1,123,591 Year 2: \$1,358,956	FY10?	HHS, MCPS & Partner Nonprofit
Provide a Parent Outreach Coordinator (.5 FTE) at each targeted school to improve communication, parent involvement and student outcomes	\$303,811	FY10	MCPS
Create summer youth employment (job placement, career and skill development, job fairs) program for 100 youth	\$80,000	FY10	Rec/DED/OHR
Evaluate use of programmed after-school space	\$60,000	FY10	Rec/CUPF
Project Evaluation	\$150,000		
TOTAL	\$3,139,625		

The 2008 implementation plan also described a number of activities that did not require additional costs including:

Objective/Activity	Timeline	Responsible Agency
Develop interagency MOU for information sharing	5/08-10/08	HHS/MCPS
Schedule fall vision and hearing screenings	8/19/08-12/31/08	HHS
Assess need for Immunization clinic in schools	8/26/08-9/19/08	HHS
Continue operations group meetings	10/08-10/10	HHS
Evaluate alternative staffing strategies	2/2/09-4/1/09	MCPS
Include Project secondary schools in the Professional Learning Communities Institute	July 2009	MCPS
Working with landlords and property managers to intervene with tenants in danger of eviction (Housing First Initiative)	FY09	HHS

It appears that the thinking around the services that should be included in the project has evolved over time; some of the recommended items in FY15 are not reflected in the earlier plan, and conversely, a number of the items in the earlier plan have not been recommended for expansion funding to date.

Background

According to the Board of Education’s recommended FY15 budget, the Kennedy Cluster Project was initiated in 2007 to identify and address the root causes of the achievement gap in MCPS. Kennedy Cluster schools were identified for the project because they enrolled large percentages of African American and Hispanic students, many of whom were poor or lived in homes where Spanish was the primary language. The project brought together representatives of MCPS, County Government agencies, Department of Juvenile Services, State's Attorney's Office, and other youth serving agencies, to form a multi-agency team to discuss challenges affecting youth and their families in Kennedy Cluster project schools and provide them with support and services.

FY15 Operating Budget Recommendations

The following table shows the recommended adjustments to the FY15 Operating Budget recommended by the County Executive for the Kennedy Cluster Project.

Department	Program	Description	Rec. Amount	FTEs
DHHS - CYF	Child & Adolesc. School & Comm. Based Svcs	Staffing Needed for Expansion	111,565	2.5
DHHS - CYF	Linkages to Learning	Add site at South Lake Elementary School	122,377	0
DHHS - CYF	Early Childhood Svcs	Early Childhood Services	104,156	0
Recreation	Youth Devel. Programs	Expand Excel Beyond the Bell to Montgomery Village Middle School	217,959	3.5
Recreation	Youth Devel. Programs	Expand High School Sports Academy to Watkins Mill Cluster	112,299	4.88

The Joint Committee will review and make recommendations related to DHHS budget items. The PHED Committee reviewed the adjustments related to the Recreation Department on

April 30 and recommended approval of the items on their own merit apart from their connection to the Kennedy Cluster Project.

The Board of Education has proposed the following new funding in the FY15 MCPS budget:

Description	Rec. Amount	FTEs
Evaluation specialist to conduct program outcomes study	\$ 45,675	0.5
Two 0.4 teacher-level positions to coordinate afterschool programs at Col. E. brook Lee Middle School and Montgomery Village Middle School	\$ 60,552	0.8
Emergency assistance funds for families referred by Project schools	\$ 12,000	0

The Executive proposes to expand the project to the Watkins Mill Cluster Schools including all schools in that cluster. Watkins Mill was identified as the cluster that was most similar to Kennedy. See ©38 for a comparison of high school cluster demographics. Council staff notes that although Wheaton has higher levels of poverty, ESOL, and Mobility rates than both Kennedy and Watkins Mill, it was not targeted for “Kennedy Cluster” services.

Staffing

Current staffing dedicated to the Kennedy Cluster project includes a full-time Care Coordinator and part-time MCPS Project Manager. The Executive’s recommended budget targets the following additional staffing resources to be dedicated to the Kennedy Cluster multi-agency teams:

Multi-Agency Team- Kennedy/Watkins Mill

HHS

- 1FT Care Coordinator PMII/25
- .5 Behavioral Health Person PM1/23
- 1.0 Office Service Coordinator OSC/16
- \$6,000 for Client Assistance

Collaboration Council

- .13 contractual FTE Representative to help with resource identification and help with very high risk families

Recreation

- 2 .25 FTE geographically based persons - cost will be absorbed by department

MCPS

- Evaluation Specialist .5FTE
- \$6,000K client assistance

State's Attorney's Office

- .5 FTE Attorney cost will be absorbed by agency

Police

School Resource Officer costs will be absorbed by department

Expansion

(HHS) Linkages to Learning will be added to South Lakes Elementary School

(HHS) Early Childhood Team will be added initially to the Kennedy Cluster only

(REC) Excel Beyond the Bell will be added to Montgomery Village

(MCPS) .4 FTE Coordinator will coordinate Excel Beyond the Bell

(Police) Explorer to be added at Montgomery Village Middle School (cost absorbed by Police)

(REC) Sports Academy will be added to Watkins Mill High School

(MCPS) .4 FTE Coordinator will coordinate the Sports Academy

Outcomes and Service Data

Service data for the program is broken out by demographics and provided at ©43-45. In FY13, a total of 68 cases were referred to the Multi-Agency Team. The total number of cases in FY14 is on track to double the FY13 number; by March 2014, 101 cases have been referred. Executive staff has observed that “hard outcomes data was not available”; however, it also suggests that anecdotally, “the services provided and the team itself was making a difference in the lives of families.”

Testimony

The 1977 II Action Group provided testimony (©38-40) supporting funding to expand the Kennedy Cluster Project. The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children provided testimony (©46-47) supporting the expansion of Early Childhood Services in conjunction with the Kennedy Cluster project, but expressing concern that the County’s Early Childhood Advisory Council was not consulted in developing these plans.

Council staff comments:

There are several dimensions of expansion proposed for the Kennedy Cluster Project expansion in FY15. Not only is the project proposed to expand geographically to the Watkins Mill Cluster,¹ it is also recommended to expand the staffing for existing services as well as the types of services offered, i.e. early childhood and recreation programming.

Council staff noted that expansion is being proposed as project services are evolving without a clear understanding about the impact of existing services on project participants. Having access to information that shows whether project participants are demonstrating improved academic progress or progress on factors that impact academic progress, e.g, improved grades, increased attendance, higher test scores or achievement, improved behavior or fewer disciplinary incidents, decreased involvement in the juvenile justice system, etc., would be useful in supporting the case for expansion. Indeed, Council staff questions whether geographic expansion of services, absent other justification, is prudent absent the existence of a fully-developed model and data that shows progress being made.

¹ It seems odd that the project is being referred to as the Kennedy Cluster Project as it moves to the Watkins Mill Cluster. Will stakeholders in the Watkins Mill Cluster embrace an initiative that identifies itself with a different cluster?

The County should have a comprehensive plan for supporting student achievement. Targeting resources to children and youth who have access to fewer opportunities to support their learning and reduce disparities in achievement is good policy. A rational approach is needed to expand services targeting low-achieving schools and school communities and meeting the needs of students and their families and to measure the outcomes of these services. Council staff is concerned that existing service models and policy review mechanisms have been disrupted in order to accommodate expansion recommendations. For example, expansion of Linkages to Learning to South Lake Elementary School is not recommended for full-year funding according to the Linkages model, which has developed over the course of many years.

In another case, the proposal for early childhood services was not reviewed by the Montgomery County Early Childhood Advisory Council, even though the Advisory Council began meeting in late Spring of 2013, and made recommendations for expansion of early childhood services in needy school communities long before the Executive published his FY15 operating budget. Certainly, there is value to the services being recommended by the Executive, but Council staff recommends that the Committees review the proposed programs in the context of existing criteria and review processes.

DHHS Budget Adjustments:

- **Staffing needed for Expansion** **\$111,565**

The table at ©48-52 lists the staffing recommended by the Executive under this line item and describes the positions to be added. It appears that the \$111,565 will support the addition of one full-time Office Services Coordinator, one full-time Care Coordinator, one .5 FTE Mental Health Coordinator, one .13 contractual FTE for a Collaboration Council Representative, and \$6,000 in client assistance funding.

The Committees should confirm that these items are being supported by the \$111,565 funding amount. At first glance, it would seem that it would cost more than \$111,565 to add these positions -- the existing Care Coordinator position alone was \$89,536 in FY14. In addition, the Committees may want to explore to what extent existing services offered by the Collaboration Council, i.e., mental health coordination, may overlap with proposed services.

Council staff does not recommend adding funding for the Care Coordinator in the Watkins Mill Cluster absent a fully-developed model and data that demonstrates the positive impact of Kennedy Cluster Project to date.

- **Linkages to Learning at South Lake Elementary School** **\$122,377**

Executive staff explains that South Lake was chosen to receive Linkages to Learning services because it is the school in the Watkins Mill Cluster with the highest ever FARMs rate (% of students in school have ever received Free and Reduced Price Meals Service). South Lake also has the distinction of being at the top of the list for Linkages expansion to a new school.

Council staff supports the recommendation to expand the program to South Lake but wonders whether it is possible to begin services at the beginning of the school year. Executive staff explains that DHHS and MCPS have met to plan for space allocation as of January 2015; however, it is not clear whether space for an earlier start date is possible. If so, Council staff recommends adding \$153,133 to the reconciliation list to provide funding for the program to begin at the start of the school year consistent with the typical Linkages expansion model.

- **Early Childhood Services** **\$104,156**

The Executive is proposing to provide the following early childhood services in the Kennedy Cluster:

- Pre-K Curriculum Project including training and technical assistance at \$43,146;
- A Race to the Top Breakthrough Center at \$32,210;
- Parent engagement services through Learning Parties at \$6,750;
- Expansion of mental health services at \$15,750; and
- Expansion of health consultation services at \$6,300.

Council staff understands that early childhood services currently available to providers in the Kennedy Cluster are those available to providers County-wide.

Council staff is concerned that the Early Childhood Advisory Council was not consulted in the development of the recommendation even though the Advisory Council began meeting last spring and made recommendations for expansion of early childhood services in needy school communities in the fall. Although Executive staff reports that the Advisory Council was updated on the project as of April 4, 2014, it is unclear whether the Advisory Council supports the expansion of services to the Kennedy Cluster or whether it would target expansion of services to a different location in the County.

Consequently, Council staff recommends adding \$104,156 to expand early childhood services in the County, but deferring the decision of where to target these services to the Early Childhood Advisory Council.

Recreation Budget Adjustments: The following budget adjustments were reviewed by the PHED Committee on April 30 and recommended for approval. Committee members felt that the programs had merit independently of their connection to the Kennedy Cluster Project.

- **Sports Academy at Watkins Mill** **\$112,298**

The Executive is recommending the addition of a Sports Academy at Watkins Mill High School to begin in January 2015. The PHED Committee recommended approval of this funding, but recommended placing an additional amount of funding on the Reconciliation List to allow Sports Academy services to begin at the beginning of the next school year. This would allow Recreation Department staff to market and recruit participants for the program at a crucial point in time and allow students to benefit from the programming for the whole school year.

- **Excel Beyond the Bell**

\$217,959

The Executive is recommending the addition of an Excel Beyond the Bell program at Montgomery Village Middle School. This program is scheduled to start at the beginning of the school year. The PHED Committee recommended approval.

Councilmember Ervin's Proposal to Add Funding for the Capital Area Food Banks

Councilmember Ervin requested that funding be included in the FY15 budget for a Family Markets program through the Capital Area Food Bank. The cost of bringing the program is \$32,000 per school. The memorandum explaining the program is attached at ©53-54. Council staff is not aware that funding for this program is included in the FY15 budget. If Councilmembers are interested in supporting this program, they would need to include funding on the reconciliation list.

III. GEORGE B. THOMAS LEARNING ACADEMY

Joint HHS and Education Committee Discussion:

The Committee deferred a decision on increased funding for the George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy pending additional information about the program. Committee members expressed interest in reviewing data related to the academic achievement of participants, including FY14 honor information as a comparison point, grades, academic ineligibility, and program attendance based on FARMS eligibility. Additional service information related to the number of participating MCPS and non-MCPS, e.g., private or home school, students was requested. The Committee also wanted information about the number of nonprofit development directors the County funds, the rationale for providing this support, and the amount on average that these positions raise in new funding annually.

Committee members expressed concern that funding for these school-based academic support services are included in the DHHS budget. Committee members also inquired about increasing fee revenue from families that are able to pay and questioned the use of County funding for non-MCPS students.

George B. Thomas Sr. Learning Academy

\$100,000

DHHS administers contracts for services delivered by private entities that are educational in nature and involve collaboration with the school system. These contracts are included in the Child and Adolescent Community and School-based Services program in the Children, Youth, and Families.

The Executive recommends \$903,913 in funding for the George B. Thomas Learning Academy for FY15, an increase of \$100,000 or 12.4% from the FY14 level. The program includes a Saturday school that provides structured mentoring and tutoring services to enhance the academic performance and achievement of children in grades 1 through 12. The program is contracted to provide services to a minimum of 3,200 youth at twelve MCPS cluster sites.

Increased funding of \$30,000 is targeted to enhance the quality of tutoring by adding 10 tutors to the current staff and lower the teacher-student ratio (1:17) and support a Director of Development position that will continue implementing a comprehensive development plan with the goal to increase private section funding and financial sustainability. The Director of Development has been funded for two consecutive years through a County Executive Grant. The Department reported that the Development Director raised about \$200,000 in first half of FY14.

During FY14 operating budget discussions, MCPS reported the following financial support for the program: \$85,000 for rental of facilities at 12 sites; \$50,000 for materials; \$20,000 for insurance; \$30,000 for transportation; \$20,000 for the young scholars program; and 50% of the salary of the program coordinator. It is unclear whether or not MCPS will be providing this support in FY15.

Outcomes, Service and other Data Requested by the Committees

Information on the number of children served, FARMS status, attendance in the program, and honor roll status of students is provided at ©55-56. The data show that 21.2% of students achieved honor roll status, and that 14.5% of students attended the program over 80% of the time. Approximately 31.9% of students attended the program less than 50% of the time. In addition, the program reports that students self-reported increased confidence in their ability to do well in schools and reach academic goals, and improved math and reading skills and grades.

In response to the Committees' information requests, the program provided the following student information:

MCPS Enrollment Information

	Total #	% of Enrollees
Students not Enrolled in MCPS	36	1%
Students Enrolled in MCPS	3343	99%

FARMS Participation

	Total #	% of Enrollees
Students Participating in FARMS	1952	58%
Students Not Participating in FARMS	1427	42%

In addition the program transmitted an evaluation report for the Saturday School Program (excerpts attached at ©57-80), which include academic performance data, results and outcomes for the 2012-2013 program year. The report concludes that Saturday School participation was associated with higher levels of academic performance that were both statistically and practically significant. Participants in the treatment group had higher performance in the following areas:

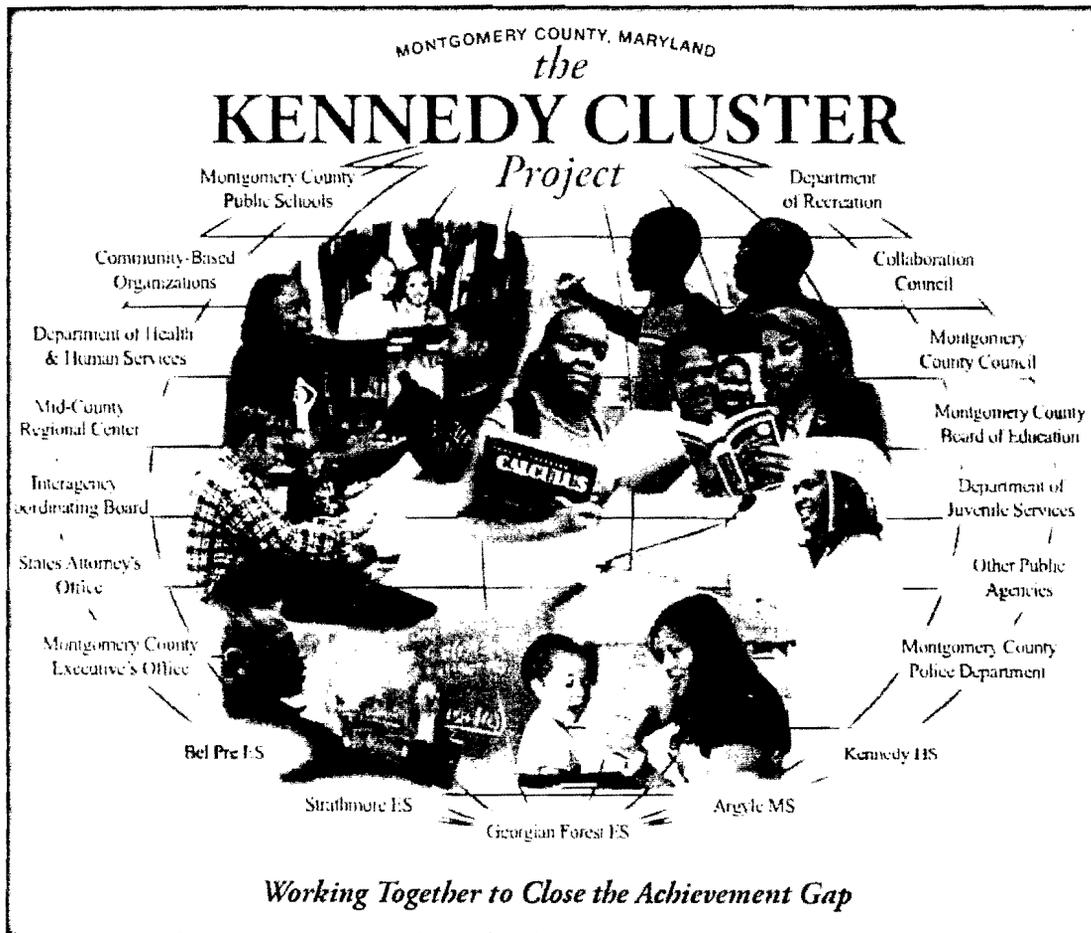
- Grades 1 and 2
 - School attendance
- Grade 3
 - Reading benchmark attainment
 - Mathematics benchmark attainment
- Grades 4 and 5 Semester 2 Reading GPA
 - Semester 2 Mathematics GPA
- Grades 6 and 7

- Semester 2 English GPA
- End-of-Year English Course Marks of B or Higher
- Semester 2 Mathematics GPA
- End-of-Year Mathematics Course Marks of B or Higher
- Grades 9 to 12
 - End of Year GPA

Information about County funding of nonprofit development directors and performance expectations for these positions was not made available to Council staff by the time of packet publication.

Testimony: The 1977 II Action Group provided testimony (©43-45) expressing support for funding for the Goerge B. Thomas Learning Academy/Saturday School and urging restoration of funding for programs like SHARP.

From Multiple Agencies to a Multi-Agency Team: A Case Study of the Kennedy Cluster Project



Prepared by Clare Keller

September 2013

CONFIDENTIAL WORKING DRAFT

Executive Summary

The racial/ethnic gap in academic achievement is a long-standing concern in education. Some of the root causes of the gap are better understood by examining the issues and challenges that confront African American and Hispanic students from low-income families, many of whom also live in households where English is a second language. In these situations, solutions to closing the achievement gap must include access to a broader range of services than are available through a school system. As a result, school systems increasingly are partnering with local agencies to overcome barriers to academic achievement for disadvantaged students. This case study describes the results of a partnership between Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Montgomery County agencies—the Kennedy Cluster Project.

MCPS initiated the Kennedy Cluster Project in 2007 to identify and address the root causes of the achievement gap in MCPS. Schools in the Kennedy High School feeder area (cluster) were selected as the focus of the project because the Kennedy cluster schools enrolled large percentages of African American and Hispanic students, many of whom were poor or lived in homes where Spanish was the primary language, or both. The Kennedy Cluster Project multi-agency team representatives provided to students and their families educational resources in and out of school as well as access to health care, housing, financial assistance, legal aid, recreational programs, and many other social services.

Although the achievement gap has not closed for Kennedy cluster students, there is evidence that the Kennedy Cluster Project has contributed to positive academic outcomes for individual at-risk students and for the Kennedy cluster schools overall. Some encouraging academic findings are:

- Graduation rates among African American and Hispanic students at Kennedy High School increased over the past three years.
- The racial/ethnic gap in the high school graduation rate narrowed over the past three years as improvements in the graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students outpaced those of White and Asian students.
- Anecdotal evidence suggested that Kennedy Cluster Project activities contributed to the high school graduation of some at-risk students.
- Over the past two years, the dropout rate of Hispanic students at Kennedy High School was lower than the overall MCPS high school dropout rate for Hispanic students.
- Anecdotal evidence suggested that Kennedy Cluster Project activities helped to prevent some at-risk students from dropping out.
- Over the past two years, the mobility rates of African American and Hispanic students who attended Kennedy High School were lower than the overall rates for MCPS African American and Hispanic students.
- Anecdotal evidence suggested that Kennedy Cluster Project activities reduced residential mobility among elementary and middle school students by making it easier for low-income and homeless families to stay in their neighborhoods.

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- School counselors reported that the Kennedy Cluster Project activities improved students' attendance, classroom performance, and course marks.

In addition to fostering achievement among African American and Hispanic students, the multi-agency team addressed root causes of the achievement gap by facilitating access to services that foster at-risk students' likelihood of success despite the odds. Some examples of the multi-agency contributions are:

- Montgomery County Department of Recreation staff reported increases in attendance of Kennedy cluster students at recreational and extra-curricular programs.
- Many students received mental health services that were beyond the scope of what was available at the school level.
- Kennedy Cluster Project interventions increased students' and families feelings of hope, wellbeing, and engagement, three socio-emotional factors that are highly correlated with academic performance.

An unintended positive consequence of the Kennedy Cluster Project was professional development for the partners at no additional cost to MCPS or the county agencies. The multi-agency team has a shared vision, high levels of trust and interdependence among members, and creative problem-solving approaches to service delivery. Better communication resulted in more efficient delivery of educational and community-based resources and services to students and their families during and beyond the school day. Some examples are:

- The Kennedy Cluster Project multi-agency team collaboration reduced communication barriers between and among the school system and county departments and agencies.
- The team members have built a professional network and call on each other to help resolve questions and problems for students and families.
- School counselors increased their awareness of how to access local agency services directly.
- Counselors are better able to link families to specific services so that many students and families can be served without the need for a multi-agency meeting.

In Montgomery County, the achievement gap is no longer merely an educational problem. It is a community problem. Over the past five years, the Kennedy Cluster Project has contributed to success for individual students, their families, and their community, one case at a time. More work needs to be done to close the achievement gap. But results of the case study provide strong evidence that progress in narrowing the gap is possible through multi-agency collaboration.

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Background

On average, African American and Hispanic students perform lower on measures of academic achievement than do their White and Asian counterparts. The performance differences, or achievement gaps, are evident as early as Grade 2 and persist through Grade 12. School-based efforts to close the gaps have had some success. But solutions to the root causes of the achievement gaps require a broader range of services than those delivered during the school day.

Research shows that students benefit when their schools, families, and communities work together. One reason for this is that student academic success is influenced simultaneously by the relationships and resources available through their homes, schools, and community environments (Bryan, 2005; Coleman, 1987; Epstein, 1995). In 2007, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Superintendent Jerry D. Weast met with stakeholders from MCPS and Montgomery County government to propose formation of a collaborative partnership—the Kennedy Cluster Project—to address jointly root causes of racial/ethnic differences in academic achievement.

Kennedy Cluster Schools

The Kennedy cluster of approximately 4,900 students includes Kennedy High School as well as two middle schools and four elementary schools in the Kennedy High School service area (cluster). Bel Pre Elementary School serves students through Grade 2, after which they articulate to Strathmore Elementary School for Grades 3 to 5. The majority of Grade 5 students at Georgian Forest, Glenallen, and Strathmore Elementary Schools articulate to Argyle and Lee Middle Schools. In turn, a majority of Grade 8 students at Argyle and Lee Middle Schools articulate to Kennedy High School.

At the time the project began in 2007, the Kennedy cluster enrolled the largest percentage of African American students in MCPS and a growing population of Hispanic students. The enrollment pattern has continued through 2013. Compared with MCPS students overall, Kennedy cluster school enrollees are significantly more likely to be African American or Hispanic (Table 1).

Table 1
MCPS 2013 Official Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Level	School	% African Am.		% Hispanic	
		2013	School vs. MCPS	2013	School vs. MCPS
Elementary School	MCPS	20.1		27.2	
	Bel Pre	44.7	+24.6	38.5	+11.4
	Georgian Forest	29.3	+9.2	48.5	+21.3
	Glenallen	36.5	+16.4	44.9	+17.8
Middle School	Strathmore	44.7	+24.6	37.6	+10.4
	MCPS	21.6		24.8	
	Argyle	37.7	+16.1	39.4	+14.6
High School	Lee	32.6	+11.0	51.7	+26.9
	MCPS	22.3		24.4	
	Kennedy	37.8	+15.5	45.4	+21.0

Source: Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

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In 2013, the percentages of Kennedy High School enrollees who were African American or Hispanic were more than twice the MCPS high school averages of 21.6 and 24.8 percent. The patterns were similar in elementary and middle schools. At Lee Middle School, Hispanic enrollment in 2013 was more than twice the MCPS middle school average of 24.8 percent. At Bel Pre and Strathmore Elementary Schools, African American enrollment was more than twice the MCPS elementary school average of 20.1 percent.

The Kennedy cluster is heavily impacted by poverty. Kennedy cluster enrollees are significantly more likely to qualify for Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS) services than MCPS students overall (Table 2). The impact of poverty is particularly evident in elementary and middle schools where more than 60 percent of students received FARMS services in 2013. Even at the high school level, where FARMS participation is typically lower than for other levels, 54.4 percent of the students received FARMS services in 2013, a rate nearly twice the MCPS high school average of 28.2 percent.

Table 2
Percentage of Student Receiving FARMS and LEP Services, 2013

Level	School	FARMS*		LEP*	
		School 2013	School vs. MCPS	School 2013	School vs. MCPS
Elementary School	MCPS	39.2		25.3	
	Bel Pre	67.0	+27.8	45.6	+20.3
	Glenallen	76.9	+37.7	34.4	+9.1
	Georgian Forest	69.0	+29.8	38.9	+13.6
	Strathmore	62.7	+23.5	25.5	+0.2
Middle School	MCPS	32.6		8.7	
	Argyle	60.8	+28.2	14.5	+5.8
	Lee	66.3	+33.7	22.3	+13.6
High School	MCPS	28.2		5.9	
	Kennedy	54.5	+26.3	9.1	+3.2

* Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS) services. Source: MSDE

* Limited English Proficiency (LEP) services. Source: MSDE.

Kennedy cluster school enrollees were significantly more likely than MCPS students overall to receive Limited English Proficiency (LEP) services (Table 2). Nearly one in ten students at Kennedy High school (9.1 percent) qualified for LEP services in 2013, a rate that was nearly twice the MCPS high school average of 5.9 percent. In 2013, LEP participation was close to the MCPS elementary school average of 25.3 percent at Strathmore Elementary School, which serves students in Grades 3 to 5. However, for younger students at Bel Pre Elementary School, the 2013 LEP participation rate of 45.6 percent was almost twice as high as the MCPS elementary school average of 25.3 percent.

Purpose of Case Study

This case study examines how Kennedy Cluster Project multi-agency team members developed stronger partnerships with families and the Kennedy community to overcome barriers to academic success for African American and Hispanic students. Documentation of the project processes and results will inform efforts to replicate the project in other MCPS high school clusters and in schools outside MCPS.

5

Methodology

The Multi-Agency Team

The Kennedy Cluster Project multi-agency team is a network of agency representatives who work together for the purpose of helping to break down institutional and social barriers that disaffect student learning. In addition to educational resources in and out of school, participating agencies provide access to health care, housing, financial assistance, legal aid, recreational programs, and many other social services. The multi-agency team includes representatives from MCPS, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, the State's Attorney's Office, the Department of Juvenile Services, the Montgomery County Police Department, the Montgomery County Department of Recreation, the Collaboration Council, community-based organizations, and other public agencies. The team meets twice per month to review cases that are referred by Kennedy cluster schools.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected during a 12-month period from June 2012 to June 2013. The data collection methods included review of historical documents, unstructured observations of the multi-agency team meetings; semi-structured interviews with key informants; and aggregated achievement and survey data.

Unstructured observation data were collected at 13 multi-agency meetings held between October 2012 and June 2013. The observation data included transcriptions of the conversations that occurred between members of the team and the families. Excerpts of the conversations from those meetings are shown in italics in the report. No child or family is identified in the report.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 key informants from February 2013 to April 2013. Key informants responded to six open-ended questions about their background; the impact of the multi-agency team for increasing their awareness of root causes of the achievement gap; their awareness of services that are available for students and their families to address the root causes; and their successes and challenges at closing the achievement gap for individual students. In addition, the key informants discussed the professional relationships they had built as a result of their participation on the multi-agency team. Quotations from the interviewees are shown in italics in the report. No key informant is identified in the report.

Student outcome data was collected in June 2013. Aggregated school-level graduation, dropout, and mobility data were obtained from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) website, www.mdreportcard.org. Disaggregated student enrollment, demographic, and achievement data were not available from MCPS. Results of the 2012 Gallup student survey measuring hope, engagement, and wellbeing were obtained from the MCPS website, www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org.

Data analysis combined results from a literature review with the quantitative and qualitative results obtained in this study to describe program impact on student achievement outcomes. In addition, multiple measures of social-emotional outcomes describe how greater access to social capital and services can support academic resilience among at-risk students. Analysis of the interview data with key informants describes how participation on the multi-agency team enhanced their professional expertise, capacity and effectiveness. Inferences based on the findings should take into account that the Kennedy Cluster Project is one of many programs used by schools to improve student performance (Appendix A).

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Results

The cases addressed in the 2012–2013 school year provided insights about the challenges faced by children and families in the Kennedy cluster schools. In many cases, academic concerns such as poor attendance or course failure were rooted in emotional distress related to housing issues or family dynamics. For example:

- A third grader's attention-seeking behavior had become more extreme. He lied about drawing with marker in the school bathroom. He soiled his pants in class, then kicked his clothing under a desk and tried to blame other students. His parents were separated and his father did not pay child support. His mother was struggling to pay the rent.
- An eighth grader with spotty attendance and incomplete assignments was suspended for theft. A few months earlier, his father had been deported. Recently, the young man had been admitted to Children's Hospital for an unexplained head injury.
- A high school student wanted to go to college but was skipping school with her friends. She had a history of domestic violence in her home. Her mother had obtained a restraining order against her father but he had stopped paying child support. She was living with her mother and brother in one of the three bedrooms of an apartment they shared with two other families.

Not all of the cases came to the attention of the multi-agency team because of problems with achievement. Nearly half the time, students had satisfactory academic performance but were at risk because of mental health issues or family crises that were beyond the control of school. For example:

- A third grader was doing well academically but was verbally abusive to his teacher and other students. He drew pictures of guns and said things to his teacher like "I wished you died." Through tears, his mother told the team that her son said that he wants another mother and that he doesn't love her.
- An Ethiopian sixth grader was a "good student who worked hard" but she needed school supplies and clothing. Her mother had applied for asylum status for herself and her three children, but until that was approved they were not eligible for social services. The family of four lived in one room at a cousin's house.
- A school senior was a quiet, good student who wanted to be the third in his family to graduate from Kennedy High School. But in the spring of his junior year, an injury on a Ride-On bus left his mother unable to work. By the fall of his senior year, he and his mother were homeless.

Every case was different. But the process of helping families was consistent across a wide range of case needs. When students or families needed a single service or referral, many of the school counselors

used resources available to them through the Kennedy Cluster Project to answer questions and make referrals without the need for a multi-agency meeting. When family needs were more complex, the multi-agency team was able to evaluate the referral and assign county representatives to provide client-centered customer support.

Academic Indicators

The primary goal of the Kennedy Cluster Project is to close the achievement gap. Measuring progress toward this goal has been complicated, in part because the multi-agency team hears a relatively small number of cases each year, each of which requires a different combination of interventions. Case reviews find that some interventions provide immediate short-term benefits, while others influence outcomes years later. Data from the case hearings and key informants suggests that the program has effects at the school level, as well as for individuals. Interview data from school counselors suggests this multiplier effect occurs because when one student receives intensive support from the multi-agency team, schools have more time available to deal with other students with less pressing needs.

Graduation Rate

A high school diploma is a first step to financial security and a better overall quality of life in adulthood. On average, the annual income of a high school graduate is more than 45 percent higher than for an individual who dropped out and did not earn a diploma (Figure 1). High school graduates who enroll in some college, even without attainment of a bachelor's degree, have annual incomes that are 73 percent higher than the income of those without a high school diploma.

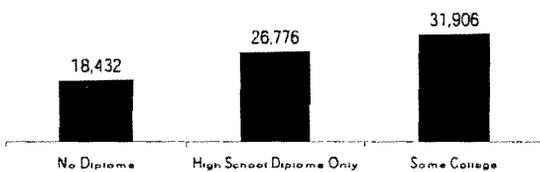


Figure 1. Estimates of average annual earnings by level of educational attainment. Source: U. S. Census Bureau, 2012.

The benefits of greater financial stability are in turn associated with social benefits of less reliance on social services, better health, and more active community engagement. Children of parents who graduated from high school are more likely to graduate themselves.

The MCPS overall graduation rate is among the highest in the nation (Education Week, 2013). More encouraging is that racial/ethnic differences in MCPS graduation rates have narrowed over the past three years.

The graduation rates¹ of African American, Hispanic, and White students in MCPS and at Kennedy High School, already significantly higher than for their public school counterparts nationwide (Stillwell &

¹ MSDE calculates the four-year cohort graduation rate by dividing the total number of diplomas earned divided by the net number of students who enrolled in the graduation class over the four year period. Detailed results are not reported (n/r) for groups with four-year cohort graduation rates of more than 95 percent.

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Sable, 2013), have shown further signs of progress since 2010. First, African American and Hispanic students contributed most to increases in MCPS graduation rates over the past three years (Table 3). At Kennedy High School, the graduation rates improved more than four percentage points for African American and Hispanic students, increases more than twice those of Asian and White students. Second, the differences in the annual graduation rates of the relatively more disadvantaged African American and Hispanic students at Kennedy High School were not statistically significantly different than those of African American and Hispanic students in all MCPS high schools. The pattern of results provides evidence of a trend toward higher, and more equitable, high school graduation rates in MCPS overall, and at Kennedy High School in particular.

Table 3
4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates of High School Students, 2010 to 2012

		4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate						3-Year Trend
		School vs. MCPS	School vs. MCPS	School vs. MCPS	School vs. MCPS	School vs. MCPS		
		2010	2011	2012				
African American	Nation*	66.1	n/r	n/r				
	MCPS	78.1	81.3	82.3			+4.2	
	Kennedy	77.4	-7	83.9	2.6	81.5	-7	+4.2
Hispanic	Nation*	71.4	n/r	n/r				
	MCPS	74.2	75.3	76.7			+2.4	
	Kennedy	71.9	-2.4	74.7	-7	76.2	-5	+4.3
Asian	Nation*	93.5	n/r	n/r				
	MCPS	94.7	94.3	>95%			----	
	Kennedy	91.1	-3.7	90.3	-4.0	93.2	n/r	+2.1
White	Nation*	83.0	n/r	n/r				
	MCPS	93.7	93.9	94.0			+0.3	
	Kennedy	>95%	n/r	93.3	-5	89.3	-4.8	----

* National graduation rates for four-year cohort of 2010. Results were not reported for the classes of 2011 and 2012.
Note. None of the school to MCPS comparisons was statistically significant.

Although the Kennedy Cluster Project has not closed the gap in graduation status for all students, the collaboration has worked one student at a time to help students attain high school diplomas.

One teenage mother was about to drop out of Kennedy High School because she needed medical care, housing, and child care. The multi-agency team helped her complete her graduation requirements and get access to medical and financial assistance. She graduated with her class and went on to receive a \$6,000 grant that allowed her to attend Montgomery College and study criminal justice. After she graduated, she wrote a thank you letter to the team.

"I wouldn't be where I am now if the project would not have helped me."

"I want to thank...[people] who never gave up on me and told me that I was capable of doing many things if I just put effort into it...[school staff] who made sure I had my work done for all my classes...helped me

get four bridge projects done in five days...and paid for my cap and gown in order for me to walk across the stage at DAR Constitution Hall....[members of the multi-agency team] who helped me with getting my medical insurance...so I was able to have a gallbladder surgery...and helped with getting my medications, housing, child care, food referrals, and gift cards..."

"The Kennedy Project is just amazing. It changes peoples' lives."

Dropout Rate

Dropping out of school sets in motion a series of negative social consequences for dropouts and for the communities in which they live (Fall & Roberts, 2012; Dynarski, Gleason, Rangarajan, & Wood, 1998). Students without a high school diploma have greater risks for unemployment and earn less when they are employed. They are more likely to rely on public assistance and have less access to health care. The rates of criminal behavior and incarceration are higher among dropouts than students who obtain at least a high school diploma. When students from low-income families drop out they put themselves on a path that will perpetuate a cycle of poverty.

Table 4
Annual Dropout Rates of MCPS High School Students, 2011 to 2012

		Annual Dropout Rate ^a	
		2011	2012
African American	Nation ^a	5.5	n/a
	MCPS	< 3.0	< 3.0
	Kennedy	< 3.0	3.9
Hispanic	Nation ^a	5.0	n/a
	MCPS	4.1	4.4
	Kennedy	3.9	4.2
Asian	Nation ^a	1.9	n/a
	MCPS	< 3.0	< 3.0
	Kennedy	< 3.0	< 3.0
White	Nation ^a	2.3	n/a
	MCPS	< 3.0	< 3.0
	Kennedy	< 3.0	< 3.0

^a National dropout results are reported for public high school students in Grades 9 to 12 during the 2010 academic year. Results for 2011 and 2012 are not available (n/a).

Nationally, about five percent of Hispanic and African American public high school students in Grades 9 to 12 drop out each year, rates more than twice those of Asian and White students (Stillwell & Sable, 2013). While the annual dropout rates² in MCPS and at Kennedy High School are lower than the national

² MSDE calculates the annual dropout rate by dividing the total number of dropouts by the total enrollment in Grades 9 to 12. Detailed results are not reported for rates of less than three percent.

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averages, the racial/ethnic dropout pattern is similar, with African American and Hispanic students dropping out at greater rates than those of Asian and White students (Table 4).

One noteworthy trend over the past two years is the lower dropout rate of Hispanic students at Kennedy High School compared with the MCPS rate. Although not statistically significant, the differences suggest that Kennedy Cluster Project interventions may contribute to a narrowing of the gap in Hispanic dropout rates.

One of the multi-agency team members provided an example of how support from the Kennedy Cluster Project contributed to a long-term positive outcome for a 15-year African American male who was on the verge of dropping out in 2010.

"I first learned of the case at the Kennedy Cluster Project when his father came seeking help in May 2010. The father was from Mali in West Africa. He came to the meeting by himself. At that time the father was worried about child's altercations at school, anger issues, and lack of academic progress. There was a juvenile case pending for the young man, which went to court several times."

"In February 2013, the young man returned to juvenile court and reported that he had earned a high school diploma, is enrolled at Montgomery College, and is looking for a job. The court was so impressed with him, I've never heard of this, the judge came off the bench, closed the case out, and shook his hand."

"I was surprised by what happened in court but it is a testament to what can happen. There is the possibility of success in everyone's life no matter how the situation may look at any one time. If the right resources and support and encouragement get into the young person's life and he is willing to accept what folks are trying to help him with, he can be successful. I think the help and the support the Kennedy Cluster Project provided was one of the reasons for his success."

Mobility

Overall, the research and theoretical literature indicates that residential mobility has detrimental associations with achievement and high school completion, especially among urban youth (Voight, Shinn, & Nation, 2012). Student mobility occurs when students change schools during the school year as a result of change in residence. When families move, the change in neighborhoods may disconnect them from social services and resources that contribute to academic achievement (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). The Kennedy Cluster Project provides families with access to services that make it easier for them to stay in their homes.

In 2011 and 2012, the mobility³ rates of Hispanic students who attended Kennedy High School were statistically significantly lower than their MCPS counterparts (Table 5). The mobility rates of Kennedy African American students were lower than the MCPS rates for the past two year as well, although the results were not statistically significant in 2012.

³ MSDE calculates the mobility rate by dividing the sum of entrants and withdrawals for the school year by the average daily enrollment. Detailed results are not reported (n/r) for groups with less than five percent mobility. Results are not available prior to 2011.

Lack of documentation may contribute to higher mobility rates among Hispanic families in the Kennedy cluster. School counselors and other members of the multi-agency team talked about the limitations that may prevent families from accessing support services for issues related to eviction, utility payments, and other housing crises.

“A lot of my students are not documented so some services are not accessible.”

“We work with undocumented community members but we are limited by state and federal guidelines.”

Table 5
Mobility Rates of MCPS High School Students, 2011 to 2012

		Mobility Rate			
		2011	School vs. MCPS	2012	School vs. MCPS
African American	MCPS	19.4		19.6	
	Kennedy	12.8	-6.6*	17.2	-2.4
Hispanic	MCPS	16.7		16.7	
	Kennedy	13.9	-2.8*	12.7	-4.0*
Asian	MCPS	5.5		< 5.0	
	Kennedy	7.0	1.5	< 5.0	n/r
White	MCPS	6.0		6.1	
	Kennedy	14.1	8.1	15.0	8.9

* Difference is statistically significant.

Addressing mobility prior to high school is essential to stave off long-term negative consequences of school change. Mobility among elementary students has been linked to learning disadvantages that contribute to grade retention in the short term and to lower mathematics and reading achievement on the long-term trajectory from elementary to high school (Fowler-Finn, 2001; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004; Obradovic, Cutuli, Chan, Hinz, Heistad, & Masten, 2009).

While the overall trends in mobility among middle and elementary school students in the Kennedy cluster have not changed significantly in the past two years, the case records provide anecdotal evidence that Kennedy Cluster Project activities reduce residential mobility and make it easier for low income and homeless families to stay in their neighborhoods.

“The Kennedy Cluster Project started to wrap services to keep a family stable and at one middle school. It helped them academically to connect to school. The male student is on the basketball team. His grades have come up, and he was recommended for higher level courses. His sister has started to achieve as well.”

Loss of community resources is a particular hardship for parents who move due to financial issues that result in eviction or homelessness (Kingsley, Smith, & Price, 2009; Voight, Shinn, Nation, 2012). The Kennedy Cluster Project has provided support to reduce mobility among homeless families.

"We had one case of a child who was homeless and was going after school to the Wheaton Library to study because that was the only place the family had to go. They studied, ate, washed up there, then when the library closed the mother took them to a shelter. The team brought a lot of support to the family to help with housing, past bills, utility bills, housing security, and giving the child a home to go to. The child didn't have a home to go to to study. When we provide help with so many of these issues we provide a foundation on which child can build academic success."

Classroom Performance

Students at risk of academic failure often face a complexity of problems caused by poverty, health, and other social conditions that make it difficult for them to succeed in school. The Kennedy Cluster Project addresses the problems that are the root causes of the academic achievement gap in ways that complement the direct academic support provided by the school.

Interviews with multi-agency team members provided information about the ways the Kennedy Cluster Project helps students get on a path to academic success.

"Certain needs have to be met before they can focus on academic needs. If they are not eating in the home, their mind is not on school work or homework. Their mind is thinking about that they are hungry."

"If students' home lives are unstable it affects their ability to concentrate. We can bring people together and get families access to things they need and resolve family issues."

"Often times there are outside factors that impact students' success in school...and [the team can] help to reduce barriers that interfere with ability to concentrate, attendance, be on time, be motivated to come to school..."

"When we provide the family with some level of stability with regard to food, living, housing...it allows the child to have a base to begin to focus on their school."

"We address family issues that may hinder students from being able to focus on school [such as the] chaos of not knowing where your next meal is coming from or where you will live. [Our help] takes pressure and anxiety off the kid and leads to better achievement in school."

"...[helping families] has trickled down to academic success. It is tough to know if it has an immediate academic effect. It has an effect socio-emotionally. Who knows what would have happened if we had not done something. It could be worse."

Counselors provided anecdotal evidence of the impact of the Kennedy Cluster Project on students' attendance and academic performance.

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"I've seen kids coming to school that were staying home before."

"The involvement has helped students' situations, grades, coming to school."

"There is one family in particular that needed help and did not know where to go. The Kennedy Cluster Project provided assistance to the family as a whole. It got the child back on track and gave the parents a sense of wellbeing. They have utilized everything [the Kennedy Cluster Project] shared with them....The child is doing a lot better in school now."

"One student had a problem with acculturation from Africa and got in trouble with a gun. [The team] supported his mother a lot and he is back at high school and doing average work now."

"[He] is doing well. Last quarter there was some concern about one class, but he has all As, and one B. Things have improved [since the multi-agency team provided support six months ago]."

"[He] is doing pretty well. He is reading on grade level which was a concern earlier in the year."

Social and Emotional Indicators

While the initial purpose of the Kennedy Cluster Project was to focus on barriers to achievement among African American and Hispanic students, what has emerged from the project is greater awareness of resources that promote academic resilience. There is strong evidence that social and emotional factors impact academic outcomes (Afterschool Alliance, 2009; Albright, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2011; Harper, & Griffin, 2011). The multi-agency team makes an important contribution to closing the achievement gap by facilitating access to services that foster at-risk students' likelihood of success despite the odds.

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

The ways children spend their out-of-school time is an important indicator of their academic risk (Huang, Kim, Cho, Marshall, & Perez, 2011; Murray Nettles, Mucheran, & Jones, 2000). Participation in recreational activities such as team sports and mentoring programs is correlated with more positive academic attainment and higher paying jobs (Lieras, 2008; Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2013; Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007). Conversely, time spent "hanging out" with friends is a strong predictor of school failure and teenage risk behavior (Beuhring, Blum, & Rinehart, 2000).

The Kennedy Cluster Project promotes engagement in extracurricular activities through Montgomery County Department of Recreation (MCR) services, collaborations and partnerships. MCR offers a wide range of leisure activities and opportunities throughout the year which help students experience interactions and develop skills that contribute to academic resilience. Data suggest that the Kennedy Cluster Project has increased the access of students and families to MCR services.

"I see actually more families in my center now than I did before [from Kennedy Cluster Project referrals]."

"...the children many times need an outlet and [MCR] can offer that by giving them something positive to do."

"I have formed some friendships with some families that have come through [my MCR programs]."

"What has been really helpful is the summer program, the fun center available for youth 5 to 12 years of age that Kennedy Project participants come to."

"We have a summer leadership challenge program which gives teens [ages 13 to 16] the ability to learn skills they need to be a junior counselor and...is also very important to provide that self esteem piece."

Access to Mental Health Services

Access to mental health services is a significant factor in promoting resilience among disadvantaged students. Between 12 percent and 30 percent of children who are performing well in school also are facing emotional stress that ultimately may cause a downturn in their academic performance (Becker & Luther, 2002). Most vulnerable are children confronted with the added risks associated with disadvantaged environments. Even when mental health needs are evident, school personnel have limited options for addressing the issues.

"The school system is limited in what we can do...the family therapist can say something that a school counselor cannot say."

"Outside therapists see things we don't see in the school. They can do family therapy....The therapist goes to the home...and sees [family] dynamics."

During the 2013 school year, the team provided mental health services for students at all grade levels. Many students were performing well despite considerable personal emotional stress. Mothers shared two poignant stories that highlight the extent of the social-emotional challenges students faced while trying to maintain their academic performance:

"Back home in [Africa] we had everything....Now we are refugees." A year earlier, the mother's husband, a high-ranking government official, had been imprisoned and sentenced to death. Some family members fled the country. For the past eight months, the mother and her son had been living in one room of a friend's apartment in Silver Spring. The fate of her husband and the whereabouts of her oldest child in Africa were unknown.

"When I had her I was in high school. I was raped.... I haven't been with her as a parent since she was 6 months old." The baby was raised by her grandparents in Cameroon. In middle school, she came to the United States to live with her mother and a family she did not know. A few months after she arrived, the young uncle with whom she grew up, and who was like a sibling to her, was shot and killed. "When [my daughter] came, she did not talk for 2 weeks. She did not know me....After the shooting she started saying that she might take her

life...that she does not deserve to live. Most of the time she is depressed and won't say anything."

Beliefs about the Future—Hope

Hope is a trait that is characterized by an individual's optimistic beliefs about his or her ability to plan for and create a positive future (Ciarrochi, Heaven, & Davies, 2007; Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006). Individuals are hopeful when they feel that there are adults in their lives who care about them and when they feel

confident in their abilities to get good grades, find many solutions to their problems and get a good job after they graduate (Gallup, 2013).

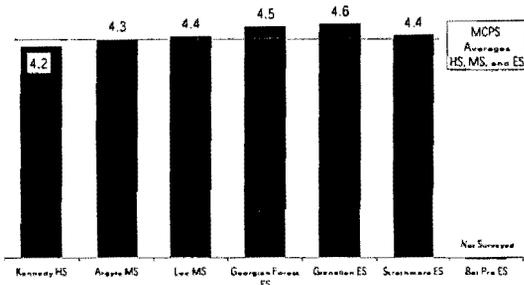


Figure 2. Results of 2012 Gallup survey of student ratings of hope about the future. Source: MCPS.

On average, students who attended schools in the Kennedy cluster in the fall of 2012 rated their feelings of hope at about the same levels as the average MCPS ratings for students at the same grade levels (Figure 2). Results suggest that the Kennedy Cluster Project interventions fostered feelings of hope among children and their families.

One way the multi-agency team works to create hope is by providing more equitable access to social services and opportunities. Multi-agency team meetings give students and families access to experts who can help them address a range of problems and provide referrals to appropriate supports services. Team members report that the interventions support students' and parents' problem-solving skills and promote hope.

"A huge barrier is lack of knowledge about what is out there and what is available. They just need a little bit of help [about] where they could go."

"[We] identify students and families who are facing challenges inside or outside the school system and come together to alleviate those problems."

"So many people are right at the edge of falling through the safety net. A lot of times there is a window where you are eligible and if you don't apply at that time it will fall through. If the family doesn't think about it, the things we take for granted don't work."

"We frequently have those moments when clients [tell us they] are grateful for our assistance".

"Parents feel hopeful after hearing everyone...say what they can do to help."

Wellbeing

Wellbeing involves how individuals think about and experience their lives (Gallup, 2013). Student wellbeing is a strong predictor of academic success (Alva, 1991; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, &

Cortes, 2009; Waxman, Gray, & Padrón, 2003; Waxman, Padrón, Shin, & Rivera, 2008). Children are more available to learn and do better in school when they are happy, healthy, and confident that they have family and friends they can count on when they need someone (Gallup, 2013).

On average, students who attended schools in the Kennedy cluster in fall 2012 rated their feelings of wellbeing at levels that were the same or higher than the MCPS averages for students at the same grade levels (Figure 3). The consistency of this finding for all levels of Kennedy cluster schools suggests that the Kennedy Cluster Project contributes to student wellbeing.

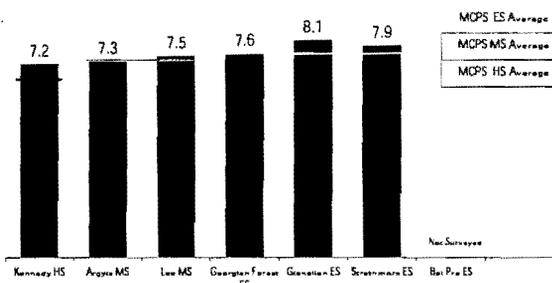


Figure 3. Results of 2012 Gallup survey of student ratings of overall wellbeing. Source: MCPS.

Students' wellbeing is enhanced by efforts to promote wellbeing for the families who care for them. An important step in that process is to foster trusting relationships between families, the school, and the community. Data suggest that the multi-agency team processes and follow-up build trust and enhance wellbeing. The trusting relationships increase the likelihood that families will benefit from a network that is a source of connection, information, and support that parents can access to create more positive home environments for themselves and their children.

"To help the child, you need to help the families. All the multi-agency representatives are there to help the families be more self sufficient, learn parenting skills, and get resources."

"The program began in 2007 with the goal to provide support to help students achieve their academic potential. But...what I've observed is that for so many of the children in the Kennedy cluster and Montgomery County in general, some part of the academic issue, large or small, is based on so many of the other things that surround them like food insecurity, homelessness, domestic violence, foreclosures... When we provide the family with some level of stability with regard to food, living, housing, it allows the child to have a base to begin to focus on their school."

Student and Family Engagement

Student engagement in learning activities and the broader school environment is a strong predictor of academic resilience regardless of students' prior performance or ability (Finn & Rock, 1997; Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Rouse, & Chen, 2012; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Reyes & Jason, 1993; Waxman, Padrón, Shin, & Rivera, 2008). Students are more likely to be engaged at school when they feel safe, encouraged, and welcome (Gallup, 2013). The Kennedy Cluster Project works to enhance student engagement by providing mentoring programs and academic supports that foster school connectedness and involvement. In addition, the multi-agency team offers a safe haven for families to

share fears and problems and to make connections with people in the community who help and encourage them.

Nationally, and in MCPS, student engagement is highest among elementary students and lowest among high school students (Figure 4). On average, students who attended schools in the Kennedy cluster in fall 2012 rated their feelings of engagement at levels that were about the same as the MCPS averages for students at the same grade levels.

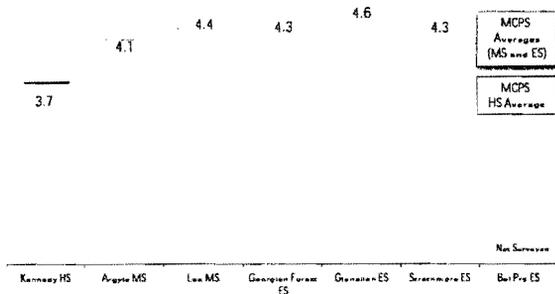


Figure 4. Results of 2012 Gallup survey of student ratings of school engagement. Source: MCPS.

Students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to attend school, earn higher grades, graduate, and enroll in postsecondary programs (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). One of the school counselors remarked, "Any time we engage a family and get them to come in for a meeting, it is a positive."

Efforts to engage parents are especially important for Hispanic students whose families are challenged by language barriers and cultural differences (Emerson, Fear, Fox, & Sanders, 2012).

The Kennedy Cluster Project multi-agency team includes many Spanish speakers who are instrumental in reaching out to Hispanic parents. At multi-agency team meetings, a Spanish-speaking care coordinator and a translator work one-on-one with parents to build trust and help encourage them to use available resources to enhance their well-being. These team members explained some of the barriers that prevent families from seeking help.

"[Many parents] are afraid, undocumented, scared, have a language barrier....or are afraid of how information will be used."

"Some Hispanic families worry about getting a green card if they accept help from the government."

"[One Hispanic parent] thought they would take her to jail [if she talked about the reason for her child's truancy]."

"One mother was homeless with her seven kids and was afraid to tell the school because she thought her kids would be taken away."

"When families come in they are overwhelmed with emotions and fear of the unknown."

"One of the biggest things I saw with a family when I first started and walked in [to the multi-agency meeting] with her, I said to her, 'If at any point you want me to ask them to stop let me know.' I saw the fear that was in her eyes when she saw that big group of people."

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"Now when I bring them into the room [for the multi-agency team meeting], I say 'Don't get overwhelmed, we are here to support you and link to different resources and see what resources you need.' So I set it up so when they walk in they are prepared."

The last meeting of the 2013 academic year provided an example of how multi-agency team engagement over the course of the academic year built trust with, and enhanced hope and well-being for, a Hispanic family with a history of domestic violence.

In November, the counselor referred a mother who requested financial support, winter clothing, and furniture. At the six-month follow-up with the multi-agency team in May, the mother broke down and, through tears, told the team that she needed help escaping 26 years of domestic violence. Her middle school son had done well in school in the past but was traumatized by what was happening at home and beginning to show some of his father's violent behaviors. The multi-agency team helped this mother make the contacts she needed to access legal and social services. In June, the mother asked for another meeting. With the help of her Spanish translator, she thanked the team for their support.

"After the last meeting I gained strength and knew that I was not by myself. I got out of my home. My children have changed a lot and are doing better in school. [The Kennedy Cluster Project care coordinator] is helping me get my children into summer school programs...I feel stronger and more independent. I couldn't do it by myself. I thank all of you for your support."

From Multiple Agencies to a Multi-Agency Team

In 2007, the Kennedy Cluster Project began to identify and address the root causes of the achievement gaps in MCPS. Implementing solutions to those root causes required multi-agency team collaboration and sharing of information about students and their families among various service providers. Federal laws and state regulations place restrictions on the ability of agencies to share anything beyond directory information. In 2008, attorneys for MCPS, Montgomery County Government, and Montgomery County Police and Justice, worked with appropriate agency heads to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to address some of those restrictions.

In 2009, plans for many recommended Kennedy Cluster Project interventions were scaled back due to budget constraints. But the multi-agency team remained committed to the project. Since spring 2009, the multi-agency team, headed by Mr. Donald Kress representing MCPS and Ms. Fran Brenneman representing Montgomery County Government, has heard cases twice per month during the school year. Document analysis of team meetings from 2007 to 2012 and observations of the team at work in 2012 and 2013 provided strong evidence of benefits of the collaboration.

An unintended positive consequence of the multi-agency collaboration was embedded professional development for participants, at no additional cost to MCPS or the county agencies. What began with an MOU between multiple agencies has developed into a multi-agency team of professionals with shared vision, high levels of trust and interdependence, and creative problem-solving approaches to

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service delivery. Team members spoke with one voice about their greater awareness of the issues and resources and utilization of a professional network to enhance their capacity to access and deliver services to children and families.

Building Awareness and Shared Vision

The Kennedy Cluster Project allows schools to take advantage of a more coordinated strategy for reaching out to children and their families. School counselors who have worked with the program for several years and attended training sessions reported increased awareness of how to access directly resources to deal with specific issues that do not require a multi-agency intervention.

"The multi-agency team has held training sessions so that school staff can learn more about county resources available for their students."

"The [training] workshop with representatives from different organizations... was very helpful in getting counselors the resources they could use."

"The counselor does not always have the information and connections to answer questions parents have.... [Now] when we talk to parents and teachers we know what services [are available]."

"It was an eye-opener for the Pupil Personnel Workers.... We became more aware of what services we can offer our families."

"My previous job looked at welfare services. I didn't know what the achievement gap was about."

"Being a member of the multi-agency team] opened my eyes up to things I was not aware of before. I knew we had county recreation department, for example, but didn't know what they offer."

"I have learned so much about the services [other agencies] provide. "

"Sitting at the meetings and hearing the members talk about what is available has been an education for all of us."

Building Trusting and Interdependent Professional Relationships

Over the past five years, team members have built professional relationships that typically would not have been possible without the opportunity for collaboration.

"We developed an ongoing relationship ... we did not have before. "

"[Over the years] we began to know who to call and who we can get help from."

"I keep their phone numbers near and dear."

"It is a lot easier to coordinate services when you can put a face with a name."

"Now we are friends and we ... help each other."

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Discussion

Students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 spend about 20 percent of their waking hours in school⁴. Given that small percentage, it is not surprising that schools across the United States are partnering **with their students' families and** communities to support student success. For students in the Kennedy cluster, the contributions of other agencies and community groups are essential to provide access to out-of-school time opportunities that directly and indirectly influence the achievement gap.

The Kennedy Cluster Project multi-agency team collaboration reduced communication barriers between and among the school system and county departments and agencies. Better communication resulted in more efficient delivery of educational and community-based resources and services to students and their families during and beyond the school day. Services included academic support and enrichment programs that could directly improve academic achievement. But perhaps more important was access to social services and programs that addressed basic needs related to housing and food insecurity, health care, counseling, leisure and recreational activities, and legal aid.

Although academic gaps have not closed, there is evidence that the Kennedy Cluster Project is making a difference. Statistical and anecdotal evidence suggest that the Kennedy Cluster Project contributed directly to higher achievement. Trends in graduation were higher and more equitable at Kennedy High School in 2012 than in prior years. Dropout rates of Hispanic students were significantly lower than in the past at Kennedy High school. In addition, data showed that the Kennedy Cluster Project contributed to reduced mobility and better classroom attendance and performance among students at all the cluster schools.

The Kennedy Cluster Project's **most** important contributions may be on the impact on social-emotional indicators that are highly correlated with academic resilience and achievement. Survey data and anecdotal reports provide evidence that program benefits included higher rates of participation in extra-curricular activities among students at risk, better access to mental health services, greater engagement of Hispanic families, and more positive feelings of hope and well-being.

For the multi-agency team, the achievement gap is no longer merely **a school problem. It is everyone's** problem. Closing the achievement gap requires the commitment of multiple agencies with a shared vision for how to better deliver social and educational services to students and their families. Over the past five years, the Kennedy Cluster Project has contributed to success for individuals and for schools. More needs to be done. But because of the commitment of the stakeholders and the shift in ownership of the problem, the future offers promise of continued progress toward a solution.

⁴ Based on 180 school days of 6.5 hours each and 365 calendar days where students are awake for 16 hours and asleep for 8 hours on average.

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Appendix A

2012–2013 School Programs at Kennedy Cluster Project Schools

	Kennedy	Argyle	Lee	Bel Pre	Georgian Forest	Glenallen	Strathmore
Kennedy Cluster Project School	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Professional Development Programs							
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	*	*	*		*		*
Middle School Reform (Partial)			*				
Secondary School-Based Academy and Magnet Programs							
Academy of Business Studies	*						
Career Pathway Programs	*						
College Institute	*						
International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme	*						
Leadership Training Institute	*						
MediaCom: Multimedia & Telecommunications Academy	*						
Medical Careers	*						
Medical Careers, Sports Medicine and Management Academy	*						
Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC)	*						
Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC)	*						
Dual Language			*				
Magnet School for Digital Design and Development		*					
Elementary School-Based Academic Programs							
Focused Academic Support—Local Funds				*		*	*
Focused Academic Support—Federal Title I Funds					*		
Head Start					*	*	
Prekindergarten				*	*		
Media/Technology Program						*	
Resource (K-5)					*		
Reading/Language Arts Program				*			
Ruth Rales Reading Program				*			
One Dream Academy - 21st Century Community Grant							*
School-Based Special Education Programs							
Secondary Learning Center	*						
Elementary Learning Center							*
Autism	*						
Learning and Academic Disabilities	*	*	*			*	
Gifted and Talented/Learning Disabled			*				
Emotional Disabilities					*		
Physical Disabilities	*		*				
Learning for Independence	*						
Out-of-School and Community-Based Programs							
After School Theatre Program						*	
Character Counts!						*	
Commonweal Tutoring		*				*	
Destination Graduation	*						
Elementary Home School Model				*	*		*
Excel Beyond the Bell		*					
Extended Day Program		*					
Passion 4 Learning		*					
School/Community-Based	*						

Source: *Schools at a Glance*, Montgomery County Public Schools, www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

Implementation Plan for Kennedy Cluster Project 11-21-08

Goal: Reduce the academic disparity in the Kennedy cluster of schools between African American and other students.

Objectives/Activities	Cost Estimate	Timeline	Dept./Agency Responsible	Expected Results
Obj. 1: There will be an increase in the use of equitable practices.				
a. Develop cultural competency for employees and non-profits.	\$tbd	9/08-continue	HHS/OCP/REC	Cultural training for employees and non-profits who work in the Kennedy Cluster.
b. Include Project secondary schools in the MCPS Professional Learning Communities Institute	\$0 (PLCI is already included in the MCPS Operating Budget)	July 2009	MCPS Office of Organizational Development	Argyle MS will be included in the next middle school cohort of the MCPS Professional Learning Communities Institute. Kennedy HS should be included in the first cohort if/when a high school PLCI curriculum is developed.
c. Evaluate alternative staffing Strategies.	\$0	2/2/09 4/1/09	MCPS Offices of School Performance & Human Resources	The responsible offices, principals of the Project schools, and MCEA will agree to staffing policies, procedures, and incentives that will enhance the quality of staff in the Project schools.
Obj. 2: There will be improved student health & well-being.				
a. Expand Linkages to Learning to all project middle and elementary schools #1	FY'10 (startup year) - \$1,122,591; Year 2: \$1,358,956 (see attached estimate)	Full implementation of all sites within 6 months of funding becoming available (i.e. - 7/1/09-1/1/10).	HHS, MCPS & Partner Agency (vendor)	Non-academic barriers to learning will be addressed for identified students via delivery of prevention, case management, and/or mental health services that seek to improve social/emotional well-being, school functioning, and family self-sufficiency. Serves all children/families in Elem and Middle schools.
b. Schedule fall vision and hearing screenings. 775 students will be screened	\$0	8/19/08-12/31/08	HHS-School Health	Students will be referred as needed to specialist and will be seated in front of class. Serves all children/families in Elem, Middle, and High School schools.
c. Assess Need for Immunization Clinics in Schools.	\$0 Vaccines are free	8/26/2008 - 9/19/08	HHS-School Health	Students who need vac's will have access/all students will be in compliance Serves all children/families in Elem, Middle, and High School schools.
d. Expand Summer Meals Program	\$115,000	Summer	MCPS Food	Summer Open Lunch

	(annually)	2009	Service & Transportation	Programs would operate at Kennedy HS, Argyle MS, Georgian Forest, Bel Pre and Strathmore ESSs, with MCPS circulator busses serving each site.
Obj. 3: There will be more parent engagement.				
a. Provide a Parent Outreach Coordinator at each targeted school (.5 FTE)	\$303,811 (annually) salaries and benefits for five 0.5 FTE 12-month positions	FY 10	MCPS Office of School Performance & Dept. of Family & Community Partnerships	Improved communication between parents and their child's school Increased parent involvement at each school On-going parent education opportunities at each school Improved student attendance Reduction in student suspensions Increased student achievement Parents will report an increased awareness of how to access county services
Obj. 4: There will be more students ready to learn.				
a. Increase universal pre-school opportunities for all 3- and 4-year olds	516,522	FY09	HHS/ESC/MCPS	All children ready to learn school as defined by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Children Ready to Learn data.
#2				
Obj. 5: There will be sustained collaboration among partners in providing information and communication that work with Kennedy Cluster students.				
a. Conduct resource fairs.	\$800 (printing, water, light refreshments, giveaways for children/families) \$43,800 (\$20,000 for printing, equipment rental, food, logistics, promotional needs; \$23,800 for overtime pay for staff to process extra applications resulting from Resource/Benefits Fair)	Nov 2009 Sept/Oct 2010	HHS will lead and solicit participation from other relevant private or government reps. HHS will lead but will also solicit participation and resources from other relevant private and community service providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 150 participants attending the fair At least 20% of the people attending the fair will receive applications to HHS programs. 20% of benefits applications are to be returned to HHS within 60 days of completion of fair At least 15 programs will bring information to the fair. At least 50 % of the attendees will complete a Survey to help understand usefulness of information, and to inform the Benefits Enrollment Fair planned for Fall of 2009. # of people reached at Fair with information on services and programs;

				# of people referred to services and programs; # of applications completed and submitted at Fair; # of applications approved for services # exhibitors and programs participating
b. Co-locate Gilchrist and Rocking Horse Centers.	TBD	7/09		
c. Develop inter-Agency MOU for information sharing.	\$0	5/08-10/08	HHS/MCPS	Gov't will be able to provide more effective and efficient services through info sharing.
d. Continue operation group meetings.	\$0	10/08-10-10	HHS	Shared project accountability/shared problem solving among agencies
Obj. 6: There will be a rich out-of-school environment for students.				
a.. Fully operationalize Excel Beyond the Bell (EBB)	**345,330	FY 2009 and FY 2010	Collaboration Council as the intermediary with a Partnership Group that includes Recreation; DHHS; CUPF; and several other public & private agency representation	Increased number of youth participating in quality programs; 2. Increase in the variety of quality programs and opportunities; 3. Better allocation of public and private resources to fit comm. needs and youth preferences; 4. Increased funding and sustainability of programs and system infrastructure--- All resulting in positive youth development, including physical, social/emotional and academic/intellectual growth.
#3 ES Coordination and partner building: 300 youth Estimated number of new "slots" to serve children and youth: At least 100-125 (based on \$2000-2500/youth for \$250,000 requested) Estimated number of out-of-school time providers who participate in professional development activities & accountability (program performance data collection): at least 20 Estimated number of youth impacted by these providers: At least 600 (average of 30 youth/provider)				
b. Provide Refurbished Computers.	\$20,000 2,000 computers @ \$10 each.	1/09	MCPS Division of Technology	The availability of technology within the Project area will be increased through the distribution of refurbished MCPS computers to qualifying families.
c. Heighten Focus on the County's Positive Youth Development Initiative through the existing Kennedy Cluster Community Based Collaborative (Community Outreach and Education)	\$15,000	FY'10	Regional Youth Service Center, MCPD, MCPS, HHS, Rec, Collaboration Council, MCPL	Increased participation from representatives from the public, private, and non-profit sectors (3 in each area per meeting) Increase youth participation (by 10 students per meeting) Increased knowledge of community resources and assets (participants to receive no less than two additional available opportunities) We average about 60 (at least 20 of those at students) people

				per meeting – 4 meetings per year -- 240 people per year
d. Create Summer Youth Employment Program.	\$80,000	FY'10	Rec/DED/OHR	# of youth placed in jobs Skills learned # of job opportunities # of job fairs career knowledge Serve 100 kids
e. Evaluate use of programmed after-school space.	\$60,000	FY'10	Rec/CUPF	# of programs # of youth served
f. Expand activity bus services	\$28,649 After-School Activities Coordinator: \$8,049 (using the same stipend as the current middle school Athletic Coordinator: \$2,683) – Excel Beyond the Bell already provides such a position for Argyle M.S. Activity Busses: \$20,600 (\$75 per activity bus per day; providing service 3 days per week for 32 weeks	ASAP	MCPS Department of Transportation	Provide 1 activity bus to each elementary school and 2 to the middle school for 3 days per week for an additional 4 weeks.
Obj. 7: There will be a decrease in the involuntary housing-related factors that lead to student mobility.				
a. . As a component of the Housing First Initiative, collaborate with landlords, property managers and property management firms to engage them in activities that will help them effectively intervene with tenants who are in danger of being evicted.	\$0	FY 09	HHS/SNH	compiling the number of evictions in the Kennedy Cluster area the numbers of meetings held and the feedback received from landlords
b. Collaborate with HHS Homeless Services to provide housing support for families #3 30 to 35 families at a time	\$101,757	FY 09	HHS/SNH	# of grants issued # of cases managed

Total \$2,989,645
 Evaluation of project 150,000
TOTAL \$3,139,645.00

**EBtB does not include transportation costs or leased space
 *LTL- includes full 5 day sites at each school with infrastructure

- What are the FY14 and recommended FY15 budgets for Head Start? What is the local match for the program? Please identify all adjustments in the recommended FY15 budget related to the Head Start program.

FY 14: PY 48	FY14*	Enrollment 628
Montgomery County Schools (MCPS)	\$3,371,910	77%
Community Action Agency	\$471,901	11%
School Health	\$524,978	12%
Total Budget for Federal Funds:	\$4,368,789	100%
Non Federal Cash & In-Kind Expenditures – MCPS (20% match)	\$1,092,197	
Total Budget for Federal Funds & MCPS Non-Federal Funds:	\$5,460,986	
*Includes 5.27 sequestration reduction		

FY15: PY 49 – proposed funding	FY15	Enrollment 648
Montgomery County Schools (MCPS)	\$3,603,675	77%
Community Action Agency	\$509,870	11%
School Health	\$554,276	12%
Total Budget for Federal Funds:	\$4,667,820	100%
Non Federal Cash & In-Kind Expenditures – MCPS (20% match)	\$1,166,955	
Total Budget for Federal Funds & MCPS Non-Federal Funds:	\$5,834,776	

- Please provide the FY14 approved and FY15 recommended budget for the Centro Nia pre-kindergarten program. Please identify the number of children residing in Montgomery County who are on the Centro Nia waitlist, if any.
FY 14 approved: \$332,220
FY 15 recommended \$332, 220
Wait List for Montgomery County – 253 year to date

Early Childhood Services

- What funding does the Reginald K. Lourie Center received in FY14 and what is the recommended funding for the organization in FY15? Under each contract, please provide the amount budgeted, a description of services delivered, year to date services numbers, and under which services area funding it managed.

Early Childhood Services has two contracts with the Reginald Lourie Center:

- Infants and Toddlers Program: The Lourie Center contract is an embedded services contract for 25.44 Child Development Specialists and 4.25 Nurse Consultants in FY14 in the amount of \$2,619,039.30. This contract also includes Psychological Assessments in the amount of \$39,000.00.

The contract is for staff time, so we cannot pull data that would tell us services provided to date because the staff are a part of a team of providers who develop services based on individual needs of each child and family. Service data comes from the State and is not separated by provider. We have requested a report that

correlates services by service provider. We have not heard from the State yet whether such a report can be provided.

The Lourie Center budget request is level funded for FY15 for \$2,658,039.60. The CE recommended budget also includes a \$69,550 Community Grant to provide operating support to the Therapeutic Nursery Program. In addition, the State budget provided that \$300,000 of the appropriation for the Child Care Subsidy Program be allocated to expand the Therapeutic Nursery Program at the Reginald S. Lourie Center for Infants and Young Children in Montgomery County.

- Early Childhood Mental Health: Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Contract.
FY14 = \$26,709.63 was budgeted but the entire amount was liquidated to other vendors since the Lourie Center could not provide consultants for mental health consultation during FY14 fiscal year.
FY15 = \$26,709.63 budgeted (New open solicitation in process)

- Please describe what is involved with the Early Childhood Advisory Council Grant. What will the funding be used for? Please describe the process for determining how the funding would be spent? When do funds need to be spent?
Funding from MSDE was received for Montgomery County Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge Grant-Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils. The proposed budget reflects the required expenses to focus on four projects related to continued development of the Montgomery County Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC); a public outreach and media campaign; a professional development and family engagement project in a Title I school community; partial funding for a mini-demographics study and for data analysis. Expenses include funds for a project manager, training and technical assistance consultants, data analyst, facilitators, interpreters/ translators, and parent engagement activities.

The process for determining the projects in the ECAC Implementation Grant was developed through the ongoing work of the ECAC (begun in April 2013) through initial workgroups/committees and examining data, exemplary practices in the County and approaches to family engagement.

The grant term ends 6/30/2015.

- Please describe the early childhood services that will be provided through the expansion of the Kennedy Cluster project.
What early childhood services are currently being provided as part of the project?
Currently, there are no early childhood services included in the Kennedy Cluster Project. Services are proposed as a part of the expansion of services in FY15.

What Early Childhood Services will be provided?

The services will be similar to a model that has been developed for the Glenmont area (through the Race-to-the-Top Breakthrough Center concept) and for the Early Childhood

- Please explain the recommended adjustments to funding from the Maryland Infants & Toddlers funding (CLIG) and Maryland Infant and Toddlers Grant and the impact on services.

The CLIG (Consolidated Local Implementation Grant) is the Maryland Infant and Toddler Grant. The adjustment was due to an error in the amount brought forward for FY14 from the previous year, which has been correct for FY15.

Please Note: the FY14 allocation is based on a different State calculation than in previous years. FY13 was based on an annual child count, this year's funding is based on the average of child count data over three years.

As the average resulted in a lower child count, Part C Funds and the State General Funds went down by \$19,619 and \$33,267 respectively. However, we did receive a one-time supplemental grant which increased our overall funding by 8.5%. So in essence we remained level funded in FY14.

- What accounts for the decrease in the number of children served from the Actual FY13 level to the estimated FY14 and target FY15 levels.
FY 13 was a banner year based on the number of children served. Although we served 5,907 children, we are only projecting to serve 4,500 in FY14 and FY15 because we do not have enough historical data to determine if we will trend as high again, so we projected less based on averages from prior years.

Linkages to Learning

- Has funding to annualize operations at Arcola ES and Georgian Forest ES been recommended for FY15? If so, how much is recommended?
There is \$131,358 in the FY15 CE Recommended budget to annualize the operating cost associated with the Arcola and Georgian Forest LTL sites.
- Why is expansion at South Lake ES being recommended before the provision of full staffing complements at schools with higher Ever FARMS rates than South Lakes in accordance with Linkages Advisory Group recommendation?
The expansion at South Lake was recommended as part of the Kennedy Cluster expansion plan, not per the LTL Strategic Plan. See response under South Lake question under Kennedy Cluster.
- What services will the \$122,377 for Linkages site at South Lakes ES provide? Please identify the staff positions that will be provided and when services will begin. Site Coordinator, Case Manager & Mental Health Therapist beginning Jan. 2015 (half year only).
Why did the Executive not recommend the \$275,510 identified as the 1st year costs for a complete program at South Lakes ES.
The Kennedy Cluster Expansion project was recommended for a January 2015 start.

Has Executive staff determined that there is space to provide Linkages services at South Lake ES in FY15?

DHHS and MCPS have met to plan for space allocation as of Jan 2015. Space solutions may include the addition of a portable on the school campus.

- Why is expansion of Linkages to Learning program at South Lake Elementary School linked to expansion of the Kennedy Cluster Project? Was the Linkages Advisory Committee's recommendation to expand services to South Lake made in conjunction with the Kennedy Cluster Project?
See below in Kennedy Cluster Project write up.
- What is the \$237,353 in multi-program adjustments for?

Linkages to Learning	0	237,353
Annualization for Arcola and LTL		131358
CE Rec 2% inflationary adjustments		83411
Remainder can be attributed to compensation and benefit changes		22,584

High School Wellness Center

- What is the FY14 budget for each High School Wellness Center broken out by personnel costs, operating expenses, and FTEs by program area (school health and PYD)? What is the recommended FY15 budget each for center? Recommended FY14 budget for each of the High School Wellness Center programs?

FY14 CE Rec Budget	PH - School Health Services				CYF - Positive Youth*		Total
	FTE	PC	OE contract svc	OE misc	OE contract svc	OE misc	
High School Wellness Centers							
Northwood HS (OE is combined here)	1.00	87,855	193,626		555,090		836,571
Gaithersburg HS	0.90	74,720	150,000	30,000	528,360	14,240	797,320
Watkins Mill HS	0.90	74,720	150,000	30,000	528,360	14,240	797,320
*The only FTE associated with PYD is the _____ who monitors the contracts and also oversees 1 FT OSC, and 8 FT Community Service Aides.							
FY15 CE Rec Budget	PH - School Health Services				CYF - Positive Youth		Total
	FTE	PC	OE - contract svc	OE - misc	OE - contract svc	OE - misc	
High School Wellness Centers							
Northwood HS (OE is combined here)	1.0	104,497	193,626		555,090		853,213
Gaithersburg H	1.0	85,035	150,000	30,000	528,360	14,240	807,635
Watkins Mill HS	1.0	98,211	150,000	30,000	528,360	14,240	820,811

- How are the proposed two new High School Wellness Centers accounted for in the FY14 budget? Under which programs does funding for the programs fall?
The funding for the High School Wellness Centers is located in Public Health – School Health Services program and in CYF under the Positive Youth Development program. Please provide amounts and FTEs associated with the programs for each program area. See the chart above.
If funding for the centers is included in Multi-program adjustments, please break out the totals for the other non-wellness center-related multi-program adjustments and FTEs.
N/A
- Are there any annualization costs recommended for FY15 for the new wellness centers at Gaithersburg and Watkins Mill High Schools? No, the funding for the services at the Wellness Centers is fully funded the first year.

Kennedy Cluster

- What is the recommended FY14 funding for the project in the County Government and in MCPS?
\$89,536.00 for the care coordinator position.
\$25,000 for MCPS Project Manager (Don Kress)
- What are the plans for the project in FY15?
The recommended plan for June 1, 2014-December 31, 2014 is to continue the Kennedy Cluster Project as it presently operates now, with a Multi-Agency Team that meets twice a month and works with referrals from counselors and families from Glen Allan, Bel Pre and Strathmore Elementary Schools, Lee and Argyle Middle Schools and Kennedy High School.

The current Multi-Agency Team is a team made up of employees from Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Police and Recreation (Rec), States Attorney's Office (SAO), and that "borrows" employees from other duties within many different departments and agencies for two days a month to provide wrap around services for students and their families with the goal of eliminating the Achievement Gap for those children. By providing services such as food, housing and clothing, the student hopefully will be able to succeed and at worst, not decline in his academic standing.

Beginning in January 2015, the CE is recommending funding for a dedicated Multi-Agency Team that will function in both Kennedy and Watkins Mill Clusters, Excel beyond the Bell and the Police Explorer Program for Montgomery Village Middle School, Linkages to Learning in South Lake Elementary School (Watkins Mill), and the Sports Academy in Watkins Mill High School. Early Childhood services will operate in the Kennedy cluster only, not in the Watkins Mills cluster at the start of this expansion.

- Please identify in which agencies and departments funding for the project is recommended.
The Department of Health and Human Services the Department of Recreation and Montgomery County Public Schools have recommended funding for this project.
- What components will be expanded, and what clusters or schools will expansion take place in FY15?
The Multi-Agency Team will have dedicated employees instead of operating as it currently does. The team is still headed by representatives from County Government and MCPS (Fran Brenneman and Don Kress). It presently has a Care Coordinator for Kennedy and as it expands to Watkins Mill, a second Care Coordinator is ins included int the CE Recommended budget. The rest of the expanded multi-agency team includes funding requests for:

Multi-Agency Team- Kennedy/Watkins Mill

HHS

1FT Care Coordinator PMII/25
.5 Behavioral Health Person PM1/23
1.0 Office Service Coordinator OSC/16
\$6,000 for Client Assistance

Collaboration Council

.13 contractual FTE Representative to help with resource identification and help with very high risk families

Recreation

2 25FTE geographically based persons- cost will be absorbed by department

MCPS

Evaluation Specialist .5FTE
\$6,000K client assistance

States Attorney's Office

.5 FTE Attorney cost will be absorbed by agency

Police

School Resource Officer costs will be absorbed by department

Expansion

(HHS) Linkages to Learning will be added to South Lakes Elementary School
(HHS) Early Childhood Team will be added initially to the Kennedy Cluster only
(REC) Excel Beyond the Bell will be added to Montgomery Village
(MCPS) .4 FTE Coordinator will coordinate Excel Beyond the Bell)
(Police) Explorer will be added to Montgomery Village Middle (cost absorbed by Police)
(REC) Sports Academy will be added to Watkins Mill High School
(MCPS) .4 FTE Coordinator will coordinate the Sports Academy)

Expansion to the following Watkins Mill Cluster Schools

Watkins Mill, Daly, South Lake, Whetstone and Stedwick Elementary Schools, Neelsville and Montgomery Village Middle Schools, Watkins Mill High School

The entire Kennedy Cluster Project Initiative is a cluster model with a vertical articulation and therefore encompasses all schools in that cluster.

- Please explain the rationale for expanding services and the reasoning for selecting the specific service expansion sites.

The services that are offered within the Kennedy Cluster Project are another tool in to assist in closing the Achievement Gap. Montgomery County Public Schools spend much time in the classrooms working with students and their families. But the school system cannot tackle the other hours when children are home with their families. Many of these children's families who come before the Multi-Agency Team come from parent(s) who are homeless, do not provide adequate food, have no health care, and have no clothes or furniture.

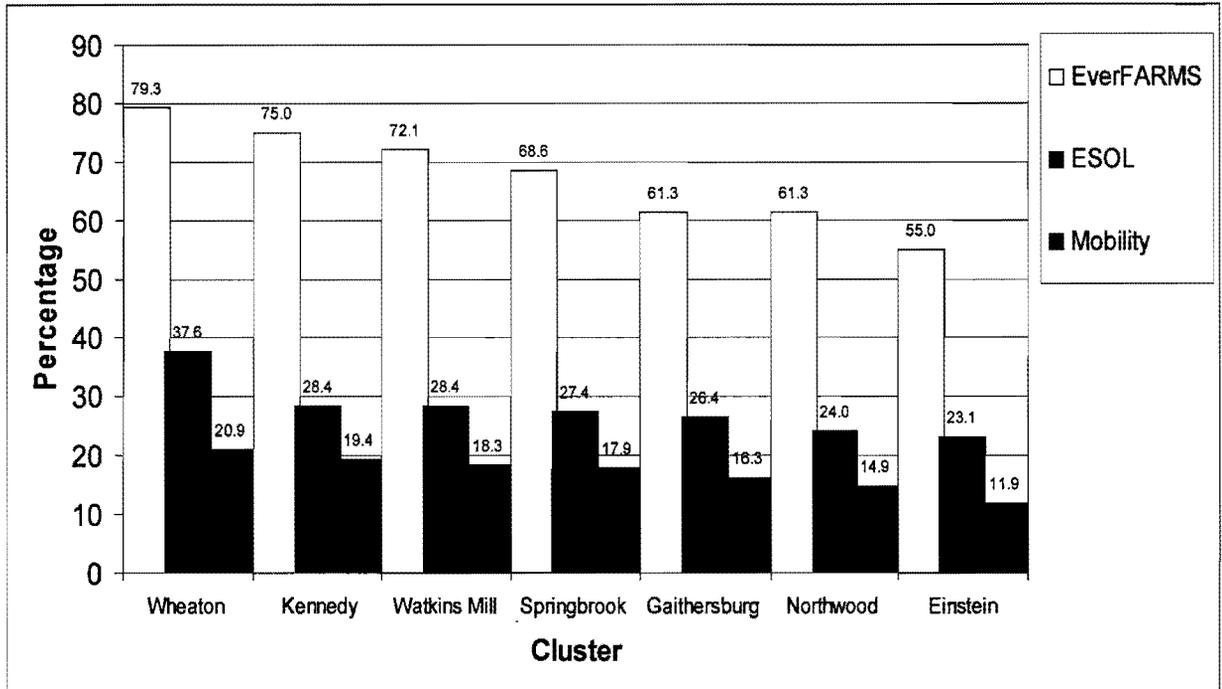
When the Kennedy Cluster Project (KCP) Leadership group first put this project together, it was to study what would make the biggest impact to these families and eliminate the social deterrents that these families experience. Included in that early recommendation were Linkages to Learning and early childhood in every elementary school, after school programs, and a multi-department and agency team guided memorandum of understanding. When the Multi-agency team began, the actual model was limited by budget constraints, but was guided by the governing structure with its operational and leadership teams.

Though hard outcome data was not available, anecdotal support was provided by family members, staff of the school and other agencies. All said that the services provided and the team itself was making a difference in the lives of families. School counselors were able to guide students in their studies, while the Team took on the difficult students with families in crisis.

During the summer of 2013, the Leadership Team comprised by County Executive Ike Leggett, Superintendent Josh Starr, Council Members Navarro and Ervin, and School Board President Chris Barkley directed the operation team, made up of Department Directors, Uma Ahluwalia, Gabe Albornoz, States Attorney's representative George Simms, Police representative Assistant Chief Darryl McSwain, Team Members Don Kress and Fran Brenneman, and MCPS Staff members, to explore other options for closing the achievement gap, to explore expanding the existing project, and if the project were expanded, where would that expansion take place.

The approach identified in this FY15 budget, similar to the one recommended in 2008 was brought back to the Leadership Team in early Fall of 2013 with the recommendation to go to Watkins Mill. The County Executive directed the team to go back and look at similar Clusters and to reduce costs. Clusters with similar Ever FARMS, ESOL and Mobility were reviewed. Watkins Mill was identified as the one cluster that was most similar to Kennedy. The Leadership Group concurred with our total proposal.

- Is there a template or plan for bringing the project to scale in the targeted clusters and County-wide? If so, please provide.



- What is the current staffing of the Project, and how is staff recommended to change in FY15? Please provide job descriptions for all FTEs that are proposed for the Project in FY15. Please describe what the additional \$111,565 and 2.5 FTEs recommended for FY15 will be used for.

See attached spreadsheet

- Why is expansion of Linkages to Learning program at South Lake Elementary School linked to expansion of the Kennedy Cluster Project?

The Kennedy Cluster Leadership team (see team members earlier) recommended the expansion to Watkins Mill Cluster. The entire Kennedy Cluster Project Initiative is a cluster model with a vertical articulation and therefore encompasses all schools in that cluster. Once the decision was made to expand to Watkins Mill Cluster, all schools in the cluster would be able to take advantage of the services requested. As part of this plan, the expansion means that all elementary schools in Kennedy and Watkins Mill Clusters will, as resources are available, have a LTL program. Until that time, the Cluster Project will accommodate all schools. Once the LTL programs are in all the elementary schools, the project will only handle referrals for the high schools and middle schools. The County evaluates the program plan annually, balancing program outcomes, client needs, and competing budget priorities in determining future expansion plans.

Was the Linkages Advisory Committee's recommendation to expand services to South Lake made in conjunction with the Kennedy Cluster Project?

The guidance from the Advisory Committee is very much appreciated and is indeed very valuable. No, the Linkages Advisory Committee did not recommend the Kennedy Cluster expansion. This decision was made after considering all options and coordination with other initiatives. South Lake was chosen to receive Linkages in the Watkins Mill cluster because its EverFARM numbers are the highest in that Cluster.

Has the Executive determined that there is space to provide Linkages services at South Lake ES in FY15?

Linkages placement in a school is guided for the most part, by EverFARMS numbers—it is not determined by space availability. There are exceptions to this guideline in extenuating circumstances. In this case, South Lake is now looking into capacity.

- Please provide an update on the Kennedy Cluster project. What were key accomplishment/activities of the initiative in FY13 and FY14 to date? How many youth and families were served during that period?

FY 13 Updates

- Multi- Agency team convened 17 times to provide support and planning for 68 children and their families.
- The key issues that the group focused on included:
 - Housing continues to be a major need: 24 out of 68 students were at risk for becoming homeless.
 - Mental Health needs have also been significant: 24 out of 68 students were also referred to mental health services outside of the school system.
- Argyle Middle School hosted toy drive for families, resulting in 55 families being assisted.
- Department of Recreation provided 23 Summer Fun Camp Scholarships
- DHHS in partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools and the Department of Recreation provided financial assistance to 22 students in the Kennedy Cluster Project to attend summer camps.
- The Excel Beyond the Bell program in Argyle Middle school offered a variety of activities, hot supper, and bus transportation four days a week for 30 weeks from the end of the school day until 5:15 p.m. Programs were offered by community providers, recreation staff and teachers, including chess, drama, web design, cultural cooking, remote-controlled car building, dance, outdoor adventures, and more.
- In the spring 2012, the Kennedy Cluster Project conducted a survey to gather feedback from school personnel in an effort to improve the Project. Out of 22 school personnel who were asked to participate, 15 completed a survey. This particular survey consisted of 10 questions which focused on both strengths and weaknesses of the project.

Results indicated that:

- Most counselors liked best, “having a team with representatives from different agencies and having the individual care coordination available to parents to try

and meet their needs and link them to agencies and to attend school meetings was extremely useful.”

- Most said that to improve the project they wanted more time for families to spend with the Care Coordinator and for individualized services for families.
- When asked, “What type of services do you think will assist students to improve academically?” The most common responses were mentoring, mental health services and tutoring
- 60% agreed that “ I’ve learned useful ways to help students and their families by being involved with the Kennedy Cluster Project”
- Dr. Clare Keller, former Supervisor of Applied Research for Montgomery County Public Schools (2006–2011) a retiree and a volunteer, is working on a case study of the project that will be completed in the fall. She has spent nearly a year doing research, reading all of the Kennedy Cluster Project documents and attending most of the Multi Agency meetings. She has interviewed dozens of staff and reviewed the results of the Gallup data on MCPS. Preliminary findings note that the barriers to academic achievement are being identified and that many of KCP’s original objectives are being met through the work of the Multi Agency Team

FY 14 Updates

- Dr. Clare Keller completed, “**From Multiple Agencies to a Multi-Agency Team: A Case Study of the Kennedy Cluster Project**” In her executive summary, she writes, “*In Montgomery County, the achievement gap is no longer merely an educational problem. It is a community problem. Over the past five years, the Kennedy Cluster Project has contributed to success for individual students, their families, and their community, one case at a time. More work needs to be done to close the achievement gap. But results of the case study provide strong evidence that progress in narrowing the gap is possible through multi-agency collaboration.*”
- The Kennedy Cluster Operational Team met nearly 9 times to discuss the recommendations for possible expansion or modifications to the project model. The Leadership Team met two times to discuss those recommendations.
- Multi- Agency team convened through March 12 times to provide support and planning for 101 children and their families. 74 of these families were referral to the multi-agency team this school year.
- Key issues included:
 - Mental Health needs are significant: 48 out of 74 students were referred to mental health services
 - Medical coverage is a major need: 45 out of 74 students and/or family members did not know how to obtain medical coverage and/or care.
- Kennedy Cluster Project in partnership with the Department of Recreation hosted a toy drive for families involved with the Kennedy Project and who reside in the 20906 area code. 280 kids were served through this event.
- DHHS in partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools and the Department of Recreation provided financial assistance to 25 students in the Kennedy Cluster Project to attend summer camps.

- In fall of 2013, the Kennedy Cluster Project provided resource training for families in the Kennedy Cluster area. Agencies in attendance were those that provided financial assistance, employment services and food assistances.
- When families were asked: What information, strategies, or techniques will you apply in your life?
 - Housing Counseling – it's my dream to own a house.
 - Resources
 - From the resources I receive in the training, I get to better my situation
 - How to contact the different agencies according to the needs of my family, contacts, and addresses received today
 - Employment assistance and training would help also AAHC, getting my son involved in different activities.
 - Finding Employment

FY13

Cases referral by school:

- Argyle 19
- Bel Pre 1
- Georgian Forest 3
- Glen Allan 19
- Kennedy 12
- Lee 12
- Strathmore 2

Total 68

Demographics by race/gender

- 8 African American Females
- 14 African American Males
- 16 Hispanic Females
- 30 Hispanic Males

FY 14

Cases referral by school:

- Argyle 19
- Bel pre 4
- E. Brooke Lee 21
- Georgian Forest 8
- Glenallan 15
- Kennedy High School 30
- Strathmore ES 4

Total 101 through March, 2014

Demographics by race/gender

- African American 19
- African American male 25
- Hispanic Females 27
- Hispanic males 27
- White Female 1
- Asian Males 2

- What outcomes/research demonstrate the effectiveness of the program to date and support the recommendation to expand the program? Has there been any reduction in the achievement gap for African American students at Kennedy Cluster Project schools or students who have received or whose families have received services through the Kennedy Cluster Project?

The Kennedy Cluster Project multi-agency team representatives provided to students and their families educational resources in and out of school as well as access to health care, housing, financial assistance, legal aid, recreational programs, and many other social services. Although the overall achievement gap has not closed for Kennedy cluster students (the Kennedy Project works with approximately 100 students and their families, grades K-12, per year, a number that would not greatly influence the results reflected for the total 3,500 students in the cluster), there is evidence that the Kennedy Cluster Project has contributed to positive academic outcomes for individual at-risk students and for the Kennedy cluster schools overall.

A case study conducted pro bono by a retired MCPS Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) staffer in October 2013 reported the following findings:

- Graduation rates among African American and Hispanic students at Kennedy High School increased over the past three years.
- The racial/ethnic gap in the high school graduation rate narrowed over the past three years as improvements in the graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students outpaced those of White and Asian students.
- Anecdotal evidence suggested that Kennedy Cluster Project activities contributed to the high school graduation of some at-risk students.
- Over the past two years, the dropout rate of Hispanic students at Kennedy High School was lower than the overall MCPS high school dropout rate for Hispanic students.
- Anecdotal evidence suggested that Kennedy Cluster Project activities helped to prevent some at-risk students from dropping out.
- Over the past two years, the mobility rates of African American and Hispanic students who attended Kennedy High School were lower than the overall rates for MCPS African American and Hispanic students.
- Anecdotal evidence suggested that Kennedy Cluster Project activities reduced residential mobility among elementary and middle school students by making it easier for low-income and homeless families to stay in their neighborhoods.

Despite the positive finding of this case study, quantitative information that shows whether or not the Kennedy Project is making a positive difference for the students it serves is needed. The FY 15 MCPS Operating Budget request contains funding for a 0.5 evaluation specialist to conduct a formal, in-depth quantitative study of the Kennedy Project by the MCPS Office of Shared Accountability.

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Ruby A. Rubens

Testimony to Montgomery County Council

On FY 2015 Operating Budget

April 9, 2014

Good afternoon Council President Rice and members of the council.

I am Ruby A. Rubens, and I am here today representing the 1977 II Action Group. We are a county-wide group, who in 2008 reconvened to address many of the same educational issues as the original 1977 group. The Black Relations Action Steps presented to the Board of Education by the 1977 group, provided “specific ways to improve and maintain an atmosphere in which Black students would be respected, achieve academic success and benefit from all aspects of educational services.” Almost forty years later we are still faced with many of the disparities identified in that 1977 document.

Modest gains have occurred in graduation rates and elementary reading, however areas such as academic performance measures, out-of-school suspensions, disproportionality in special education and academic ineligibility are still troubling. We are also monitoring implementation of the new Common Core State Standards and curriculum 2.0 because there’s a possibility that the achievement gap will widen if more strategic actions are not taken to address this potential.

We are pleased that the Board’s requested FY2015 budget does target some of the areas of our concern by:

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- **Building on the FY2014 funds to lower student-teacher ratios in math and English in middle schools**
- **Lowering class size in high schools**
- **Early intervention by use of “early warning indicators”**
- **Enhanced professional development**
- **Adding additional prekindergarten classes**

We support and will continue to work with the school system to address those areas that will provide improvements for all students, but especially African American students who in some instances are not being well served. With the Board’s budget request of \$ 52 million above Maintenance of Effort, we are disappointed that there was not better identification of funds and strategic plans to address, not only improving performance overall, but accelerating performance of African American and Latino students(this is the only way the “gap” will ever be eliminated).

We would also like to understand how previous year’s funds were used to close the achievement gap, what worked and how the current MCPS’ 2015 budget request reflects and prioritize those strategies that showed positive results.

The County Executive, while not recommending full funding, did recommend a MCPS budget above Maintenance of Effort. We believe this is fair and appropriate and offers a balanced approach considering other County service needs.

We support the Executive’s inclusion of funding for:

- **expansion of the Kennedy Cluster Project**
- **enhancements to Excel Beyond the Bell**

- **The George B. Thomas Learning Academy/Saturday School**

Although the above programs provide needed support for children and families at-risk, we are concerned that the educational needs of students during suspension are not being provided through programs such as SHARP. We urge restoration of this type program to ensure that students do not lose significant learning during periods of out-of-school suspension.

We are also concerned for those students who are no longer in traditional comprehensive schools, but in alternative education. Although a good deal of work is still needed to define and redesign alternative education, once this is done to the satisfaction of all stakeholders, it is absolutely necessary to provide the capital improvements needed for a facility worthy of our students and staff. We therefore urge you to support the funds for this project included in the FY2015-20 CIP.

We hope that in your budget work sessions, you will be able to work productively with the Board and Superintendent to ensure that , although we are still in a period of economic austerity, we can focus our priorities on removing disparities and ensuring that all students can reach their full potential.

We thank you for the opportunity to offer our comments on the FY2015 operating budget.



**Testimony of the Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children
MONTGOMERY COUNTY 2015 OPERATING BUDGET, ~~draft~~
John Surr, for the Public Policy Committee, Thursday, April 10, 2014**

Thank you, President Rice and members of the Council. The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children is a professional association of those who work with and for young children, and over 500 of our 2,000 members live and work in Montgomery County. We are in the process of reconstituting a County Chapter, so next year there will be a different letterhead.

We are grateful that the economy and the wise use of government resources permits the County Government in the 2015 Budget to repair some of the damage done to early childhood infrastructure and supports due to inadequate funding during and after the recession. The inflation adjustments to civil service pay and government contracts will permit the County to retain valuable workers and high quality services for young children.

We support the County Executive's initiatives to establish a Children's Trust and collaborative services to the Watkins Mill Cluster of public schools, even though we heard very sketchy details about them first through the Budget. The Budget-making process that brought forth these initiatives seems to have bypassed the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), which you created to bring to bear on our County's early childhood system the advice and collaboration of all those interested in young children in the County. We hope and expect that in future years the ECAC won't be neglected in policy-formation, as we have been focusing our efforts on the common efforts to reduce the Kindergarten achievement gap, as do these initiatives. We can only hope that the initiatives will be best, most efficient ways to use additional County resources to meet that common objective.

There are three other areas of early childhood services where the proposed level budget may be insufficient to meet the needs of the County's young children and their families: the Working Parents Assistance Fund (WPA), the Child Care Resource and Referral Center (CCRRC), and the administrative infrastructure that helps young children thrive. WPA and CCRRC supplement supports for families and child care providers at the State level. It appears that the 2015 Operating Budget just approved at the State level will be also be level in these two areas, which is totally inadequate to serve the needs that the subsidy and the R&R Network were designed to meet. We are not now asking you to step in to provide WPA-level subsidies for all the County residents who

receive State subsidies, although that would save the County Government money in the long run. We are asking that you fund WPA and the CCRRC sufficiently to bring them back to their pre-recession standards of service.

The State's Child Care Subsidy system is broken. Although the research shows that low-income and otherwise challenged young children most need and benefit from high quality child care, the State subsidy, now at about the 10th percentile of the child care market, can only pay for low quality, custodial care, which may increase the achievement gap and cost governments huge amounts in future expenses for special education, juvenile justice, welfare, health care, and criminal justice. We know that you can't fix that from here, but at least you can fix the County's much better structured WPA subsidy so that it pays for high quality care and meets the needs of all who qualify. You probably have received a report from a DHHS working group, recommending a variety of changes in the WPA subsidy so that it meets these needs. It will have a fiscal note, but you need to make that investment if you want to reduce the achievement gap for its recipients and pave the way for their future success as taxpayers, rather than drains on the County's resources.

Another concern of our members is that the CCRRC's State funding is not being increased at a time when the Center can't meet the demand among child care providers for the training they need to comply with regulatory requirements and improve the quality of their care under the new Maryland EXCELS system, which also will help to reduce the achievement gap. The Center's County funding was reduced a few years ago, and it hasn't been restored. Additional contract or permanent personnel are needed for the CCRRC to be able to provide the help the County's providers need to succeed. Please make that possible.

Finally, the administrative infrastructure that serves the early childhood system in both MCPS and the County Government is understaffed, and needs to be restored to its pre-recession levels in order to be able to do the increasing number of jobs that you and the Board of Education have given them to accomplish, in helping the growing and diverse population of young children in the County to thrive. Many of the new Federal, State, and foundation initiatives for young children involve competitive grants, and we simply can't compete for them adequately if the MCPS and County employees are stretched too thin doing their existing jobs. Supportive services provided by the county, such as mental health and family services for challenged young children, are also stretched too thin.

Montgomery County is a very different place than it was when I started to testify at these Budget hearings 23 years ago. We face increasing challenges in helping all of our children to live to their potential, and so far your hard-working County employees and teachers have been doing their very best to do that. The slowly increasing school readiness results, now at 81 percent of Kindergarten children "fully ready" for its challenges, are a vast improvement over previous years, but they still are below the State average of 83 percent. Please make it fiscally possible for that momentum to continue and improve

FY14 and FY15 Kennedy Cluster Staffing

FY14 - Current Staffing

Position	Title/Grade	FTE	Duties
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as the first line Care Coordinator for the Watkins Mill Kennedy Cluster Project • Maintain a full understanding of Montgomery County Agency's including government- local, state and federal and non-profits and the services they provide. • Assist clients in understanding eligibility standards for benefit programs. • Work with clients in completing and submitting multiple applications, including: TCA, TDAP, SNAP, Medical Assistance, Rental Assistance, Child Care Subsidies, Maryland Energy Assistance Program, Pharmacy Assistance, MCHP Program, Emergency Assistance for pending evictions and utility cut-offs, and others. • Explain and distribute to the customer, forms needed for the Intake Process; e.g. housing verification, school verification, asset listing, etc. • Interface with all County Offices to answer customer queries and facilitate prompt resolution of issues and concerns in the application process. • Support customers in applying for other State and Federal programs such as Social Security and Supplemental Security Insurance applications. • Support customers in communicating with area hospitals and other medical facilities when required to obtain needed information for customers regarding billing issues. • Makes referrals assisting when necessary to all other State, County and non-governmental services available such as Food Bank (e.g. Manna), Dental/Medical Clinics, credit counseling, legal aide, clothing sources. • Make appointments or hard referrals to designated HHS and community partners. • Maintains complete records for individual follow-up as well as identification of emerging trends and issues across the involved systems. • Plays key role Multi-Agency team meetings, offering options and supporting families. • Participate in MCPS team meetings and other activities focused on collaboration and family support.
HHS Care Coordinator (1)	PM II/25	1 FTE	
MCPS	Consultant	\$25,000	
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Special Needs Housing Representative
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Manager II- Fran Brenneman
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Income Support Representative
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Behavioral Health Representative
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Interpreter
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Office Service Coordinator
In-Kind Staffing	REC		Rec Specialist Representative
In-Kind Staffing	SAO		Attorney Representative
In-Kind Staffing	POL		Police Representative
In-Kind Staffing	MCPS		Paid Consultant- Don Kress



FY14 and FY15 Kennedy Cluster Staffing

County Executive's FY15 Recommendations

HHS- \$111,565

Position	Title/Grade	FTE	Duties
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Special Needs Housing Representative
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Manager II- Fran Brenneman
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Income Support Representative
In-Kind Staffing	HHS		Interpreter
Office Services Coordinator (1)	OSC/16	1 FTE	<p>Besides usual OSC duties, this position must spend much time with our clients, assist them in scheduling appointments with the Multi-Agency Team and with scheduling Holiday activities and other outreach activities. This position will also assist with scheduling trainings at the schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must speak Spanish • Must have good people skills • If possible, will be used as an interpreter at meetings
Care Coordinators (2)	PM II/25	2 FTE- 1 existing, 1 Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as the first line Care Coordinator for the Watkins Mill Kennedy Cluster Project • Maintain a full understanding of Montgomery County Agency's including government- local, state and federal and non-profits and the services they provide. • Assist clients in understanding eligibility standards for benefit programs. • Work with clients in completing and submitting multiple applications, including: TCA, TDAP, SNAP, Medical Assistance, Rental Assistance, Child Care Subsidies, Maryland Energy Assistance Program, Pharmacy Assistance, MCHP Program, Emergency Assistance for pending evictions and utility cut-offs, and others. • Explain and distribute to the customer, forms needed for the Intake Process; e.g. housing verification, school verification, asset listing, etc. • Interface with all County Offices to answer customer queries and facilitate prompt resolution of issues and concerns in the application process. • Support customers in applying for other State and Federal programs such as Social Security and Supplemental Security Insurance applications. • Support customers in communicating with area hospitals and other medical facilities when required to obtain needed information for customers regarding billing issues. • Makes referrals assisting when necessary to all other State, County and non-governmental services available such as Food Bank (e.g. Manna), Dental/Medical Clinics, credit counseling, legal aide, clothing sources. • Make appointments or hard referrals to designated HHS and community partners. • Maintains complete records for individual follow-up as well as identification of emerging trends and issues across the involved systems. • Plays key role Multi-Agency team meetings, offering options and supporting families. • Participate in MCPS team meetings and other activities focused on collaboration and family support.

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FY14 and FY15 Kennedy Cluster Staffing

Mental Health Coordinator (1)	PM I/ 23	.50 FTE	The majority of our referrals are for students and/or families with mental health issues. Many parents are uninsured; many do not speak English. Though the job description for this new position has not been written yet, it will include such things as: 1. Professional that has knowledge of all mental health resources in the County including resources that: • take insurance and those that do not • work in the home or other locations and those that not • speak languages other than English 2. Professional who is knowledgeable in child development and mental health issues. 3. Be able to assist families in obtaining authorizations thru value options. 4. Available to provide training on different mental health issues. 5. Maintain partnerships with mental health professionals in the community. 6. Maintain relationships with HHS mental health partners to facilitate easier entry when necessary.
CC Representative (1)	Rep	.13 FTE contractual	Will be able to bring cases to the collaboration council that require higher level assistance
Client Assistance	\$6,000		operating
Total Multi-Agency Investment		\$111,565	
MCPS - \$ 57,675			
Evaluation Specialist (1)	12 month	.50 FTE	Will identify and track outcomes for each cluster.
Client Assistance	\$12,000		
In-Kind Staffing			Paid Consultant- Don Kress
Total MCPS		\$57,675	
Recreation Department/State's Attorney's Office			
In Kind Staffing- Recreation Specialist (1)	Rec. Spec/21	.50 FTE	Two .25FTE geographically based staff- cost will be absorbed by the department. Will be aware of programs in the geographic areas of Kennedy and Watkins Mill. • Afterschool programs • Weekend programs • Summer and holiday camps
In-Kind Staffing-Attorney (1)	Attorney/27	.50 FTE	The attorney now attends meetings and is knowledgeable about truancy, immigration, domestic abuse, housing, and personal injury among other issues.
Total Absorbed by Rec. Dept./State's Attorney		\$55,358	
Early Childhood Services- \$104,156			
<u>Early Childhood</u>	<u>Amount</u>		
Pre-K Curriculum Project	\$43,146		
Race to the Top Breakthrough Center	\$32,210		
Learning Parties	\$6,750		
Expansion of Mental Health	\$15,750		
Expansion of Health Consultation	\$6,300		
Total ECS	\$104,156		

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FY14 and FY15 Kennedy Cluster Staffing

Linkages to Learning - \$122,377

Linkages to Learning		FY2015 -- January Start	
South Lake ES (pre-K-5)	\$ 122,377	3.0 FTE	
Family Case Manager			Conducts comprehensive family self-sufficiency needs assessments and devises family service plans. Works with families in school, at home and/or the community to attain goals via direct child/family support and education as well as referrals to financial/tangible aid and community-based services. Conducts (or co-conducts, with parent leaders) psycho-educational/skill development parent groups to provide resource information, assist families in achieving their goals, establish parent networks and help build collective parent assets in the school community. Consults and collaborates with school personnel to achieve common family and school goals.
Child and Family Therapist			Conducts diagnostic behavioral health evaluations for referred students, child/family/group psychotherapy, crisis intervention, psycho-educational and/or skill development groups, classroom observations and consultation with school staff, and presentations/workshops for parents or staff. Participates in school collaborative problem solving meetings. Coordinates access to psychiatric treatment and psychological testing.
Community School Coordinator			Conducts yearly school community needs assessments. In concert with school administration and key stakeholders in the school community, develops appropriate yearly program plans to utilize community assets and address identified needs. Fosters community development via parent/family engagement, parent networking and leadership opportunities, and recruits the necessary resources, services, agencies and volunteers to implement needed programs. Provides collaborative leadership for the development and implementation of a continuum of services for children and families within the school neighborhood (coordinating with other initiatives such as Excel Beyond the Bell, Kennedy Cluster Project, etc. to maximize opportunities and minimize overlap of services).
Total LTL	<u>\$122,377</u>		

FY14 and FY15 Kennedy Cluster Staffing

Middle Schools: REC - \$217,959; MCPS - \$30,296			
Mont Village MS			
	REC		
Excel Beyond the Bell	\$217,959		
Total REC	\$217,959		
MCPS			
MCPS Resource Coordinator (.4 FTE)	\$30,296	.4 FTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will coordinate after- school/summer school activities • Serve as Liaison between school administration and Excel Beyond the Bell leadership (Collaboration Council/Recreation Dept.) • Will help to serve as community liaison and attend community meetings
Total MCPS	\$30,296		
Police Department			
In-Kind- Explorer Program	\$24,390		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This position will coordinate and run the explorer program that provides activities that develop "leadership skills, self-confidence, commitment and discipline". • Members have the opportunity to participate in practical, real life and meaningful hand on experiences giving them insight in a law enforcement career. • For ages 14-20.
Total Absorbed by Police Department	\$24,390		
High Schools: REC \$112,298; MCPS- \$30,296			
Watkins Mill High School			
Sports Academy	\$112,298		
Total REC	\$112,298		
MCPS			
MCPS Resource Coordinator (.4 FTE)	\$30,296	.4 FTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will coordinate after- school/summer school activities • Serve as Liaison between school administration and Excel Beyond the Bell leadership (Collaboration Council/Recreation Dept.) • Will help to serve as community liaison and attend community meetings
Total MCPS	\$30,296		
TOTAL CE Recommended: \$668,355 (does not include MCPS budgeted amounts)			

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

VALENE ERVIN
COUNCIL MEMBER
DISTRICT 5

December 4, 2013

Isiah Leggett
County Executive
Montgomery County
101 Monroe St
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Executive Isiah Leggett:

As the original drafter of the Kennedy Cluster Project proposal, I am committed to our mission to identify and address the institutional barriers impacting African American students' academic achievement. Since the project's inception in 2007, we have known that food insecurity has a major affect on student performance and stands as one of the biggest challenges we face in closing the achievement gap. Despite Montgomery County's high ranking nationally in terms of household income, 35% of MCPS students receive free and reduced meals. To address this growing problem in Montgomery County and improve academic achievement, we must find opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles and provide nutritious food to low-income families.

During a site visit and meeting with leadership at the Capital Area Food Bank, I was introduced to the Family Markets program which currently operates in the District of Columbia. For a relatively low cost, the Capital Area Food Bank identifies schools with high FARMS rates and other indicators of poverty and sets up a market once a month at the school, where student's families have access to six thousand pounds of fresh and nutritious food at no cost. The distribution date is planned in accordance with other school activities. The schools currently participating in the program have seen dramatic increases in attendance at these functions. In addition to providing food at these events, government agencies and community based organizations can participate and provide additional information and services to children and families in attendance. This program is a perfect fit for the Kennedy Cluster Project because its' holistic model mirrors our efforts to bring communities together and address all of the issues that impact low-income families and the achievement gap.

I was pleased to arrange for the Capital Area Food Bank to present information about the Family Markets program at the last Kennedy Cluster Project leadership meeting. As you know, there was widespread interest to include several sites in the County Executive's FY15 Operating



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

VALERIE ERVIN
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 5

Budget request for the Kennedy Cluster Project. At \$32,000 per school, this relatively small investment would make an immediate impact on working families and student success. Please let me know who the point person will be on this initiative, so my staff can work with them to ensure that this budget item is appropriated in May. I trust that your office will continue to work with the Capital Area Food Bank to ensure that we take advantage of this incredible opportunity.

I strongly support this potential partnership and the promise that it brings for students and families in the Kennedy Cluster. Thank you for your consideration and continued dedication to Montgomery County residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Valerie Ervin".

Valerie Ervin
Councilmember – District 5

c:

Gabriel Alborno, Director, Department of Recreation
Uma Ahluwalia, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Christopher Barclay, President, Board of Education, MCPS
Fran Brenneman, Director, Child and Adolescent School and Community Based Services, HHS
Kate Garvey, Chief, Children Youth and Family Services, Department of Health and Human Services
Thomas Manger, Chief, Montgomery County Police Department
John McCarthy, State's Attorney, Montgomery County
Craig Rice, President, Montgomery County Council
Charles Short, Special Assistant to County Executive
Dr. Joshua Starr, Superintendent, MCPS

Sites	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
Gaithersburg	6	18	12	9	5	7	-	-	-	-	57
Burtonsville	4	10	9	12	6	10	-	-	-	-	51
TOTAL	10	28	21	21	11	17	-	-	-	-	114

FY14 Referral and Completion Data

Site	# students referred	# students admitted	# students completed	% students completed 75% > of assignments	% students attending from students referred
Gaithersburg	70	57	57	100%	81.42%
Burtonsville	*120	51	**47	100%	42.50%
TOTAL	190	108	104	100%	56.84%

*Burtonsville (B-Sharp) receives a list of all suspended students as referrals.

**3 students dismissed for behavioral issues and 1 for health reasons. All completed assignments while at program.

Presented data is a compilation from Sep-2013 through Feb-2014.

- Please explain what the \$100,000 increase for the George B. Thomas Learning Academy will be used for. For FY13 and FY14 to date, the fees charged for services, total revenues collected from fees, academic outcomes information, and service data.

The George B. Thomas Learning Academy, Inc	FY13	FY14-YTD
Number of students	3,350	3,340 (as of Apr-2014)
Attendance of >80%	486	680 (as of Dec-2013)
Attendance of <50%	1,070	452 (as of Dec-2013)
Honor Roll (3.0 – 3.49)	422	n/a (end of year data)
Honor Roll plus (3.5 – 4.0)	288	n/a (end of year data)
Total revenue collected from Fees *	116,311.96	105,802.78 (as of Apr-2014)
FARM Eligible	60%	60% (as of Apr-2014)

	FY13	FY14-YTD
Number of students	3,350	3,340 (as of Apr-2014)
Attendance of >80%	486	680 (as of Dec-2013)
Attendance of <50%	1,070	452 (as of Dec-2013)
Honor Roll (3.0 – 3.49)	422	n/a (end of year data)
Honor Roll plus (3.5 – 4.0)	288	n/a (end of year data)
Total revenue collected from Fees *	116,311.96	105,802.78 (as of Apr-2014)
FARM Eligible	60%	60% (as of Apr-2014)
*\$50 regular registration fee and \$30 discounted fee for FARM eligible children.		

- \$30,000 will enhance quality of tutoring services by adding 10 tutors to the current staff in order to maintain a lower teacher-student ratio.
- \$70,000 will secure the provision of the Saturday School program and services to low-income residents by funding a Director of Development position to continue implementing a comprehensive development plan with the goal to increase private sector funding and financial sustainability. This position was funded for two consecutive years through a CE Community Grant.
- Increasing outreach efforts to our diverse stakeholders in multiple languages.
- Implementing a revised algebra curriculum for grades 1 through 8 to maintain alignment with the Common Core state standards and curriculum 2.0
- Students self-reported increase in confidence on their ability to do well in school and reach academic goals; improvement in their math and reading skills and grades.

Service Area Administration

- What is the Children's Trust? What will \$100,000 be used for? Please identify the mission, goals, anticipated outcomes, community partners, and any anticipated contracts related to this effort.

The Children's Trust is a model that is developed based on similar trusts in other states including Florida and California. It is a bold vision to develop a strong menu of children's services that help close the achievement gap and address the social determinants that impact that gap in a multi-generational way. The Trust is funded with a renewable source of revenue and supports various services for specific age groups of children. The hope is that in FY 16 and beyond there will be a renewable fund source for the Trust. In Florida and California, the trust fund focused on the 0-5 age group; however, in Montgomery County we are choosing to design the Trust as applicable to the 0-18 age group. This could be a vehicle to fund early care and education, the services plus model in schools, after school time activities, the redesigned Wheaton High School model, more LTL or Kennedy Cluster type programming, Explorers etc.

The Trust has three components:

A governing board made up of the County Executive, The Council President or designee, The Superintendent and School Board President and a business member selected by the

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The racial/ethnic gap in academic achievement is a long-standing concern in education. Some of the root causes of the gap are better understood by examining the issues and challenges that confront African American and Hispanic students from low-income families, many of whom also live in households where English is a second language. In these situations, solutions to closing the achievement gap must include access to a broader range of services than are available through a school system. Out-of-school time (OST) programs have the potential to provide some of the services that students need to overcome barriers to achieving their academic potential. This evaluation describes the results of one OST program, The George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy Saturday School program.

The George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy, Inc. (GBTLA) was established in 1986 by members of the Mu Nu Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. The first learning academy, the Olney Saturday School, began in 1986 with 21 children and 19 volunteers at a day care center at the Housing Opportunities Commission in Olney, Maryland. The program has grown significantly since then. The current Saturday School program serves more than 3,000 students per year at 12 Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) high schools.

The GBTLA founders recognized that an increasing number of poor and minority children in the community needed additional academic support to be successful in school. They believed that self-confidence was key to academic success. Saturday School activities were structured to provide a nurturing environment that would enhance students' positive beliefs about themselves as well as build their knowledge and skills.

Over the past 28 years, GBTLA has provided services to tens of thousands of at-risk students. During that time, there has been abundant qualitative and anecdotal evidence that students benefit from program participation. This evaluation is the first to use a quasi-experimental design to describe quantitative academic outcomes for treatment and comparison groups.

The evaluation design ensured that any differences in performance at the end of the year could be attributed validly to program effects. To

accomplish that, the evaluation sampling procedure randomly selected matched pairs of students who were expected to have the same levels of performance at the end of the school year. The statistical controls and matching procedures accounted for differences in academic outcomes that might be explained by participants' grade levels, demographics, or prior achievement.

Between October 2012 and April 2013, Saturday School offered program participants more than 65 hours of focused academic instruction. Program participation of 35 hours or more was associated with positive academic outcomes among students in Grades 1 to 12. The effects are noteworthy for two reasons—the consistency in program effects across multiple measures and grade levels; and the relative magnitude compared with outcomes reported in the literature for other OST programs.

Among students in Grades 1 to 12, Saturday School participation was associated with higher levels of academic performance that were both statistically and practically significant. Participants in the treatment group had higher performance in these areas:

- Grades 1 and 2
 - School attendance
- Grade 3
 - Reading benchmark attainment
 - Mathematics benchmark attainment
- Grades 4 and 5
 - Semester 2 Reading GPA
 - Semester 2 Mathematics GPA
- Grades 6 and 7
 - Semester 2 English GPA
 - End-of-Year English Course Marks of B or Higher
 - Semester 2 Mathematics GPA
 - End-of-Year Mathematics Course Marks of B or Higher
- Grades 9 to 12
 - End-of-Year GPA

Program participation also was associated with small to moderate, mostly non-significant, practical differences in the academic attainment of elementary and middle school students who were performing below

grade level in fall 2012. Participants in the treatment group had higher performance in these areas:

- Grades 1 and 2
 - School Attendance (also statistically significant)
 - Reading Benchmark Attainment
- Grade 3
 - Reading Benchmark Attainment
 - Mathematics Benchmark Attainment
- Grade 4 and 5
 - Semester 2 Reading GPA
 - Semester 2 Mathematics GPA
 - End-of-Year Mathematics Course Marks of B or Higher
- Grades 6 to 8
 - Semester 2 English GPA
 - End-of-Year English Course Marks of B or Higher
 - Semester 2 Mathematics GPA
 - End-of-Year Mathematics Course Marks of B or Higher (also statistically significant)

There were small, non-significant, practical differences in the academic attainment of high school students who were performing above grade level in fall 2012. High school students in the treatment group were more likely to be academically eligible in spring 2013 and had higher end-of-year marking period averages.

Saturday School narrowed achievement gaps by helping students overcome barriers to achievement that are associated with race/ethnicity and poverty. The program provided rigorous instruction that was delivered by teachers who were familiar with students' academic and emotional needs. The combined program characteristics of academic rigor and a nurturing environment were associated with significant academic outcomes. Elementary, middle and high school students of all ability levels were able to use this resource to better achieve their academic potential.

The results of this program evaluation provide quantitative evidence of the importance of OST programs such as Saturday School for helping to narrow achievement gaps. In addition, the statistical analyses provide support for anecdotal evidence from students, teachers, and parents who served as key informants for this evaluation.

The evaluation design for this study included a program site visit to collect data from key informants about their reasons for participating in Saturday School and the impact that participation has had for them. Their remarks reinforced the GBTLA founders' beliefs that a program to build academic skills and personal self-confidence could help close achievement gaps.

"I came here because I wasn't that good in math. I wasn't always able to grasp the mathematical skills as quickly as some of my other classmates. . . . I also wanted to better my analytical skills and [reading comprehension] skills. And Saturday School has definitely helped me. . . . When I go back to school it feels kind of like I'm more advanced than the others now. My grades improved. I'm able to maintain a 3.5. I'm proud of myself. And I'm taking harder classes which means I push myself more."
—African American High School Student

"Students get to practice the skills that maybe they don't have the time to practice [at school] at their own pace. We are able to sort out or target and differentiate the needs they have as students."—Saturday School Teacher

"The sixth day of learning just gives students an extra boost. . . . A lot of times being in a classroom all week [the children] are not as relaxed as they are on Saturday and not as willing to take chances. I think Saturday School gives them the opportunity to take more chances and become risk takers in their education and it also builds their confidence. They do well in Saturday School and they bring that back to the classroom. And then they do a little better in the classroom."—Saturday School Teacher

"They teach . . . confidence here. When [teachers] call on them, they have to stand and give their answers. They are supposed to be really respectful too. My son really knows you have to take your hat off when you come in. They are ready to work. I see him being very confident as part of the program. For reading I was concerned . . . his marks were not as high as the math . . . and the writing was just atrocious. . . . When he came here, the [reading instruction] started with writing in a journal or on a topic. He'll write pages and then get up and read it in front of the whole class."—Parent of 2nd Grade Saturday School Student

The Saturday School instructional staff are employees of the GBTLA who remain with the same students throughout the academic year. The Saturday School instructors for Grades 1 to 8 are certified teachers who are familiar with MCPS curriculum and instructional practices. The Saturday School volunteer tutors include advanced high school students who earn SSL⁴ hours, undergraduate students from Bowie State University and University of Maryland, retired professors from Montgomery College, graduate students from Johns Hopkins University, and medical students from the U.S. Uniformed Health Services (USUHS).

The stable staffing arrangement allows staff to build relationships with students and monitor their progress during the school year. Saturday School teachers in Grades 1 to 8 receive feedback from the Center Director about the academic progress of program participants. High school participants and their tutors monitor performance on classroom assignments, homework, and tests via on-line access to the MCPS electronic gradebooks.

At the beginning of the school year, Saturday School staff attend a training session that provides an update on the Saturday School program; discussion about the Saturday School program format and instructional approaches, materials, management techniques, and assessment tools; and other logistical information. Throughout the year, staff receive on-site administrative and technical support.

METHODOLOGY

This evaluation describes the impact of the GBTLA Saturday School program on student achievement in Grades 1 to 12. Results for elementary and middle school students were further disaggregated to examine outcomes for students who were performing below grade level at the beginning of the school year. The evaluation questions were:

1. Is Saturday School participation associated with higher rates of reading benchmark attainment and school attendance in Grades 1 and 2?
2. Is Saturday School participation associated with higher reading, English, and mathematics course marks in Grades 3 to 8?

⁴ To meet Maryland high school graduation requirements, students must earn 75 Student Service Learning (SSL) hours by the end of Grade 12 (MCPS, 2012).

3. Is Saturday School participation associated with more positive attendance, reading, English, and mathematics outcomes for students in Grades 1 to 8 who are performing below grade level at the beginning of the school year?
4. Is Saturday School participation associated with better overall academic outcomes for high-achieving high school students?

PROGRAM POPULATION

The students included in this analysis were drawn from a population of 3,287 students who enrolled in Saturday School in 2012-2013 (Appendix A). Students who attended at more than 55 percent of the 24 Saturday School sessions were assigned to the treatment group (high level of participation). Students who enrolled in Saturday School but attended less than 55 percent of the sessions were assigned to the comparison group (low level of participation).

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Preliminary descriptive statistical analysis of academic outcomes for all program participants suggested that higher levels of Saturday School attendance were associated with better academic performance and better school attendance (Appendix A). Participants in the treatment group consistently outperformed participants in the comparison group. Further analysis was conducted on a sample of the program population in order to test the validity of inferences about program impact based on preliminary findings.

ANALYTIC PROCEDURES

One of the challenges for evaluating the impact of the Saturday School program was the non-random assignment of individuals to treatment and comparison groups. Saturday School participation is voluntary. In order to attribute outcomes to program participation, the analyses needed to control for confounding factors that might influence program attendance and offer alternative explanations of observed program effects.

RANDOMLY MATCHED PAIRS COMPARISONS

The best solution to non-random program assignment was a matched pairs analytic design in which a random sample of participants in the

treatment group was matched with a random sample of participants in the comparison group (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983; Rudner & Peyton, 2006). Matched pair designs ensure that the characteristics of participants and non-participants are comparable. This analysis used propensity score matching procedures to overcome the limitations of non-random assignment and get unbiased estimates of program effects.

Logistic regression procedures for each grade level were used to calculate a propensity score for each individual based on five covariate characteristics that could influence attendance—gender; race/ethnicity; participation in Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS) and/or limited English proficiency (LEP) services; and prior achievement. The propensity scores obtained by logistic regression were the conditional probabilities that students would be in the treatment group. The values of the propensity scores ranged from 0 to 1. Students with the same gender, race/ethnicity, FARMS status, LEP status, and prior achievement level had the same propensity score (probability of program attendance) regardless of whether they were assigned to the treatment or comparison groups.

Participants selected at random from the treatment group were matched with randomly selected participants in the comparison group who had the same propensity scores. Unmatched participants in the population of all Saturday School enrollees were excluded from the matched pairs analyses. The matching procedure produced pairs of participants with identical covariate characteristics (Appendix B). The pairs were compared to determine whether program participation was associated with the academic outcomes of interest.

OUTCOME MEASURES

Student outcome data obtained by the Executive Director from MCPS included attendance for the months of October 2012 to April 2013, assessment data, course marks, and academic eligibility. In Grades 1 and 2, outcomes were available for attainment of primary MCPS reading benchmarks and school attendance. In Grade 3, outcomes were available for MCPS reading and mathematics benchmarks. In Grades 4 to 8, second semester course marks were available in reading, English, and mathematics. In Grades 9 to 12, available data included academic eligibility, overall marking period averages (MPAs), and cumulative grade point averages (GPA). These data were used to conduct statistical analyses that could answer the evaluation questions posed in this study.

MATCHED PAIRS ANALYSIS

Descriptive analyses on the matched pairs sample was used to generate means and standard deviations for each grade-level outcome. Paired t-tests and logistic regression analyses were used to evaluate the statistical significance of continuous (*e.g.*, GPA) and dichotomous (*e.g.*, academic eligibility) outcome variables, respectively. The results of the analyses are presented in terms of effect sizes (ES) as well as statistical significance ($p < 0.05$).

The effect sizes are included even when the results are not statistically significant because the results of significance testing can underestimate program effects (Type II error), especially when sample sizes are small. Effect sizes provide policy-relevant information for practitioners and facilitate comparisons with outcomes of other evaluation studies. This analysis uses Cohen's *d* to compare effect sizes of matched pairs of participants. The calculations for *d* were adjusted for estimation bias that would occur if the effect size calculation did not take into account correlations between the matched pairs outcomes (Dunlap, et al., 1996). Effect size values of 0.10, 0.20, and 0.50 represent very small, small, and medium program effects, respectively (Cohen, 1988).

QUALITATIVE MEASURES

A Saturday School site visit in February 2014 collected program feedback from a non-random sample of key informants who participated in the program in 2012–2013. The key informants included program staff, students, and parents. Key informants were asked why they participated in the program and what benefits they had observed as a result of their participation. Quotations from key informants provide further context for interpreting the quantitative outcomes. The key informants are identified by Saturday School role (student, teacher, or parent), but not by name or program site. Selected comments are included in the Executive Summary to provide additional context for interpreting the quantitative results.

RESULTS

The results reported for the matched pairs of participants control for differences in program effects that could be attributed to variation in grade levels, demographics, or prior achievement. Each treatment

group participant was randomly paired with a comparison group participant at his or her grade level who had the same gender; race/ethnicity; FARMS and LEP service status; and prior academic performance. Descriptions of the characteristics of the matched pairs are provided in Appendix B. The program effects are reported for all matched pairs with available outcome data. In addition, outcomes are reported for matched pairs of participants in Grades 1 to 8 who were performing below grade level in the fall of 2012 (low achievers).

READING AND ENGAGEMENT IN GRADES 1 AND 2

The Saturday School reading instructional components for Grades 1 and 2 are structured lesson plans that reinforce attainment of foundational reading skills. Students learn to use patterns of letters in words and develop understanding of the relationships between letters and sound. The Saturday School teachers use the sixth day of instruction to provide extra support in areas where students need more practice. The differentiated lessons both reinforce and extend the lessons that are taught during the prior week at the students' elementary schools.

End-of-year reading benchmarks evaluate whether students mastered reading skills at the text levels that are set as goals (benchmarks) for their grade levels. Saturday School participation was associated with higher rates of primary reading benchmark attainment among low achievers (Table 1). The percentage of low achievers in the treatment group who met the end-of-year grade level reading benchmarks was 14.8 points higher than the percentage in the comparison group (ES = 0.32). There was a non-significant, but slightly higher, difference in benchmark attainment of all readers.

TABLE 1
2012–2013 PRIMARY READING BENCHMARK OUTCOMES FOR
SATURDAY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS IN GRADES 1 AND 2

End-of-Year Reading Benchmarks by Group	All Students Grades 1 and 2			Low Achievers Grades 1 and 2		
	N	% Met	ES	N	% Met	ES
Treatment	152	75.0	0.06	27	29.6	0.32
Comparison	152	72.4		27	14.8	

Saturday School instruction in the primary grades focuses explicitly on building student self-confidence. Teachers "make learning fun" and encourage first and second graders to take chances and become risk takers in a learning environment that is more relaxed than a regular classroom. The confidence students gain in Saturday School can contribute to students' more positive feelings of school engagement when they return to their regular classrooms.

School attendance provided an indirect measure of the impact of Saturday School on first and second graders' feelings of self-confidence and school engagement (Table 2). More frequent program participation between the months of October and April was associated with significantly higher school attendance during those same months. Overall, participants in the treatment group were absent 1.6 days less than comparison group participants (ES = 0.35). Low achievers in the treatment group were absent 3.5 days less than comparison group low achievers (ES = 0.51), a rate more than twice that of all students.

TABLE 2
2012–2013 ATTENDANCE OUTCOMES FOR SATURDAY SCHOOL
PARTICIPANTS IN GRADES 1 AND 2

Grades 1 and 2 Days Absent October to April by Group	All Students Grades 1 and 2			Low Achievers Grades 1 and 2		
	N	Met %	ES	N	Met %	ES
Treatment	152	4.4	0.35*	28	3.7	0.51*
Comparison	152	6.0		28	7.2	

* p < 0.05

ELEMENTARY READING AND ENGLISH IN GRADES 3 TO 8

By Grade 3, the instructional emphasis in reading shifts from learning to read to reading to learn. The Saturday School reading instructional components for Grades 3 to 8 are aligned with the instructional activities that are taught during the prior week at the students' elementary or middle school. The structured lessons emphasize reading fluency and comprehension, strategy use, writing, and critical thinking.

ELEMENTARY READING IN GRADE 3

MCPS Grade 3 reading benchmarks measure student attainment of reading skills in three areas—language/vocabulary, informational text,

and literature (MCPS, 2013). By the end of the school year, Grade 3 students who meet language/vocabulary benchmarks are able to engage in collaborative discussions; determine main ideas and details of a text; ask and answer questions about information from a speaker; determine meaning of unknown and multiple meaning words/phrases; understand word relationships and meanings; and use spatial and temporal words in conversation. Students who master the end-of-year Grade 3 informational text benchmark are able to comprehend and analyze literary non-fiction and use text features and illustrations to locate information. Students who master the end-of-year Grade 3 literature benchmark are able to read, analyze, and discuss literary elements of fiction.

Saturday School participation was associated with higher rates of Grade 3 reading benchmark attainment (Table 3). Three outcomes are particularly noteworthy—attainment of the language/vocabulary benchmark by all readers; and attainment of the language/vocabulary and literature benchmarks by low achievers.

TABLE 3
2012–2013 PRIMARY READING BENCHMARK OUTCOMES FOR
SATURDAY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS IN GRADE 3

Grade 3 Reading Benchmarks by Group	All Students Grade 3			Low Achievers Grade 3		
	N	% Met	ES	N	% Met	ES
Language/Vocabulary						
Treatment	125	60.8	0.24*	39	33.3	0.14
Comparison	125	48.8		39	25.6	
Informational Text						
Treatment	125	57.6	0.10	39	38.5	0.05
Comparison	125	52.8		39	35.9	
Literature						
Treatment	125	44.0	0.05	39	25.6	0.32
Comparison	125	41.6		39	12.8	

* p < 0.05

The treatment versus comparison group difference of 12 points in the percentage of readers who met the language/vocabulary benchmark was statistically significant (ES = 0.24). The percentages of low achievers in the treatment group who met the language/vocabulary and

literature benchmarks were 7.7 points higher (ES = .14) and 12.8 points higher (ES = .32), respectively, than the percentages in the comparison group.

ELEMENTARY READING IN GRADES 4 AND 5

Saturday School participation was associated with higher reading course marks in Grades 4 and 5 (Table 4). The difference in the semester two grade point averages (GPA) in reading for all students in the treatment group compared with the comparison group was statistically significant (ES = 0.23). There was a similar difference in the semester two GPA of low achievers (ES = 0.29). Overall, the percentage of treatment group participants who completed the year with a B or higher in reading was 6.1 points higher than the comparison group percentage (ES = 0.14).

TABLE 4
2012–2013 ELEMENTARY READING OUTCOMES FOR
SATURDAY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS IN GRADES 4 AND 5

Elementary Reading by Group	All Students Grades 4 and 5			Low Achievers Grades 4 and 5		
	N	Mean	ES	N	Mean	ES
Reading GPA Semester 2						
Treatment	130	3.1	0.23*	23	2.5	0.29
Comparison	130	2.9		23	2.2	
Percent Earned a B or Higher 4th Marking Period						
Treatment	130	79.2	0.14	23	52.2	0.17
Comparison	130	73.1		23	43.5	

* $p < 0.05$

The pattern of ES results for the two elementary reading outcomes suggests that Saturday School had a small to moderate practical impact on the achievement of low achievers. The semester two reading GPA for low achievers in the treatment group was higher than for their matched pairs in the comparison group (ES = 0.29). By the fourth marking period (MP), the percentage of the low achievers in the treatment group who earned a B or higher in reading was nearly 9 points higher than for their comparison group counterparts (ES = 0.17).

MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH IN GRADES 6 TO 8

Saturday School participation was associated with higher English course marks in Grades 6 to 8 (Table 5). The higher semester two English GPA

of students in the treatment group was statistically significant (ES = 0.37). In addition, there was a statistically significant difference of more than 18 points in the percentage of all students in the treatment group who earned a B or higher in the fourth marking period (ES = 0.37).

The semester two English GPA for low achievers in the treatment group was higher than for the comparison group (ES = 0.36). By the fourth marking period, the percentage of the low achievers who earned a B or higher in English was more than 9 points higher than for their comparison group counterparts (ES = 0.20).

TABLE 5
2012–2013 MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH OUTCOMES FOR SATURDAY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS IN GRADES 6 TO 8

Middle School English by Group	All Students Grades 6 to 8			Low Achievers Grades 6 to 8		
	N	Mean	ES	N	Mean	ES
English GPA Semester 2						
Treatment	159	2.7	0.37*	22	2.1	0.36
Comparison	159	2.3		22	1.9	
Percent Earned a B or Higher 4th Marking Period						
Treatment	159	64.2	0.37*	22	31.8	0.20
Comparison	159	45.9		22	22.7	

* $p < 0.05$

MATHEMATICS IN GRADES 3 TO 8

The Saturday School mathematics instructional lessons for Grades 3 to 8 are structured academic activities that support and reinforce grade-level mathematics concepts and skills. The content is aligned with the MCPS curriculum but the sequence of instruction is flexible so teachers can provide additional support where it is most needed. The pattern of mathematics attainment was consistently higher for elementary and middle school students who attended Saturday School more frequently.

ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS IN GRADE 3

MCPS Grade 3 mathematics benchmarks measure student attainment of foundational mathematics skills in two Numbers and Operations areas—Base Ten and Fractions (MCPS, 2013). Students who attain the Base Ten benchmark are able to multiply 1-digit numbers by multiples

of ten and understand place value strategies. Students who attain the Fractions benchmark are able to represent fractions on a number line, compare equivalent fractions, and represent whole numbers as fractions.

Saturday School participation was associated with higher rates of Numbers and Operations benchmark attainment in Grade 3 (Table 6). There was a statistically significant difference of nearly 15 points in the percentage of treatment group students who met the Base Ten benchmark compared with the comparison group (ES = 0.30).

TABLE 6
2012–2013 MATHEMATICS BENCHMARK OUTCOMES FOR
SATURDAY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS IN GRADE 3

Grade 3 Mathematics Benchmarks by Group	All Students Grade 3			Low Achievers Grade 3		
	N	% Met	ES	N	% Met	ES
Number and Operations: Base Ten						
Treatment	131	47.3	0.30*	55	21.8	0.19
Comparison	131	32.8		55	14.5	
Number and Operations: Fractions						
Treatment	131	42.0	0.14	55	16.4	0.05
Comparison	131	35.1		55	14.5	

* $p < 0.05$

The percentage of low achievers in the treatment group who met the Base Ten benchmark was more than 7 points higher than the comparison group percentage (ES = 0.19). The percentage of all treatment group participants who met the Fractions benchmark was nearly 7 points higher than the comparison group (ES = 0.14).

ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS IN GRADES 4 AND 5

Saturday School participation was associated with higher mathematics course marks in Grades 4 and 5 (Table 7). The difference in the semester two GPAs in mathematics for all students was statistically significant and had a small practical significance (ES = 0.29). The percentage of treatment group participants who completed the year with a B or higher in mathematics was nearly 9 points higher than the percentage for comparison group participants (ES = 0.18).

The semester two mathematics GPA for low achievers in the treatment group was higher than for their matched pairs in the comparison group (ES = 0.41). By the fourth marking period, the percentage of low achievers in the treatment group who earned a B or higher in mathematics was more than 9 points higher than for low achievers in the comparison group (ES = 0.19).

TABLE 7
2012–2013 ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS OUTCOMES FOR
SATURDAY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS IN GRADES 4 AND 5

Elementary Mathematics by Group	All Students Grades 4 and 5			Low Achievers Grades 4 and 5		
	N	Mean	ES	N	Mean	ES
Mathematics GPA Semester 2						
Treatment	117	3.0	0.29*	33	2.3	0.41
Comparison	117	2.8		33	2.0	
Percent Earned a B or Higher 4th Marking Period						
Treatment	117	71.8	0.18	33	42.4	0.19
Comparison	117	63.2		33	33.3	

* p < 0.05

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS IN GRADES 6 TO 8

Saturday School participation was associated with significantly higher middle school mathematics achievement (Table 8). The outcomes for low achievers, who are least likely to attain college and work readiness benchmarks by the end of high school, are particularly important.

TABLE 8
2012–2013 MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS OUTCOMES FOR
SATURDAY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS IN GRADES 6 TO 8

Middle School Mathematics by Group	All Students Grades 6 to 8			Low Achievers Grades 6 to 8		
	N	Mean	ES	N	Mean	ES
Mathematics GPA Semester 2						
Treatment	179	2.6	0.22*	82	2.2	0.25
Comparison	179	2.4		82	2.0	
Percent Earned a B or Higher 4th Marking Period						
Treatment	179	58.7	0.36*	82	39.0	0.32*
Comparison	179	40.8		82	24.4	

* p < 0.05

The higher semester two mathematics GPA of students in the treatment group was statistically significant (ES = 0.22). In addition, there was a statistically significant difference of nearly 18 points in the percentage of all students in the treatment versus comparison groups who earned a B or higher in the fourth marking period (ES = 0.36).

The semester two mathematics GPA for low achievers in the treatment group was higher than for their matched pairs in the comparison group (ES = 0.25). By the fourth marking period (MP), the percentage of the low achievers who earned a B or higher in mathematics was nearly 15 points higher than the comparison group percentage, a difference that was statistically significant (ES = 0.32).

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES IN GRADES 9 TO 12

The Saturday School high school program is different from the focused instructional program for elementary and middle school students. High school students work one-on-one with tutors and mentors to get help in whatever academic area needs the most support. Some high school students attend a few sessions to get help with specific course projects or to prepare for a standardized test. Others attend regularly to reinforce and clarify what they are learning in their English, mathematics, or advanced courses. The Saturday sessions provide opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of course content, improve their course marks, and strengthen their reading comprehension and analytic skills. Skills and strategies that students learn in one content area can be applied to improve their course marks in other content areas.

In 2012–2013, the majority of Grade 9 to 12 Saturday School participants were moderate to high-achieving minority students, many of whom were from poor families. About 85 percent were African American or Hispanic, and nearly 55 percent received FARMS services. Of the 84 pairs of students included in this analysis, nearly 90 percent were enrolled in one or more Honors-level courses, and nearly 95 percent were academically eligible to participate in extra-curricular activities in fall 2012 (Appendix B).

Overall, Saturday School participation was associated with higher end-of-year academic achievement for high-performing high school students

(Table 9). The percentage of treatment group participants who were academically eligible in the fourth marking period was nearly 10 points higher than the percentage for comparison group participants (ES = 0.28). The fourth quarter marking period average (MPA) of the treatment group was higher than for the comparison group (ES = 0.19). Overall, the difference in the end-of-year cumulative Grade Point Averages (GPAs) of treatment and comparison participants was statistically significant (ES = 0.27).

TABLE 9
2012–2013 HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOMES FOR SATURDAY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS IN GRADES 9 TO 12

High School Academic Outcome by Group	All Students ^a Grades 9 to 12		
	N	Mean	ES
Percent Academically Eligible 4th MP			
Treatment	83	91.6	0.28
Comparison	83	81.9	
MPA 4th Marking Period			
Treatment	83	2.8	0.19
Comparison	83	2.7	
Cumulative GPA			
Treatment	84	2.8	0.27*
Comparison	84	2.6	

* $p < 0.05$

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER OST PROGRAM EFFECTS

The effect sizes observed for Saturday School are noteworthy when compared with those reported for other OST programs. OST program evaluations that report results for treatment and comparison groups typically find outcomes with small practical significance even when outcomes are statistically significant (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Lauer, et al., 2004; Lauer, et al., 2006; Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007; Zief, Lauver, & Maynard, 2006). The statistically significant outcomes reported in this study included small to medium effect sizes ranging from 0.22 to 0.51. In addition, there were statistically non-significant effect size differences between 0.10 and 0.36 that had small practical significance.

Elementary and middle school treatment group participants consistently outperformed their comparison group counterparts on measures of reading and mathematics attainment and overall course performance. On a variety of elementary and middle school measures, the effect size differences were highest among pairs of students who were performing below grade level in reading or mathematics at the beginning of the school year. In high school, where most participants were already above-average achievers, the treatment group participants outperformed their comparison group counterparts on measures of academic eligibility and overall course performance.

DISCUSSION

Over the past 28 years, The George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy, Inc. has provided services to tens of thousands of at-risk students. During that time, there has been abundant qualitative and anecdotal evidence that students benefit from program participation. This evaluation is the first to use a quasi-experimental design to describe quantitative academic outcomes for treatment and comparison groups of Saturday School participants.

The evaluation design ensured that any differences in performance at the end of the year could be attributed validly to program effects. To accomplish that, the evaluation sampling procedure randomly selected matched pairs of students who were expected to have the same levels of performance at the end of the school year. The statistical controls and matching procedures accounted for differences in academic outcomes that might be explained by participants' grade levels, demographics, or prior achievement.

Between October 2012 and April 2013, Saturday School offered program participants 60 hours of focused academic instruction. Program participation of 35 hours or more was associated with positive academic outcomes among students in Grades 1 to 12. The effects are noteworthy for two reasons—the consistency in program effects across multiple measures and grade levels; and the relative magnitude compared with other OST programs.

One of the challenges associated with closing achievement gaps is that racial/ethnic differences in reading and mathematics achievement widen as students move from first to eighth grade. Participation in

Saturday School provided support that helped overcome that challenge. The impact of program participation was greatest in upper elementary and middle school, the grade levels at which African American and Hispanic student are most at-risk for slower rates of achievement growth compared with their White and Asian classmates. Higher levels of program participation among students in Grades 4 to 8 were associated with statistically significantly higher course marks in reading, English, and mathematics.

Saturday School participation had significant practical impact on the reading, English, and mathematics achievement of elementary and middle school students who were performing below grade level at the beginning of the school year (low achievers). These students are at greatest risk for dropping out of high school and failing to attain college and work readiness outcomes. The risks are even greater among students from families who live in poverty or who do not speak English at home. Analysis of outcomes for matched pairs of low achievers found that greater program participation was associated with higher rates of reading and mathematics benchmark attainment; and higher course marks in reading, English, and mathematics.

Nearly all of the high school participants in 2012–2013 were enrolled in honors-level or advanced courses and were academically eligible to participate in extracurricular activities. Students such as these often are overlooked by OST programs that serve low achievers primarily. Analysis of outcomes for matched pairs of high school students found that greater program participation was associated with higher end-of-year academic eligibility rates, marking period averages, and cumulative grade point averages.

Saturday School provides learning opportunities and resources that help overcome barriers to educational attainment associated with race and poverty. Saturday School participation in 2012–2013 was associated with better academic outcomes among low performing students and among students who were performing at or above grade level. The benefits students received from a sixth day of instruction on Saturday had a positive impact on academic performance every day. Results of this evaluation contribute compelling quantitative evidence that shows the importance of OST programs such as Saturday School for helping to narrow achievement gaps.

APPENDIX A: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FOR THE 2012–2013 SATURDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM POPULATION

TABLE A1
DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF MCPS STUDENTS WHO ENROLLED IN THE
2012–2013 GEORGE B. THOMAS SATURDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM
BY LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

Demographic Group ^a	Total N Students	N by Participation Level		% by Participation Level	
		High	Low	High	Low
Gender					
Female	1449	640	809	50.6	45.5
Male	1594	626	968	49.4	54.5
Race/Ethnicity					
African American	1338	534	804	42.3	45.6
Hispanic	1030	433	597	34.3	33.9
Asian	415	225	190	17.8	10.8
White	241	69	172	5.5	9.8
Service Group					
FARMS ^c	1837	798	1039	63.0	58.5
LEP ^d	583	261	322	20.6	18.1

^a Data were provided by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Data were not available for all Saturday School enrollees.

^b Students who attended more than 55 percent of the 24 Saturday School sessions were assigned to the treatment group (high level of participation). Students who enrolled in the Saturday School but attended less than 55 percent of the sessions were assigned to the comparison group (low level of participation).

^c Free and Reduced-price Meals System services.

^d Limited English proficiency services.

TABLE A2
 2012–2013 ACADEMIC OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 1 TO 5
 BY LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN THE GEORGE B. THOMAS SATURDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Academic Outcomes ^a	Participation Level ^b	Valid N	Mean	SD	Mean Dif. ^c	Positive Trend ^d
Reading Grades 1 and 2						
Percent Met or Exceeded Reading Benchmark	High	226	74.8	43.5	9.0	*
	Low	336	65.8	47.5		
Reading Grade 3						
Reading Vocabulary: % At or Above Grade Level	High	227	56.8	49.6	10.4	*
	Low	194	46.4	50.0		
Reading Informational Text: % At or Above Grade Level	High	227	51.1	50.1	-1.5	
	Low	194	52.6	50.1		
Reading Literature: % At or Above Grade Level	High	227	40.5	49.2	-2.8	
	Low	194	43.3	49.7		
Reading Grades 4 and 5						
Reading GPA Semester 2	High	263	3.0	0.8	0.1	*
	Low	263	2.9	0.8		
Percent Earned a B or Higher MP4	High	261	74.3	43.8	3.6	*
	Low	263	70.7	45.6		
Mathematics Grade 3						
Number and Operations in Base Ten: % At or Above Grade Level	High	227	43.2	49.6	10.7	*
	Low	191	32.5	46.9		
Number and Operations, Fractions: % At or Above Grade Level	High	227	41.4	49.4	6.7	*
	Low	196	34.7	47.7		
Mathematics Grades 4 and 5						
GPA Semester 2	High	263	3.0	0.8	0.2	*
	Low	264	2.8	0.9		
Percent Earned a B or Higher MP4	High	259	77.2	42.0	13.8	*
	Low	260	63.5	48.2		

^a Data were provided by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Results are reported by Marking Period (MP) when applicable.

^b Students who attended more than 55 percent of the 24 Saturday School sessions were assigned to the treatment group (high level of participation). Students who enrolled in the Saturday School but attended less than 55 percent of the sessions were assigned to the comparison group (low level of participation).

^c The mean difference is calculated from unrounded values and may differ by 0.1 from the rounded values shown in the table.

^d * Mean results were better for the treatment group (high level of participation).

TABLE A3
 2012–2013 ACADEMIC OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 6 TO 12
 BY LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN THE GEORGE B. THOMAS SATURDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Academic Outcomes ^a	Participation Level ^b	Valid N	Mean	SD	Mean Dif. ^c	Positive Trend ^d
English Grades 6 to 8						
English GPA Semester 2	High	289	2.7	0.8	0.4	*
	Low	353	2.3	1.0		
Percent Earned a B or Higher in English MP4	High	287	63.8	48.2	19.4	*
	Low	352	44.3	49.7		
Mathematics Grades 6 to 8						
Math GPA Semester 2	High	319	2.6	1.0	0.3	*
	Low	417	2.3	1.0		
Percent Earned a B or Higher in Math MP4	High	318	58.8	49.3	19.0	*
	Low	415	39.8	49.0		
Overall Academics Grades 9 to 12						
MPA Grades 9 to 12 (MP4)	High	125	2.8	0.8	0.5	*
	Low	430	2.3	0.9		
End-of-Year Grade Point Average (GPA)	High	125	2.7	0.6	0.5	*
	Low	450	2.3	0.8		
End-of-Year Academic Eligibility (MP4)	High	125	88.0	32.6	20.1	*
	Low	430	67.9	46.7		

^a Data were provided by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Results are reported by Marking Period (MP) when applicable.

^b Students who attended more than 55 percent of the 24 Saturday School sessions were assigned to the treatment group (high level of participation). Students who enrolled in the Saturday School but attended less than 55 percent of the sessions were assigned to the comparison group (low level of participation).

^c The mean difference is calculated from unrounded values and may differ by 0.1 from the rounded values shown in the table.

^d * Mean results were better for the treatment group (high level of participation).

APPENDIX B: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MATCHED PAIRS SAMPLE USED FOR THE 2012–2013 SATURDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM EVALUATION

TABLE B1
CHARACTERISTICS OF TREATMENT AND COMPARISON GROUPS IDENTIFIED
THROUGH PROPENSITY SCORE MATCHING, GRADES 1 AND 2

Group	Grades 1 and 2			
	N Students		Prior Reading Level ^a	
	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison
All	155	155	2.7	2.7
African American	63	63	2.9	2.9
Hispanic	67	67	2.4	2.4
Asian	18	18	3.2	3.2
White	7	7	2.9	2.9
Male	76	76	2.7	2.7
Female	79	79	2.7	2.7
FARMS ^b	119	119	2.6	2.6
LEP ^c	61	61	2.2	2.2

^a Reading level is a categorical assignment on a scale of 1 to 4 based on fall reading text level.

^b Free and reduced-price Meals System services.

^c Limited English proficiency services.

TABLE B2
CHARACTERISTICS OF RANDOMLY SELECTED TREATMENT AND COMPARISON GROUPS
IDENTIFIED THROUGH PROPENSITY SCORE MATCHING, GRADES 3 TO 5

Group	Reading Grades 3 to 5				Mathematics Grades 3 to 5			
	N Students		Prior Reading Level ^b		N Students		Prior Mathematics Level ^b	
	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison
All	331	331	3.4	3.4	319	319	1.8	1.8
African Am.	156	156	3.4	3.4	151	151	1.8	1.8
Hispanic	118	118	3.0	3.0	120	120	1.7	1.7
Asian	36	36	3.9	3.9	30	30	2.3	2.3
White	21	21	3.7	3.7	18	18	1.8	1.8
Male	153	153	3.2	3.2	154	154	1.8	1.8
Female	178	178	3.5	3.5	165	165	1.8	1.8
FARMS	236	236	3.2	3.2	225	225	1.7	1.7
LEP	36	36	1.9	1.9	34	34	1.2	1.2

^a Reading level is a categorical assignment on a scale of 1 to 5 based on fall MAP-R scores.

^b Prior mathematics level is a categorical assignment on a scale of 1 to 3 based on predicted MSA Math scores.

Note. Matching was conducted separately for reading and mathematics due to small sample size.

TABLE B3
CHARACTERISTICS OF RANDOMLY SELECTED TREATMENT AND COMPARISON GROUPS
IDENTIFIED THROUGH PROPENSITY SCORE MATCHING, GRADES 6 TO 8

Group	Reading Grades 6 to 8				Mathematics Grades 6 to 8			
	N Students		Prior Reading Level ^b		N Students		Prior Mathematics Level ^b	
	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison
All	182	182	3.6	3.6	179	179	1.7	1.7
African Am.	100	100	3.6	3.6	95	95	1.7	1.7
Hispanic	53	53	3.3	3.3	57	57	1.5	1.5
Asian	16	16	4.1	4.1	15	15	2.3	2.3
White	13	13	4.2	4.2	12	12	1.8	1.8
Male	90	90	3.5	3.5	89	89	1.7	1.7
Female	92	92	3.7	3.7	90	90	1.7	1.7
FARMS	101	101	3.4	3.4	95	95	1.6	1.6
LEP	16	16	1.9	1.9	17	17	1.1	1.1

^a Reading level is a categorical assignment on a scale of 1 to 5 based on fall MAP-R scores.

^b Prior mathematics level is a categorical assignment on a scale of 1 to 3 based on predicted MSA Math scores.

Note. Matching was conducted separately for reading and mathematics due to small sample size.

TABLE B4
CHARACTERISTICS OF RANDOMLY SELECTED TREATMENT AND COMPARISON GROUPS
IDENTIFIED THROUGH PROPENSITY SCORE MATCHING, GRADES 9 TO 12

Group	N Students		Honors Enrollment		Academic Eligibility	
	N Students		% Enrolled ^b		% Eligible ^b	
	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison
All	84	84	86.9	86.9	94.0	94.0
African American	40	40	90.0	90.0	95.0	95.0
Hispanic	31	31	80.6	80.6	90.3	90.3
Asian	10	10	90.0	90.0	100.0	100.0
White	3	3	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Male	43	43	81.4	81.4	93.0	93.0
Female	41	41	92.7	92.7	95.1	95.1
FARMS	46	46	78.3	78.3	93.5	93.5
LEP	5	5	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0

^a Honors enrollment is a dichotomous categorical assignment based on fall 2012 status.

^b Eligibility is a dichotomous categorical assignment based on fall 2012 course marks.

