

MEMORANDUM

February 7, 2019

TO: Education and Culture Committee

FROM: Craig Howard, ^{CH} Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: **Update – MCPS Choice Programs**

PURPOSE: Receive update from MCPS staff, no action required.

Expected Participants:

- Dr. Maria Navarro, Chief Academic Officer
- Scott Murphy, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Districtwide Programs
- Niki Hazel, Director of Elementary Curriculum and Districtwide Programs

The Committee will receive an update from Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) representatives on MCPS' Choice and Special Academic programs. This update is the third in a series provided to the Committee over the last two years:

- In November 2017 the Committee received an update on MCPS' efforts to address recommendations from the March 2016 *Study of Choice and Special Academic Programs* ("Choice Study").
- In July 2018, the Committee received an update on MCPS' dual language two-way immersion program. During the discussion on the dual language programs, the Committee requested a more wide-ranging briefing on the status of all Choice programs during 2019.

This update will focus on changes MCPS has made to the structure of and access to choice and special academic programs at the elementary and middle school level. The Board of Education plans to discuss potential changes to programs at the high school level later this spring.

Background

In January 2015, the Board of Education contracted with Metis Associates to conduct a review of choice and special academic programs within MCPS. The study was designed to focus on the following four objectives:

- Understanding the unique history and current state of each of MCPS' choice and other special academic programs;

- Identifying the original purposes of each of these programs and assessing whether they are fulfilling those purposes;
- Assessing whether all students have equitable access to these programs, especially in light of the continuing growth of MCPS student enrollment and the changing demographics of the region both countywide and at the neighborhood level; and
- Ensuring that these programs, both individually and collectively, are well-positioned to effectively advance the mission, core purpose, core values (including equity), and core competencies set forth in the MCPS Strategic Planning Framework.

The Choice Study was released in March 2016 and included eight key findings and associated recommendations summarized below:

MCPS Choice Study Findings and Recommendations

<p>Key Finding 1: MCPS provides a wide variety of choice and special academic programs that have been developed at key junctures in MCPS’s history and layered upon each other to create a complex system of programs that are not fully aligned with the district’s core values, including equity.</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: Revise Policy ACD, <i>Quality Integrated Education</i>, to clarify a defined mission for choice and special academic programs with input from community and staff stakeholders to clearly outline the goals and purposes for the programs, as well as their alignment with MCPS’ core values and stakeholders’ strong belief that MCPS should pursue equity on a broad level by raising expectations and opportunities for rigorous instruction across all schools.</p>
<p>Key Finding 2: Information and communications about MCPS’ wide variety of choice and special academic programs are not filtering to all segments of the community equally, which is impacting equity of access to the programs.</p>	<p>Recommendation 2: Develop and implement new strategies for communicating, outreach, recruitment, and sharing information with underrepresented or hard-to-reach families within MCPS. These strategies should include, but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined communications in easily-understood language; • Revision of existing communication tools for cultural validity; • Outreach to families at community events or locations; • More opportunities for one-on-one or in-person communications with and recruitment of families; and • Additional materials and events in languages other than English.
<p>Key Finding 3: There are significant racial and socioeconomic disparities in the enrollment and acceptance rates to academically selective programs, which suggest a need to revise the criteria and process used to select students for these programs to eliminate barriers to access for highly able students of all backgrounds.</p>	<p>Recommendation 3a: Implement modifications to the selection process used for academically competitive programs in MCPS, comprising elementary centers for highly gifted students and secondary magnet programs, to focus these programs on selecting equitably from among those applicants that demonstrate a capacity to thrive in the program, that include use of non-cognitive criteria, group-specific norms that benchmark student performance against school peers with comparable backgrounds, and/or a process that offers automatic admissions to the programs for students in the top 5-10% of sending elementary or middle schools in the district.</p> <p>Recommendation 3b: Invest resources to expand and enhance early talent development programs for students of underrepresented groups in order to bolster participation of a broader segment of the MCPS student population in academically selective programs.</p>

MCPS Choice Study Findings and Recommendations (continued)

<p>Key Finding 4: The district’s implementation of some provisions in the current Board Policy JEE, <i>Student Transfers</i>, does not fully align with MCPS’ goal to provide equitable access to choice and special academic programs.</p>	<p>Recommendation 4a: Consider revisions to Policy JEE to clarify that the sibling link for immersion and other choice programs is not automatic; while siblings of applicants should be able to attend the same school where the special academic program is located provided there are available seats, those siblings should be required to participate in the application process, such as the lottery for immersion programs to earn a seat in the program.</p> <p>Recommendation 4b: To the extent that the district considers revisions to Policy JEE to alter the automatic articulation from middle school to high school within the cluster feeder pattern or consider approvals for programmatic requests, MCPS should analyze the impact on both school capacity and its efforts to promote diversity and avoid racial isolation.</p>
<p>Key Finding 5: The placement of special academic programs within local schools has increased the diversity of those schools’ student populations; but, in the absence of targeted mechanism to integrate the program participants and non-participants, it has created conditions of within-school separation.</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: Facilitate a process to devise strategies for fuller integration of special programs into the schools that house the programs to ensure that program participants and local or home school students have meaningful social and academic interactions, such as expanded use of specials or electives, common lunch or recess periods, and extracurricular programs; and that recruitment efforts are tailored to encourage home school populations to apply for the programs.</p>
<p>Key Finding 6: The Middle School Magnet Consortia (MSMC) has been more successful than the high school consortia in promoting racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity due in large part to shifting demographics as well as three programmatic elements: The MSMC does not utilize base areas, admits out-of-boundary students, and has developed and implemented distinct, whole-school themes.</p>	<p>Recommendation 6a: Conduct a comprehensive review of the signature and academy themes offered in each DCC and NEC school to ensure they provide options that are consistent with the district’s SPI² and provide access to programs that would not otherwise be available in home schools, such as career education pathways.</p> <p>Recommendation 6b: Assess the feasibility and impact of revising the high school consortia model to reconsider the use of base areas and to allocate a number of seats for out-of-consortium students to enroll in signature programs and themes.</p>
<p>Key Finding 7: The overall demand for choice and special academic programs in MCPS exceeds the supply of seats in the programs.</p>	<p>Recommendation 7: To the extent that MCPS invests in expanding seat capacity in choice and special programs to catch up with growth in district enrollment and demand, it should consider that these efforts are aligned with the district’s core values, including equity, and consider a wider variety of models, such as dual language and whole school, theme-based magnet programs that use lottery admissions processes that rely primarily on student interest.</p>
<p>Key Finding 8: MCPS does not systematically track participation in or attrition from its choice and special academic programs.</p>	<p>Recommendation 8: Consistently utilize variables within the district’s student data system to identify students who enroll in choice and special academic programs to assess participation, attrition, and academic and other outcomes of students in the programs to monitor implementation and impact of the programs.</p>

MCPS Implementation and Action Plan

On September 26, 2016, MCPS staff presented the Board of Education with a blueprint for addressing the various programs, policies, and structures identified. Since then, the Board has received multiple updates and has acted on different components of the blueprint. The Board’s most recent update on the overall response occurred on April 24, 2018, and the Board background materials for each of the updates are attached beginning at ©1. Some highlights of the changes made by MCPS to date include:

- Revisions to Board Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, that: required information about special academic programs to be distributed broadly across the school system to promote equitable access; and eliminated the automatic “sibling link” for language immersion programs by requiring that siblings participate in a lottery for admission beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.
- Adopted universal screening in each elementary school to identify students who might benefit from enriched and accelerated instruction at their local school.
- Implemented an elementary school selection process field test related to Center Programs for Enriched Studies that identifies students for program consideration by examining academic performance data for all students in a school instead of relying on a parent/guardian applying. MCPS notes that the new process resulted in a significantly larger pool of candidates and a more diverse pool of candidates compared to prior years.
- Expanded dual language two-way immersion programs at elementary schools (discussed by the Committee in July 2018).
- Initiated a middle school selection process field test for the Takoma Park Middle School Mathematics, Science, and Computer Science Magnet and the Eastern Middle School Humanities and Communications Magnet to increase the number of students who have access to enriched and accelerated instruction. Preliminary results show increases in the selection of Hispanic/Latino students and students receiving FARMS, increases in the number of elementary schools that have students selected, and improvement in the gender balance for these magnet programs.

The following background memorandums to the Board of Education providing updates on the Choice Study blueprint or specific actions items are attached:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Attached at:</u>
4-24-18	Choice Study: Expanding Opportunity, Unleashing Potential, Middle School Field Test	©1-3
9-12-17	Choice Study Update: Recruitment and Selection Field Test, Middle School	©4-7
5-9-17	Choice Study Update: A Year in Review and a Preview of Fiscal Year 2018	©8-15
3-14-17	Final Action, Policy JEE, Student Transfers	©16-21
1-10-17	Update on Dual Language Programs and World Languages in Elementary Schools	©22-26
10-10-16	Choice Study Update: Talent Development and the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted	©27-33
9-26-16	Choice Study Update	©34-39

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

April 24, 2018

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Choice Study: Expanding Opportunity, Unleashing Potential, Middle School Field Test

Based on the findings and recommendations of the Metis Report, Montgomery County Public Schools has engaged in systemically reforming how students may access enriched and accelerated instruction. This effort significantly has increased the number of students accessing enriched, accelerated instruction at the elementary level.

This year, the effort has included work at the middle school level, as to with how to identify and nurture highly able learners. The selection process field test for the Takoma Park Middle School Mathematics, Science, and Computer Science Magnet and the Eastern Middle School Humanities and Communication Magnet is the first component of this effort at the middle school level. The field test included an examination of the educational records of every Grade 5 student in the catchment area for the two magnet programs. This represented 80 elementary schools and approximately 8,164 students. This global review of our Grade 5 students offers valuable information for programming at the middle school level well beyond magnet program placement. There were 4,057 students assessed using the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)* from the 80 schools. This is in stark contrast with prior practice when approximately 700 to 800 students applied to the 2 programs. In addition, an important consideration when selecting students to participate in the magnet programs was whether or not a student had an academic peer group at his or her home middle school.

Preliminary results reflect increases in selected Hispanic/Latino students, and students receiving Free and Reduced-price Meals System services. There appears to also be a slight increase for Black or African American students. Additionally, the vast majority of the 80 elementary schools in the field test have students selected for the magnet programs. This is significantly different from past years where students from a few elementary schools dominated the admission process. Overall, the gender balance in both programs improved, and the 4,057 assessed students are reflective of the student population of the catchment area. The process revealed a large number of highly able cohorts at a number of local middle schools. Given the universal nature of the process and the appreciable increase in student participation, staff anticipated that there would be a greater number of appeals as well as varied acceptance rates.

* Parents/guardians of Grade 5 students received a detailed summary report for their child prepared by the publisher.

As with the elementary school expansion, the intent of the new middle school process is to build the infrastructure to meet the needs of highly able students in multiple locations and mitigate the perception that middle school students only receive enriched and accelerated instruction through a magnet program. Given there are a number of highly able cohorts remaining in their local middle schools, staff at all schools in the catchment area will receive support and training on enriched and accelerated programming. It is important to note that the existence of these cohorts at local middle schools are not new this year; what is new is the explicit support provided for programming for highly able students.

Enriched and Accelerated Middle School Courses

Building upon the magnet curriculum, staff in the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs is developing two enriched and accelerated courses for highly able cohorts at local middle schools in the catchment area for implementation in the 2018–2019 school year. Course descriptions follow.

Applied Investigations into Mathematics (IM) 6

This Grade 6 course is designed to extend students' understanding of mathematical concepts aligned with Common Core State Standards, accelerating the pace of instruction while diving deeper into concepts. This course offers access to academic competitions and the opportunity to conduct applied fieldwork. Students work with an academic cohort to conduct independent inquiries using mathematics, computer science, and the scientific process to solve real-world problems. Upon successful completion, students will matriculate to an accelerated and enriched Algebra 1 course in Grade 7 and Geometry in Grade 8.

Historical Inquiry into Global Humanities 6

This course is built around the core Grade 6 social studies curriculum; however, it is enriched with additional content, exploration of deeper connections to today, investigative inquiry to strengthen writing through Document Based Questions, and connections through literature.

Middle school principals were notified of the student cohort assigned to the course or courses in early April. For scheduling purposes, students identified in the highly able cohorts will be grouped together in sections of the course or courses. As seats are available, local school principals will identify additional students who demonstrate need for accelerated and enriched instruction for placement in the course or courses.

All middle schools that feed into the two magnets will implement one or both courses in the coming school year, depending on the size of the cohort in mathematics and humanities, respectively, with the exception of Argyle, A. Mario Loiederman, and Parkland middle schools, the three Middle School Magnet Consortium (MSMC) schools. This is because MSMC schools are whole-school magnets with enrichment and acceleration opportunities embedded in the programs. Schools also will receive professional development, consultation on master scheduling, and focused support during implementation.

The catchment area schools are: Benjamin Banneker, Briggs Chaney, Cabin John, William H. Farquhar, Robert Frost, Herbert Hoover, Francis Scott Key, Col. E. Brooke Lee, Newport Mill, North Bethesda, Rosa M. Parks, Thomas W. Pyle, Silver Creek, Silver Spring International, Sligo, Tilden, Julius West, Westland, White Oak, and Earle B. Wood middle schools. Additionally, both Eastern and Takoma Park Middle schools will offer one course. It is anticipated that based on lessons learned from the field test, the process will be refined next year and expanded countywide.

The Metis Report has been a catalyst for work reimagining a systemic approach to ensuring equitable access to enriched and accelerated instruction. The work has focused not only on special programs; it also identified how local schools meet the needs of all students, including highly able learners. The data gathered from the work also reinforces the belief that there are highly able students in every school, from every neighborhood and background.

JRS:MVN:lsf

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

September 12, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Choice Study Update: Recruitment and Selection Field Test, Middle School

Purpose

Today, we will provide an update on the work Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has been engaged in to address the study of Choice and Special Academic Programs, specifically an overview of the field testing for recruitment and selection for the selective middle school magnets. The selective middle school magnets available include the Humanities and Communication Program at Roberto W. Clemente and Eastern middle schools, and the Mathematics, Science, Computer Science Program at Roberto W. Clemente and Takoma Park middle schools.

Background

On March 8, 2016, Metis Associates presented its report to the Board of Education and provided detailed information about the methodology and engagement efforts. Staff was charged with addressing Metis' key recommendations and immediately began engaging the community in conversations about the findings, recommendations, and a collective vision of choice within MCPS predicated on equity of access and excellence in teaching and learning.

At the September 26, 2016, Board meeting, staff presented a blueprint for responding to the Choice Study including a timeline for addressing the myriad of programs, policies, and structures identified by Metis' findings. The Board discussed the blueprint and prioritized in depth discussion during the 2016–2017 school year. The blueprint identified talent development and the Centers for Enriched Studies (formerly Center Programs for the Highly Gifted), elementary world language programs, and Career and Technology Education as the topics for discussion during the 2016–2017 school year. On October 10, 2016; January 10, 2017; and May 9, 2017, detailed discussions on these topics were held with the Board. At the May 9, 2017, meeting, Choice Study Update: A Year in Review and a Preview of Fiscal Year 2018, the middle school field test

was previewed. The purpose of the field tests are to design a process to address students from all backgrounds whose need for enriched and accelerated instruction cannot easily be met in their local school.

Executive Summary

The school system is charged with answering the essential questions “are our students learning, are they learning enough, and, if not, what are we doing about it,” as they relate to our highly able learners from all backgrounds. The work emanating from the Choice Study on programs designed for highly able learners provides the opportunity to develop systemic ways to answer those questions about students who have evidenced potential for thriving in enriched and accelerated environments. Rather than viewing Grades 3 and 5 as a time for families to apply to a stressful process and to reward a few with access to enriched and accelerated curriculum, the redesign views Grades 3 and 5 as appropriate times to determine the enrichment and acceleration needs of all students, thus, using that information to inform instruction as opposed to rationing access to opportunity. The redesign is intended to expand access and opportunity so that student needs are met.

Creating expanded learning opportunities and access to enriched and accelerated curriculum, including access to the middle school magnet programs, is an important component of the district’s strategy to improve learning outcomes for all students. The focus of the middle school magnet programs builds on the talent development work at the elementary school level and the expansion of access to enriched and accelerated instruction at the upper elementary school grade levels. The Metis study recommended that the district implement modifications to the selection process for academically selective programs to focus on selecting equitably from applicants who demonstrate capacity to thrive, and ensure that any expansion is aligned with the district’s core values, including equity. From these recommendations, research, stakeholder outreach, external expert consultation, and lessons learned from the elementary school Centers for Enriched Studies field test, staff has designed a field test for the recruitment and selection process for the Middle School Magnets.

Middle School Field Test

Eastern and Takoma Park middle schools, two of the oldest selective magnet programs in the county, will serve as the field test sites. All Grade 5 students in the 80 elementary schools that constitute the catchment area for Eastern and Takoma Park middle schools will be reviewed, and based on that review, students will be identified for assessment and consideration for placement in the magnet programs at Eastern and/or Takoma Park middle schools. Families also are able to request assessment and consideration. Similar to the elementary school field test, there will be a centralized selection committee that considers a multitude of data points. Feedback from the Choice Study report suggested that the applicant pools for the application programs did not reflect the demographics of the system and were impacted by communication procedures.

A centralized selection approach relieves parents/guardians of the obligation to identify highly able potential and advocate for their student. Rather, the model builds on the tremendous amount of information that the school system has on both the student's academic accomplishments and potential. Based on these concepts, a field test will be conducted to build a more inclusive pool of students for consideration for placement in a selective middle school magnet program.

The process is centralized and designed to identify potential Grade 5 students to be considered for the middle school magnet program using current Grade 5 performance at the conclusion of quarter one. MCPS will communicate in September with all parents/guardians of Grade 5 students involved in the field test of this year's process and invite them to an information meeting at each of the middle schools in October. The MCPS website also will provide more information to parents/guardians, and bilingual staff will be available to support parents/guardians with questions. In November, MCPS will complete a central review of all Grade 5 field test students and notify parents/guardians of the outcome. Notification for assessment does not constitute entry into the selective middle school magnet program. Schools and parents/guardians will be notified by a letter mailed home in December and families will have the option to continue in the process, decline consideration for the process, or request to be considered for the process.

The data considered include: Grade 5 Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, Measures of Academic Progress, instructional reading level, and student services. Using the student's services data contextualizes a student's learning and the access and acquisition of instruction. A composite of the student's performance data will be prepared and students who have met an identified benchmark will be included in the pool for consideration for placement in the middle school magnet program. All of these students will be reviewed for consideration, therefore freeing parents/guardians from what was often, for some, a cumbersome application process. Identified students will be afforded the opportunity to take a series of assessments and complete a student questionnaire in January 2018. This information, along with a student's school assessment and report cards, will be used in the selection process.

Building on the learnings gained during the elementary school field test, MCPS will test the redesigned recruitment and selection process at the middle school, focusing on a universal screening and a centralized selection process that emphasizes creating academic cohorts for highly able students. The operational aims are to:

- Provide more equitable access to specialized programs;
- Strengthen local middle school programming;
- Increase opportunities for students from all backgrounds and schools;
- Clearly define the purpose of specialized programs;
- Mitigate school-within-school model; and
- Create a paradigm of abundance.

As a part of the field test, both Eastern and Takoma Park middle schools will explore ways to expand access to thematic magnet courses. This would allow local school students, as well as students in the core magnet program, to have the opportunity to access thematic magnet courses, thereby strengthening the school identity and increase student sense of belonging. Additionally, local students with demonstrated strengths in specific areas will be provided access to core magnet courses. This process also will provide, as it did in the elementary field test, a deeper understanding of the enrichment and acceleration needs of students entering middle school.

Conclusion

Using the lessons learned during the elementary school field test for the Centers for Enriched Studies, the middle school magnet field test will increase access and opportunity for students, alleviate the burden on parents/guardians to identify and advocate for their student, and provide the school system with a snapshot of student need for enriched and accelerated instruction. The middle school magnet field test will provide critical information on how MCPS may best meet the needs of highly able learners at the middle school level.

JRS:MVN:lsf

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

May 9, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Choice Study Update: A Year in Review and a Preview of Fiscal Year 2018

Purpose

To provide an update on the work Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has been engaged in to address the Study of Choice and Special Academic Programs and an overview of the planned blueprint for implementing improvements during the 2017–2018 school year.

Background

On March 8, 2016, Metis presented its report to the Board and provided detailed information about the methodology and engagement efforts. Staff was charged with addressing Metis' key recommendation and immediately began engaging the community in conversation about the findings, the recommendations, and a collective vision of choice within MCPS predicated on equity of access and excellence in teaching and learning.

At the September 26, 2016, Board meeting, staff presented a blueprint for responding to the Choice Study including a timeline for addressing the myriad programs, policies, and structures identified by Metis' findings (Attachment). The Board discussed the blueprint and prioritized in depth discussion during the 2016–2017 school year. The blueprint identified talent development and the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted, elementary world language programs, and Career and Technology Education (CTE) as the topics for discussion during the 2016–2017 school year. On October 10, 2016, and January 10, 2017, detailed discussions on these topics were held with the Board.

Executive Summary

Throughout this school year, staff has engaged in conversation with the community through community meetings at College Gardens, Maryvale, Oakland Terrace, and Rolling Terrace elementary schools as well as ongoing meetings with representatives from the Latino Student Achievement Action Group, the African American Student Achievement Action Group, the Asian Pacific Student Achievement Action Committee, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Parents Council, and the 1977-II Action Group. In addition to these forums, a Two-Way Immersion Implementation Team, designed to support the implementation of the two-way immersion program at both Brown Station and Washington Grove elementary schools, is a multistakeholder team that

includes, among others, representatives from each of the employee associations. As the Board determined the policy direction for Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, much of the community conversation focused on those decisions, however, there was ongoing discussion about creating greater access to programs for students from all backgrounds and all regions of the county. Community members also expressed interest in developing opportunities for students at the secondary school level that leverage the changes proposed for the elementary school level.

As previewed at the September 26, 2016, Board meeting, a field test was conducted using a more proactive recruitment and selection process for the elementary school Center Programs for the Highly Gifted, planning and professional development are under way for Two-Way Immersion implementation, and ongoing work on extending CTE opportunities for all students continue.

Guiding Principles

Unsurprisingly, as a school system as large and diverse as MCPS undertakes system improvement efforts, there is a vast array of opinions, interests, and positions at play. The response to the Metis report has attempted to take the views of the various constituencies into account and develop action plans that improve MCPS' ability to effectively and efficiently provide a panoply of rich educational opportunities to the greatest number of students. Using information gleaned from the numerous community conversations, the action plans were developed by building on the common themes that emerged across stakeholder groups. There was an almost universal expression of support for the concept that local schools, in every neighborhood, should be excellent and be able to meet the needs of a broad continuum of students, thereby increasing the possibility that most students could be served well in their home school. Although there is support for choice programs, there is a deeply held belief that every local school should represent a viable option.

The historical structure of choice programs in MCPS was predicated on a concept of scarcity, with limited numbers of seats that did not increase as system enrollment grew. As mentioned in the Metis report, seats in many of the most popular programs were limited and the demand far outpaces the supply, thereby creating a hypercompetitive race for those scarce seats. This hypercompetitive environment places undue pressure on students and stress on families. Therefore, in crafting the response to the Metis report and developing action plans, a conceptual framework that eschewed a scarcity model and prioritized the maximization of opportunity was utilized. This approach minimizes competition and places the emphasis on how to meet the needs of students.

Finally, the concept of ensuring equitable access guided the development of the action plans. Developing action plans that both create greater equitable access and provide a variety of possible paths to innovative programming is a priority. This requires carefully examining our selection processes and developing programming options for students with a variety of interests and strengths.

Talent Development

Essential to increasing opportunities for students throughout their MCPS career are intentional efforts to support the fostering of the talents of our youngest students. Efforts have continued to build opportunity for students in areas where they might not have access to enrichment beyond the school day. The talent development work in Title I schools is particularly important to increasing access

to selective programs for our students impacted by poverty. This year, Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) Summer Title I Enrichment Program will be held in 22 Title I Schools. The five-week program, designed to nurture critical and creative thinking skills through engaging, hands-on, rigorous instruction using the infrastructure of the ELO Summer Adventures in Learning program, will take place July 10 through August 11, 2017. Students will receive breakfast, lunch, and transportation to and from school at no cost. This summer will represent a significant increase in the number of students accessing this program.

	Summer 2015	Summer 2016	Summer 2017
Grade 3	393	636	389*
Grade 4	N/A	477	693
Grade 5	N/A	N/A	700
TOTAL	393	1,113	1,782

**Number does not include final number of school advocacies as of April 24, 2017.*

In conjunction with summer efforts, MCPS has invested in building the capacity of our Title I schools to identify and nurture the talents of our youngest learners. To this end, The Division of Title I and Early Childhood Programs and Services (DTECPS) provided support for a Primary Talent Development Coach to every Title I school in order to implement the following:

- Implement the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) developed inquiry-based primary talent development modules to all kindergarten students enrolled in a Title I school.
- Coach kindergarten teachers on accessing enrichment opportunities presently in Curriculum 2.0 during individual and collaborative planning.
- Provide professional development and instructional resources related to the MSDE primary talent development modules, and align to the scope and sequence of Curriculum 2.0.
- Monitor student performance data gathered from the primary talent development program using a Readiness, Emergent, Progressing, and Independent Behavioral Continuum scale.

The Primary Talent Development coaches attend six professional development sessions throughout the school year coordinated by the Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction, Elementary Integrated Curriculum team, DTECPS, and the Equity Initiatives Unit.

Center Programs for the Highly Gifted

Metis found that “[t]here are significant racial and socioeconomic disparities in the enrollment and acceptance rates to academically selective programs, which suggest a need to revise the criteria and process used to select students for these programs to eliminate barriers to access for highly able students of all backgrounds.” This finding leads to the following two recommendations:

- “Recommendation 3a: Implement modifications to the selection process used for academically competitive programs in MCPS, comprising elementary centers for highly gifted students and secondary magnet programs, to focus these programs on selecting equitably from among those applicants that demonstrate a capacity to thrive in the program, that include use of non-cognitive criteria, group-specific norms that benchmark student performance against school peers with comparable backgrounds, and/or a process that offers automatic

admissions to the programs for students in the top 5-10% of sending elementary or middle schools in the district.”

- “Recommendation 3b: Invest resources to expand and enhance early talent development programs for students of underrepresented groups in order to bolster participation of a broader segment of the MCPS student population in academically selective programs.”

These recommendations were the subject of passionate public comment and there is a significant level of interest in the system’s response to these recommendations. At the October 10, 2016, Board meeting plans to address the Metis report were shared. The major components of the plan were strengthening local school programming, creating a more inclusive and equitable process, and expanding opportunity.

Supporting Local School Programming

In fall, the universal screening report was implemented. The screening report is designed to support elementary schools in their identification and monitoring of students in Grades 3 and 5 for enriched and accelerated instruction in the local school program. Each elementary school was provided with a report that identifies students who have demonstrated the potential to benefit from enriched and accelerated instruction.

This centralized process, coupled with the Student Instructional Program Planning and Implementation process, ensures that schools have more complete information to better determine who should be accessing local enriched programming.

This year, all elementary school principals received this information in mid-October, and in future years, they will receive it at the beginning of each academic year, and will include Grades 3–5. Schools are able to review the centrally generated information in conjunction with the local school data monitoring tools information when planning for enriched instruction.

Field Testing

In an effort to address the concerns raised in the Metis report and evaluate equitable recruitment and selection models, MCPS conducted a field test in the 39 schools that are a part of the catchment areas for the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted at Dr. Charles R. Drew and Fox Chapel elementary schools. The field test used a central review process to surface students building off community commentary about the difficulty some parents/guardians have experienced navigating the application process and the findings of other districts that focus on creating an “applicant pool” model using student data rather than direct parent/guardian interest. The data considered for surfacing included: Grade 3 Measures of Academic Progress-Reading, Measures of Academic Progress-Mathematics, reading level, and student services. Using the student’s services data contextualizes a student’s learning and the access and acquisition of instruction. A composite of the student’s performance data was prepared and students who had met an identified benchmark were included in the pool for consideration for placement in the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted. All of these students were reviewed for consideration, therefore relieving parents/guardians of the burden of submitting an application. Schools and parents/guardians were notified by a letter mailed to the home and families

will have the option to continue in the process, decline consideration for the process, or request to be considered for the process. Approximately 3,894 student records were reviewed, 1,524 students were identified to take the external assessment. An additional 200 families requested that their student be assessed and considered. Only 28 families opted out of the assessment.

This model removes the onus from parents/guardians to identify highly able potential and advocate for their student. The process is centralized and designed to identify potential Grade 3 students to be considered for the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted using current Grade 3 performance at the conclusion of semester one. It is not entry into the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted, rather it is entry into the pool for consideration. Students identified and whose parents/guardians did not opt out took an online assessment and completed an open-ended, non-scored student questionnaire in February 2017. This information, along with a students' school assessment and report cards, was used in the selection process.

Additionally, grounded in the primary purpose of the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted, instructional need was considered. The Center Programs are designed for students whose needs could not easily be met in their home school because they lack a peer group. Therefore, whether or not students were outliers in their home school was a consideration. Schools with significant numbers of highly able students will receive support from staff in the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs on programing for students who need enriched or accelerated instruction. All 39 schools in the field test will receive information about the programmatic needs of their students with additional support being given to schools that evidenced significant numbers of students who could benefit from enriched and accelerated instruction. This effort will strengthen and expand local schools' capacity to meet the needs of the full continuum of learners in their buildings.

Lessons from the Field Test

- Proactively recruiting students yields a significantly larger pool of possible candidates.
- The larger pool of possible candidates is more diverse than the traditional pool.
- A more equitable process cannot compensate for lack of opportunities for enrichment and acceleration.

Expansion

Moving from a framework of scarcity to one where the focus is on meeting needs of students requires a reevaluation of how the Center Program curriculum is delivered. The need to provide additional seats combined with the resounding community sentiment to strengthen local school programing lead to the plan to expand access to the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted by creating additional seats. Currently, there are seven centers (eight sites). For school year 2017–2018, three additional center programs will be implemented—at Spark M. Matsunaga, Piney Branch, and Stonegate elementary schools—each with a class of 28 to serve identified home school students. Students offered a seat in the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted, for whom Spark M. Matsunaga, Piney Branch, and Stonegate elementary schools are their home schools, will attend the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted located in those schools, forming home school cohorts for Grades 4 and 5 students. Trend data indicate that Spark M. Matsunaga, Piney Branch, and Stonegate elementary

schools have had cohorts of academically highly able peers, creating a sufficient number for a class located in the school community. MCPS is committed to ensuring all students are considered for local enriched and accelerated programming and for the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted.

The 2017–2018 School Year Centers for Enriched Studies

Beginning July 1, 2017, the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted now will be called the Centers for Enriched Studies, labeling curriculum and not students. There will be both regional centers at Lucy V. Barnsley, Clearspring, Cold Spring, Dr. Charles R. Drew, Fox Chapel, Oak View, and Pine Crest elementary schools; and local centers at Spark M. Matsunaga, Piney Branch, and Stonegate elementary schools. Based on lessons learned from the field test, next year families will not have to apply to center programs, rather based on a review of their student's data, students will be recommended to take an assessment and be considered. Parents/guardians will retain the option of requesting that their students be assessed and considered. This aspect of the field test was universally considered a significant upgrade.

Although preliminary work has begun to benchmark models at both the middle and high school levels, a field test model has not yet been finalized. It is anticipated that a field test will be conducted during the 2017–2018 school year selection process. Learnings from both the elementary school model and the middle school field test will determine any programmatic changes considered for the 2018–2019 school year, looking first at the middle schools and then at the high schools. Staff will continue to consult with experts and practitioners to identify best practices, effective models, and possible obstacles. This work will continue to build toward a coherent articulation model that supports students from elementary school through graduation.

Elementary Language Programs

Metis found that “[t]he district’s implementation of some provisions in the current Board Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, does not fully align with MCPS’ goal to provide equitable access to choice and special academic programs.” They recommended that MCPS “[c]onsider revisions to Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, to clarify that the sibling link for immersion and other choice programs is not automatic; while siblings of applicants should be able to attend the same school where the special academic program is located provided that there are available seats, those siblings should be required to participate in the application process, such as the lottery for immersion programs to earn a seat in the program.” After extensive public comment the Board revised Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*.

Metis also found that “[t]he overall demand for choice and special academic programs in MCPS exceeds the supply of seats in the programs,” and recommended that if MCPS expands seats, it should consider using additional models such as the Dual Language Model. This recommendation dovetails with work MCPS had begun by reviewing the sole dual language program within the school system located at Kemp Mill Elementary School. The work at Kemp Mill Elementary School with the Center for Applied Linguistics is informing the development of a long-term vision for language programming at the elementary school level.

Based on the work with the Two-Way Immersion program at Kemp Mill Elementary School, and research that identifies Two-Way Immersion as a proven way to close the opportunity gap for English Language Learners, two additional Two-Way Immersion sites will be opened in the 2017–2018 school year. Brown Station and Washington Grove elementary schools will begin converting to Spanish Two-Way Immersion schools with the entering kindergarten class. The program will expand a grade level yearly until both schools are full Two-Way Immersion schools.

The Two-Way Immersion model will be expanded to additional sites in the coming years. In addition to Spanish, the French Two-Way Immersion model is in the planning stages. Implementing the Two-Way Immersion model as a home school model requires engagement with school and local communities. It is a significant communications challenge to engage with parents/guardians of kindergarteners, many of whom have no contact with the school system until kindergarten orientation. In order to learn from the work of the leaders in this field, staff has met Two-Way Immersion leaders from the states of Delaware and Utah, both states with major investments in two-way immersion programming, as well as visiting neighboring jurisdictions, such as Fairfax County, Virginia, with long-standing programs. These meetings have built staff knowledge around the challenges of staff recruitment and retention.

The 2017–2018 School Year

Additional sites will be identified for expansion of the Two-Way Immersion model, including the identification of a site for the French Two-Way Immersion program. During the 2017–2018 school year, staff will continue reviewing and benchmarking existing programs in neighboring counties, considering effective ways to expand access and opportunity to world languages through traditional and innovative delivery systems. It is anticipated that a model or models will be ready for field testing in the 2018–2019 school year. In addition, staff will continue to explore the possibility of a world language K–8 campus.

CTE Interest Based Transfers

The Metis report recommended that “[t]o the extent that the district considers revisions to Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, to alter the automatic articulation from middle school to high school within the cluster feeder pattern or consider approvals for programmatic requests, MCPS should analyze the impact on both school capacity and its efforts to promote diversity and avoid racial isolation.” In order to maintain the integrity of local schools, the current transfer process is primarily limited to hardship transfers. This recommendation calls upon MCPS to consider a possible role for programmatic requests. Staff has identified CTE as an area for exploration.

At the January 10, 2017, Board meeting, staff presented on the Career Readiness Improvement Plan. The components of the plan are:

1. Enlist the employer community as a lead partner in defining the pathways and skills most essential in today’s economy.
2. Set a higher bar for the quality of career preparation programs, enabling all students to earn a meaningful postsecondary degree or credential.
3. Make career readiness matter to schools and students by prioritizing it in accountability systems.

An essential part of the effort will be to conduct the external review of CTE programs of study. The review will provide the school system with the necessary insights and guidance to ensure our plan is on the right path and that our programs of study are sufficiently rigorous and truly meet the needs of students. The review was initiated in late January 2017 and will be completed during summer 2017. Once the review is completed and shared with the Board, an overall response plan will be created, and a model will be developed that clearly defines CTE's role in MCPS' choice continuum.

At the same time this model is developed, MCPS will continue efforts to improve the quality of CTE programs and be responsive to the needs of students and the local business community. The recommendations from external review will greatly help strengthen CTE programs across the county. Importantly, work will continue to increase student awareness of the robust offerings already in place and encouraging more students to complete CTE pathways.

Conclusion

Work is well under way to capitalize on the opportunity the Metis report afforded MCPS to take an in-depth look at how students are offered various programmatic opportunities and how processes and opportunities align with the system's core values. The various strands emanating from the Metis report represent areas for experimentation and innovation. These efforts will be grounded in a framework that rejects the scarcity model and embraces the opportunity to explore an array of possible ways to meet the varied and complex needs of all students. The complexity and breadth of the undertaking requires a multiyear approach that accepts and understands transformative change is rarely neat and requires long-term commitment for long-term gain. This first year of MCPS' response to the Metis report has yielded a number of important lessons that will inform the work of ensuring that programs, processes, and procedures are designed and implemented to ensure equitable access and excellence for all MCPS students.

JRS:MVN:lcw

Attachment

ACTION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Rockville, Maryland

March 14, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Patricia B. O'Neill, Chair, Policy Management Committee
Subject: Final Action, Policy JEE, Student Transfers

On December 13, 2016, the Montgomery County Board of Education tentatively adopted revised Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*. The tentatively adopted policy was distributed for public comment; 225 comments were received.

Members of the Policy Management Committee (Committee) further discussed Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, on February 21, 2017. In response to comments received, the Committee has revised the policy to address the following:

- Information regarding countywide programs, regional programs, or programs specifically identified by the superintendent of schools will be issued annually **and distributed broadly to promote equitable access to these programs.**
- Criteria that will be considered for a Change of School will include a younger sibling who seeks to enroll in a school where an older sibling will be enrolled in a regular/general school program, **or a special education program**, during the year the younger sibling seeks to enroll.
- Clarification of the circumstances and requirements for submitting Change of School Assignment requests after the April 1 deadline.

The Revised Draft for Final Action is included as Attachment A. Public comments are summarized in Attachment B, the Draft for Public Comment is included as Attachment C, and a spreadsheet of all comments received is included as Attachment D.

The following resolution is provided for your consideration:

WHEREAS, Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, reaffirms the Board of Education's commitment to set forth guidance for the limited circumstances under which students may be granted a transfer, referred to as a Change of School Assignment to attend a school other than their home school or the school assigned in accordance with their Individualized Education Program; and

WHEREAS, The draft of Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, was tentatively adopted by the Board of Education on December 13, 2016, and sent out for public comment; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Education has received comments from the public and the Policy Management Committee's recommendations; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education adopts Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, as updated in the attached Revised Draft for Final Action; and

Resolved, That this revision of Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, supersedes all Board of Education resolutions and actions related to student transfers and admission into magnet programs, specifically language immersion programs.

PBO:JIC:mm

Attachments

POLICY BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: JEE-RA, KLA, KLA-RA
Responsible Office: Chief Operating Officer

Student Transfers

A. PURPOSE

To explain the limited circumstances under which students may be granted a transfer, referred to as a Change of School Assignment (COSA), to attend a school other than their home school or the school assigned in accordance with their Individualized Education Program (IEP)

B. ISSUE

Students are expected to attend the school within the established area in which they reside (home school) or assigned in accordance with their IEP. Students may submit applications for COSAs from the home school or the school assigned through the IEP process in cases of documented unique hardship, a recent family move within Montgomery County, and in certain circumstances to permit a younger sibling to attend the same school as an older sibling.

C. POSITION

1. A student may apply for a COSA based on the following criteria:
 - a) When a documented unique hardship is shown. Problems that are common to large numbers of families do not constitute a unique hardship.
 - b) When a family moves within Montgomery County, preference to remain in the original school will be considered to complete the current school year only.
 - c) When a younger sibling seeks to attend the school where an older sibling will be enrolled in the regular/general school program, or a special education program, during the year the younger sibling seeks to enroll.

- d) When an older sibling attends a magnet, language immersion, or other application program, a COSA may be approved to the regular school program for younger siblings on a case-by-case basis. Such approval requires consideration of available classroom space, grade-level enrollment, staffing allocations, or other factors that impact the schools involved.
 - e) Sections c) and d) above do not apply if a boundary change has occurred.
2. COSAs are subject to the following procedures:
- a) COSA applications are to be submitted between February 1 and April 1 of the school year preceding the year of the desired transfer. Every effort will be made to notify parents/guardians and students of the decision regarding their COSA request by May 31. COSA requests submitted after April 1 will not be accepted unless the student is a new resident of Montgomery County or there is a bona fide emergency or event that could not have been foreseen prior to April 1. Documentation supporting this situation must be supplied.
 - b) Students who receive an approved COSA out of their current feeder pattern must attend the new school for one calendar year to be eligible to participate in athletics. A waiver from this restriction may be requested.
 - c) Parents/guardians accepting a COSA assume responsibility for transportation, and recognize that student parking is regulated on a school-by-school basis.
 - d) Reassignment from one consortium school to another after lottery assignments are finalized for that year are handled through the Division of Consortia Choice and Application Program Services, based on a unique hardship.
3. COSAs are not required for a student to attend a school other than their home school under the following conditions:
- a) A student attending a middle school on a COSA seeking to attend the high school in that middle school's feeder pattern.
 - b) Students who have been admitted to countywide programs, regional programs, or programs specifically identified by the superintendent of schools in a publication that will be issued annually and distributed broadly to promote equitable access to these programs. MCPS reserves the right to require students to return to their home school if they cease participation in the program.

- c) Any child who has an older sibling who is currently enrolled in a language immersion program, and will continue to be enrolled in that language immersion program the year the younger sibling seeks to enroll, may participate in a lottery established by the superintendent of schools for admission into the language immersion program. Such lottery shall include a weighting process that takes into consideration factors to include: (a) students who have an older sibling who is currently enrolled in a language immersion program and will continue to be enrolled in that language immersion program in the year the younger sibling seeks to enroll; (b) socio-economic status and poverty; and, (c) other factors as identified by the superintendent of schools, such as, in specific circumstances, a catchment area. Any child who has an older sibling who was enrolled in a language immersion program during the 2017-2018 school year and has an older sibling who will continue to be enrolled in the language immersion program the year the younger sibling seeks to enroll, may enroll in the language immersion program without the necessity of participating in the lottery conducted for admission into that program.

D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

- 1. To maintain the stability of school attendance boundaries by promoting home school attendance and respecting the space needs or limitations and staffing allocations of the individual schools.
- 2. To provide a process for students to receive a COSA when circumstances arise regarding a documented unique hardship, a recent family move within Montgomery County, or certain circumstances to permit a younger sibling to attend the same school as an older sibling.
- 3. To provide clarity for the relationship between the COSA process and countywide programs.

E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This policy is implemented through administrative regulation.

F. REVIEW AND REPORTING

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

Policy History: Resolution No. 288-72, April 11, 1972, amended by Resolution No. 825-72, December 12, 1972, reformatted in accordance with Resolution No. 333-86, June 12, 1986 and Resolution No. 458-86, August 12, 1986, accepted by Resolution No. 517-86, September 22, 1986; reviewed February, 1995; amended by Resolution No. 92-02, March 12, 2002; non-substantive modification, November 16, 2006; amended by Resolution No. 124-17, March 17, 2017.

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

January 10, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Update on Dual Language Programs and World Languages in Elementary Schools

Purpose

To provide an update on the work Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has been engaged in to address the Study of Choice and Special Academic Programs and the preliminary vision for world language instruction at the elementary school level.

Background

In January 2015, the Board contracted with Metis Associates to conduct a review of choice programs in MCPS. The study included MCPS' full and partial language immersion programs at the elementary and middle school levels, the elementary school center program for highly gifted students, magnet and other application programs with selective admissions criteria at the middle and high school levels, and the schools in the three regional consortia (Northeast, Downcounty, and Middle School Magnet Consortium).

The study was designed to focus on the following four main objectives:

- Understanding the unique history and current state of each of MCPS' choice and other special academic programs.
- Identifying the original purposes of each of these programs, and assessing whether they are fulfilling those purposes.
- Assessing whether all students have equitable access to these programs, especially in light of the continuing growth of MCPS student enrollment and the changing demographics of the region, both countywide and at the neighborhood level.
- Ensuring that these programs, both individually and collectively, are well-positioned to effectively advance the mission; core purpose; core values, including equity; and core competencies set forth in the MCPS Strategic Planning Framework. Equity, as defined in the MCPS Strategic Planning Framework, ensures that "each and every student matters [and] outcomes should not be predictable by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status."

On March 8, 2016, Metis presented its report to the Board and provided detailed information about the methodology and engagement efforts. Staff was charged with addressing Metis' key recommendation and immediately began engaging the community in conversation about the findings, the recommendations, and a collective vision of choice within MCPS predicated on equity

of access and excellence in teaching and learning. On September 26, 2016, staff presented an overview and timeline to craft the organizational response to the report. Subsequently, on October 10, 2016, staff presented the work regarding talent development and the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted.

Executive Summary

Learning languages and understanding the culture of the people who speak them is a 21st century skill that significantly helps students successfully participate in the world: a world that increasingly insists upon the need to interact effectively with others who might not speak English. Our world is changing and becoming more and more interconnected. It is imperative that MCPS provide all students the opportunity to learn languages other than English and increase their understanding of culture as early as possible. One of the Metis study recommendations is that to the extent MCPS considers expanding seats it also should think about using additional models such as the Dual Language Model. This recommendation dovetails with work MCPS has begun by reviewing its sole dual language program. The work at Kemp Mill Elementary School with the Center for Applied Linguistics is helping to inform the development of a long-term vision for language programming at the elementary school.

The key to transforming our current world languages programs and to provide all our students the necessary tools to become global citizens is to afford greater access to second language acquisition as early as kindergarten. To meet the needs of students in the 21st century MCPS will take a three-pronged approach, creating a continuum of language experiences from exposure to in depth study. This approach includes world languages instruction at both the elementary and secondary levels, expanding dual language programs, and enhancing current immersion programs.

World Languages in Elementary Schools

By offering our students the ability to begin language instruction at a younger age and continue through a longer and well-articulated sequence, MCPS will provide all students the opportunity to develop advanced levels of proficiency in one or more languages regardless of their transition to the workforce or postsecondary education.

Research has shown that second language instruction in the early elementary school years improves cognitive abilities, positively influences achievement in other disciplines, and results in higher achievement test scores in reading and math. Furthermore, young learners have a natural curiosity about learning a new language, and they are open and accepting of people who speak other languages and who are from other cultures. Young learners also possess the capacity to develop near native-like pronunciation and intonation in a new language.

During the 2016–2017 school year, staff will be reviewing and benchmarking existing programs in neighboring counties, considering effective ways to expand access and opportunity to world languages through traditional and innovative delivery systems. Staff has reviewed a variety of programs including a traditional Foreign Language in Elementary School program (30 to 45 minutes once per week), Howard County Public School System Pre-K-5 WoRLD Program (30 minutes of daily instruction in Spanish), as well as Baltimore County Public Schools' "Passport School" program (partnership with Middlebury Interactive Languages, which combines weekly face-to-face instruction with an online, self-paced program). Based on the findings of this review, a plan will be developed that delineates how language exposure could be provided systemwide at the elementary school level.

Two-Way Immersion/Dual Language Programs

The Metis report recommended that if MCPS expands seats it should consider using additional models such as the Dual Language model (Two-Way Immersion). Currently, the only Two-Way Immersion program in MCPS is hosted at Kemp Mill Elementary School. Two-Way Immersion programs allow students, whether they are heritage speakers of a minority language or native English speakers, to acquire two languages through all the subjects of the curriculum. Research of additive programs, such as Dual Language Two-Way Immersion, which promote biliteracy from an early age, are the only programs that fully close the achievement gap of English Language Learners.

In 2012, Dr. Wayne P. Thomas, Professor Emeritus of Evaluation and Research Methodology in the Graduate School of Education at George Mason University and Dr. Virginia P. Collier, Professor Emerita of Bilingual/Multicultural/ESL Education at George Mason University, published the findings and conclusions of their extensive longitudinal studies of dual language education, which they deem to be the most effective method of world language instruction in K–12 schooling. They concluded that,

...as a result of dual language learning, the achievement gap can be closed not only by English learners but also by other historically low-performing groups, such as African-Americans and students of low socioeconomic status (as measured by percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch). These findings are confirmed by Thomas and Collier's five-year long longitudinal research of two-way dual language schools across seven school districts in North Carolina. The second year of the study (2008–2009) alone includes test results from the North Carolina 2009 End-of-Grade (EOG) Reading and Math Achievement tests of 85,662 students from various socioeconomic and language backgrounds. Findings from this study, both statistically and practically significant, demonstrate that dual language programs strongly counteract the negative impact of low socioeconomic status on school performance, as English learners and African-American students of low socioeconomic status participating in dual language programs score much higher (in terms of practical significance) in EOG Reading in all grades, than their comparison groups not enrolled in dual language classes. Practical significance suggests that the observed differences between dual language and non-dual language students are large enough to represent a significant fraction of a standard deviation (effect size) and therefore have both practical and operational importance for "real world" decision-making. In fact, Thomas and Collier's research shows that students from each group engaged in dual language instruction observed in this study outperforms its comparison group not in dual language classes.

Based on the work with the Two-Way Immersion program at Kemp Mill Elementary School, the program will be expanded to additional sites in the coming years. The expansion is planned to occur in two separate phases. This will allow for engagement with school communities, staff recruitment, and thoughtful site identification.

Immersion Programs/One-Way Immersion

MCPS currently offers Chinese, French, and Spanish language immersion programs in seven elementary schools and four middle schools. All seven one-way immersion programs follow MCPS curricula and are designed to address the same standards and pacing as other MCPS schools and classes.

In a one-way immersion program, the target language is not the content of instruction; it is the means of instruction. Immersion programs are classified as either total immersion or partial immersion. Students in total immersion programs receive instruction for all subject areas in the target language. In partial immersion programs, 50 percent of instruction is given in English and the target language (Comeau et al., 1999). The goals for all immersion programs are complete proficiency in first and second languages and mastery of grade level content according to district curriculums (Met & Rhodes, 1990).

In addition to the proposals delineated above, staff is working to enhance our current elementary and secondary schools immersion programs by establishing clear and attainable language benchmarks, ensuring the faithful implementation of programs at the local level, and collecting data at the end of Grades 5 and 8. This work will strengthen the program and provide clear accountability metrics for the programs. Building upon this work, staff will develop a plan for a world language pathway from elementary school through secondary school. The current pathway is disjointed and ad hoc; providing a clear intentional pathway for students to continue pursuing world language in Grades K–12 will be a priority in the coming years.

Included in the possible enhancements of our world language programming is consideration of a Grades K–12 (K–8) World Languages Immersion campus, which would centralize the elementary and secondary schools' immersion programs into a single location. This would help support effective and efficient use of staff and materials, an elimination of school-within-a-school separation, as well as revise the current language sequence at the high school level.

Conclusion

The Metis report is a spring board for critically rethinking the manner in which world language instruction is delivered to elementary school students in MCPS. By determining the role world language study plays in a 21st century program of study and significantly increasing access to world language instruction MCPS may well position our students to compete in the global economy. The intent is that all MCPS students will receive access to world languages, and that the school system will offer a continuum of study that allows students to learn languages, understand various cultures, and actively engage in their learning.

JRS:MVN:lcw

Attachment

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Kemp Mill ES	Year 1 Enhancement K 100% DL	Year 2 Enhancement K-2 100% DL	Year 3 Enhancement K-3 100% DL	Year 4 Enhancement K-4 100% DL	Year 5 Enhancement K-5 100% DL					
Expansion of Dual Language Programs I	Identify sites (4) for expansion	Year 1 Implementation K-1 100% DL	Year 2 Implementation K-2 100% DL	Year 3 Implementation K-3 100% DL	Year 4 Implementation K-4 100% DL	Year 5 Implementation K-5 100% DL First graduating class				
Expansion of Dual Language Programs II					Identify additional sites (4) for phase II expansion	Year 1 Implementation K-1 100% DL	Year 2 Implementation K-2 100% DL	Year 3 Implementation K-3 100% DL	Year 4 Implementation K-4 100% DL	Year 5 Implementation K-5 100% DL First graduating class
World Language Experience in ES	Explore existing programs in neighboring counties: Howard County Public School System Prince George's County Public Schools Baltimore County Public Schools District of Columbia Public Schools Fairfax County Public Schools		Year 1 Implementation Identify preferred program model 30' / 5 days 30' / 3 days Hybrid F2F/Virtual Identify sites (5) for implementation Develop scope and sequence/purchase Curriculum Begin Phased in implementation	Year 2 Implementation	Year 3 Implementation	Identify additional sites (5) for further implementation	Year 1 Implementation	Year 2 Implementation	Year 3 Implementation	Year 4 Implementation
Immersion programs	Review of Policy JEE, <i>Student Transfers</i> ; Study of Programs	Identify potential sites to host K-12 Chinese/French/Spanish World Languages Immersion Campus Meet with stakeholders, including transportation Revise K-12-articulation, especially at High School level Meet with Montgomery College to discuss possible partnership regarding WL undergrad courses / pathways for WL teachers?			Year 1 Opening of MCPS WL Immersion Campus K-8	Year 2 Implementation First year of High School	Year 3 Implementation Second year of High School	Year 4 Implementation Third year of High School	Year 5 Implementation First graduating class	
Burnt Mills ES Rolling Terrace ES		Enhancement Support from Center for Applied Linguistics	Enhancement							
Seal of Biliteracy	State Board will vote on regulation on Jan. 24, 2017, to make it officially part of COMAR	Year 1 Implementation								

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

October 10, 2016

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Choice Study Update: Talent Development and the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted

Purpose

To provide an update on the work Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has been engaged in to address the Metis Associates Study of Choice and Special Academic Programs recommendations 3a, 3b, and 7.

Background

In January 2015, the Board contracted with Metis Associates to conduct a review of choice programs in MCPS. Metis is a research and evaluation firm that is nationally known for its commitment to participatory evaluation, driven by a highly collaborative approach that involves active stakeholder involvement and includes multiple methods, measures, and respondents with multiple perspectives. The review was to “initiate a comprehensive study of the wide variety of choice and other special academic programs that MCPS offers to ensure that these programs, both individually and collectively, are well-positioned to effectively advance the mission, core purpose, core values, and core competencies set forth in the MCPS Strategic Planning Framework.” The study included MCPS’ full and partial language immersion programs at the elementary and middle school levels, the elementary school center program for highly gifted students, magnet and other application programs with selective admissions criteria at the middle and high school levels, and the schools in the three regional consortia (Northeast, Downcounty, and Middle School Magnet Consortium). The study was approved by the Board as part of its Fiscal Year 2015 Operating Budget.

The study was designed to focus on the following four main objectives:

- Understanding the unique history and current state of each of MCPS’ choice and other special academic programs.
- Identifying the original purposes of each of these programs, and assessing whether they are fulfilling those purposes.
- Assessing whether all students have equitable access to these programs, especially in light of the continuing growth of MCPS student enrollment and the changing demographics of the region, both countywide and at the neighborhood level.

- Ensuring that these programs, both individually and collectively, are well-positioned to effectively advance the mission; core purpose; core values, including equity; and core competencies set forth in the MCPS Strategic Planning Framework. Equity, as defined in the MCPS Strategic Planning Framework, ensures that “each and every student matters [and] outcomes should not be predictable by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.”

Throughout fall and winter of 2015 and 2016, Metis engaged in extensive fact and data gathering. After hearing from numerous stakeholders including staff, students, parents/guardians, and community members, reviewing an extensive collection of historical documents, and consulting with experts, Metis developed a report detailing its findings and offering eight recommendations. On March 8, 2016, Metis presented the report to the Board and provided detailed information about the methodology and engagement efforts. Staff was charged with addressing Metis’ key recommendation and immediately began engaging the community in conversation about the findings, the recommendations, and a collective vision of choice within MCPS predicated on equity of access and excellence in teaching and learning.

There were three community dialogues held April 6, 2016, at Gaithersburg High School; April 18, 2016, at John F. Kennedy High School; and May 5, 2016, at Walter Johnson High School. More than 800 community members participated in the forums, engaging in a deep and sometimes difficult conversation about the role of choice. In addition to these community dialogues, staff met with various groups including the Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction (AEI) Feedback Committee, the 1977 II Action Group, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Parent Council, the Latino Student Achievement Action Committee, the African American Student Achievement Action Committee, and the Montgomery County Latino Advocacy Coalition to review Metis’ findings and recommendations. The community also was afforded the opportunity to share reactions, comments, suggestions, and questions about the report online and, as a result, almost 600 community members shared comments.

At the September 26, 2016, Board meeting staff presented a blueprint for responding to the Choice Study including a timeline for addressing the myriad programs, policies, and structures identified by Metis’ findings (attachment). The Board discussed the blueprint and its implications for the various bodies of work. As indicated in the blueprint, the topics identified for the first in depth discussion are talent development and the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted.

Executive Summary

Identifying and nurturing talent is essential to eliminating learning disparities across the school system. Creating expanded learning opportunities for students in the early grades and expanded access to enriched and accelerated curriculum, including access to the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted, is an important component of the district’s strategy to improve learning outcomes for all students. The Metis study recommended that the district invest in early talent development, especially for traditionally underrepresented groups, implement modifications to the selection process for academically selective programs to focus on selecting equitably from applicants who demonstrate capacity to thrive, and to the extent that MCPS invests in expanding seat capacity in programs to reflect the system’s growth and ensure that the expansion is aligned with the district’s core values, including

equity. Based on these recommendations for improvement, and after significant stakeholder input, extensive research, benchmarking, and consultation with experts, staff has developed a design, based on the concept of building a pathway to acceleration, to respond.

Talent Development

The Integrated Kindergarten Curriculum introduced in 2010, incorporated the primary talent development model successfully implemented in MCPS elementary schools with the Program of Assessment, Diagnosis, and Instruction. This was an effort to ensure that talent development was embedded and systemic. Primary talent development nurtures, identifies, and documents the skills necessary for success in accelerated and enriched instruction. The model focuses on developing critical and creative thinking skills that reveal the strengths and talents of more students both in daily classroom instruction and during the system process for Student Instructional Program Planning and Implementation (SIPPI). This work was designed to build a supportive pathway to enriched and accelerated instruction and when combined with The Elementary Center Programs for the Highly Gifted, provide a learning continuum that enriches, accelerates, and extends the MCPS curriculum. This effort included exposure to Junior Great Books for all students and an explicit emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills. Building on this work, the Elementary Instructional Core Team is identifying schools for direct support with talent development. Currently, staff is researching, benchmarking, and consulting on ways to enhance access to enriched and accelerated instruction as well as monitoring student progress beyond Grade 2.

Intentional Focus

MCPS has invested in supporting primary talent development in schools impacted by poverty based on research on the disparity in opportunities afforded students impacted by poverty as compared to their more affluent peers. A study by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation in March 2015, found that “students from low-income families are less likely than other students to reach advanced levels of academic performance.” The following recommendations were made:

1. Make high-performing students highly visible.
2. Remove barriers that prevent high-ability students from moving through coursework at a pace that matches their achievement level.
3. Ensure that all high-ability students have access to advanced educational services.
4. Hold Local Educational Agencies accountable for the performance of high-ability students from all economic backgrounds.

Since fall 2014, the divisions of AEI, Consortia Choice and Application Program Services (DCCAPS), and Title I and Early Childhood Programs and Services (DTECPS) have collaborated to begin building the services and programs to support the talent development of students impacted by poverty by using a multitiered approach. The model is predicated upon creating learning opportunities beyond the instructional day for students in school communities impacted by poverty. Beginning in summer 2015 AEI, DCCAPS, and DTECPS collaborated to offer an opportunity for traditionally underserved students to have increased access to advanced programming in Curriculum 2.0 acceleration and enrichment, compacted mathematics, and center programs. The Extended Learning Opportunities Summer Title I Enrichment Program (ELO STEP), a four-week program, is designed to nurture critical and creative thinking skills through engaging, hands-on rigorous instruction. The program used

the infrastructure of the Extended Learning Opportunities Summer Adventures in Learning program. As a result, students received breakfast, lunch, and transportation to and from school at no cost. ELO STEP enrolled approximately 260 incoming Grades 3 students who attended a Title I school and met specific selection criteria.

In summer 2016, the program expanded to include both incoming Grades 3 and 4 students. Identified Grades 3 and 4 students from each Title I school were invited to participate in ELO STEP. A list of eligible students was distributed to each Title I school. Interest forms were mailed to the parents/guardians of eligible students. In cases whereby a student did not meet the criteria stated above, principals and/or school staff members were allowed to serve as an advocate for students. At times, quantitative data do not adequately reflect a student’s motivation and academic potential; therefore, a School Advocacy Form may have been completed to recommend students for the program. Students meet five of the following eight selection criteria:

Grade 3	Grade 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earned an <i>InView</i> score greater than the 50th percentile on the following subtests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analogies ○ Quantitative ○ Sequencing ○ Verbal Reasoning: words ○ Verbal Reasoning: context • Attained on-grade-level winter benchmark on mCLASS • Earned a Grade 2 Winter Measures of Academic Progress – Primary Grades score at or greater than the 60th percentile • Accessed Grade 2 mathematics enrichment as indicated on the report card 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earned an <i>InView</i> score greater than the 50th percentile on the following subtests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analogies ○ Quantitative ○ Sequencing ○ Verbal Reasoning: words ○ Verbal Reasoning: context • Earned a Grade 3 Winter Measures of Academic Progress – Reading score at or greater than the 60th percentile • Earned a Grade 3 Winter Measures of Academic Progress – Mathematics score at or greater than the 60th percentile • Accessed Grade 3 mathematics enrichment as indicated on the report card
<p>Other criteria schools may consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received Free and Reduced-price Meals System services • School advocacy • Has received instruction in Jacob’s Ladder and/or William and Mary curricula 	

In an effort to extend opportunities for students’ access to accelerated and enriched programming in Title I schools during the school year, AEI and DTECPS partnered to create a Professional Learning Community (PLC). As a follow-up to the Summer Title I Enrichment Program (STEP) in Title I schools, the PLC’s purpose is to build a network of teachers in Title I schools who—

- Support the planning and implementation of instruction for highly able students in Title I schools

- Focus on equity and excellence
- Commit to professional learning for continuous improvement
- Engage in collaborative learning about the unique academic needs of students and families in Title I schools
- Desire to build a shared knowledge for advocating for students in Title I schools to access advanced pathways

The PLC met three times during the 2015–2016 school year, and will meet three times during the 2016–2017 school year.

Center Programs for the Highly Gifted

The Center Program is designed to meet the needs of highly gifted and motivated learners in mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies. The program focuses on critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and communication skills. Metis found that “[t]here are significant racial and socioeconomic disparities in the enrollment and acceptance rates to academically selective programs, which suggest a need to revise the criteria and process used to select students for these programs to eliminate barriers to access for highly able students of all backgrounds.” This finding leads to the following two recommendations:

- “Recommendation 3a: Implement modifications to the selection process used for academically competitive programs in MCPS, comprising elementary centers for highly gifted students and secondary magnet programs, to focus these programs on selecting equitably from among those applicants that demonstrate a capacity to thrive in the program, that include use of non-cognitive criteria, group-specific norms that benchmark student performance against school peers with comparable backgrounds, and/or a process that offers automatic admissions to the programs for students in the top 5-10% of sending elementary or middle schools in the district.”
- “Recommendation 3b: Invest resources to expand and enhance early talent development programs for students of underrepresented groups in order to bolster participation of a broader segment of the MCPS student population in academically selective programs.”

Supporting Local School Programming

The universal screening report is designed to support elementary schools in their identification and monitoring of students in Grades 3 and 5 for enriched and accelerated instruction in the local school program. Each elementary school will be provided with a report that identifies students who have demonstrated the potential to benefit from enriched and accelerated instruction. The universal screening process considers the following data:

Grade Three:

- *InView* subtests scores;
- MAP-P, math enrichment access;
- participation in an above grade level math course; and
- mCLASS performance.

Grade Five:

- Gifted talented identification,
- MAP-M,
- Math enrichment access for Grade 5 students,
- Participation in an above grade level math course, and
- MAP-R and PARCC scores at Level 4 or higher.

This centralized process, coupled with the SIPPI process, ensures that schools have more complete information to better determine who should be accessing local enriched programming.

For this pilot year, all elementary school principals will receive this information in mid-October, and in future years, at the beginning of each academic year. Schools will be able to review the centrally generated and local school data monitoring tools information when planning for enriched instruction.

Field Testing

Feedback from the Choice Study suggested that the applicant pools for the application programs did not reflect the demographics of the system and were impacted by communication procedures. Many districts focus on building an “applicant pool” model using student data rather than direct parent/guardian interest. This model takes the onus off parents/guardians to identify highly able potential and advocate for their student. Rather, the model recognizes that school systems have a tremendous amount of information on the student’s academic accomplishments and potential. Based on these concepts, a field test will be conducted to build a more inclusive pool of students for consideration for placement in a Center Programs for the Highly Gifted.

The process is centralized and designed to identify potential Grade 3 students to be considered for the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted using current Grade 3 performance at the conclusion of semester one. It is not entry into the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted. The process removes the required parent/guardian initiation and places the onus on the school system to reach out and invite potential participants to engage in the process. This process will occur in late January/early February 2017, and will be used with the students in the 40 pilot elementary schools that feed into the Dr. Charles R. Drew and Fox Chapel Center Programs for the Highly Gifted.

The data considered include: Grade 3 MAP-R, MAP-M, reading level, and student services. Using the student’s services data contextualizes a student’s learning and the access and acquisition of instruction. A composite of the student’s performance data will be prepared and students who have met an identified benchmark will be included in the pool for consideration for placement in the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted. All of these students will be reviewed for consideration, therefore relieving parents/guardians of the burden of submitting an application. Schools and parents/guardians will be notified by a letter mailed home and families will have the option to continue in the process, decline consideration for the process, or request to be considered for the process.

Students identified would then enter the pool and will take an online assessment and complete an open-ended, non-scored student questionnaire in February 2017. This information, along with a students' school assessment and report cards, will be used in the selection process.

Expansion

A clear theme in the community commentary was the need for more seats in Center Programs for the Highly Gifted. The need to provide additional seats combined with the resounding community sentiment to strengthen local school programming are the foundation of the plan to expand access to the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted by creating additional seats. Currently there are seven centers (eight sites). For school year 2017–2018, two additional center programs will be implemented—at Stonegate and Spark M. Matsunaga elementary schools—each with a class of 27 to serve identified home school students. Students offered a seat in the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted for whom Stonegate and Spark M. Matsunaga elementary schools are their home schools will attend the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted located in those schools forming home school cohorts for Grades 4 and 5 students. Trend data indicate that Stonegate and Spark M. Matsunaga elementary schools have had cohorts of academically highly able peers, creating a sufficient number for a class located in the school community.

MCPS is committed to ensuring all students are considered for local enriched and accelerated programming and for the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted. Overall, the field test will consider school assessment data, a reasoning ability assessment, student questionnaire (unscored) and student instructional need.

Conclusion

MCPS has seized upon the opportunity afforded by the Choice Study to engage in deep reflection, meaningful engagement with stakeholders, extensive research, and innovative design work. The report challenged the school system to consider reimagining many decades-old processes. Building on the exciting talent development work, the Title I model has begun strengthening a supportive pathway to enriched and accelerated instruction, including consideration for placement in a Center Program for the Highly Gifted, MCPS has begun to test design ideas and engage in process improvements. Informed by the communities' desire for more access to the Center Programs for the Highly Gifted for more students, and the desire for strong local schools, the field test is designed to align with both goals. As indicated in the September 26, 2016, memorandum to the Board, MCPS' response to the Metis report is iterative rather than static. The field test will yield learnings that will inform and shape next steps.

JRS:MVN:lcw

Attachment

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

September 26, 2016

REVISED

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Choice Study Update

Purpose

To provide an update on the work Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has been engaged in to address the Study of Choice and Special Academic Programs and an overview of the multiyear blueprint for implementing improvements.

Background

In January 2015, the Board contracted with Metis Associates to conduct a review of choice programs in MCPS. Metis is a research and evaluation firm that is nationally known for its commitment to participatory evaluation, driven by a highly collaborative approach that involves active stakeholder involvement and includes multiple methods, measures, and respondents with multiple perspectives. The review was to “initiate a comprehensive study of the wide variety of choice and other special academic programs that MCPS offers to ensure that these programs, both individually and collectively, are well-positioned to effectively advance the mission, core purpose, core values, and core competencies set forth in the MCPS Strategic Planning Framework.” The study included MCPS’ full and partial language immersion programs at the elementary and middle school levels, the elementary school center program for highly-gifted students, magnet and other application programs with selective admissions criteria at the middle and high school levels, and the schools in the three regional consortia (Northeast, Downcounty, and Middle School Magnet Consortium). The study was approved by the Board as part of its Fiscal Year 2015 Operating Budget.

The study was designed to focus on the following four main objectives:

- Understanding the unique history and current state of each of MCPS’ choice and other special academic programs.

- Identifying the original purposes of each of these programs, and assessing whether they are fulfilling those purposes.
- Assessing whether all students have equitable access to these programs, especially in light of the continuing growth of MCPS student enrollment and the changing demographics of the region, both countywide and at the neighborhood level.
- Ensuring that these programs, both individually and collectively, are well-positioned to effectively advance the mission; core purpose; core values, including equity; and core competencies set forth in the MCPS Strategic Planning Framework. Equity, as defined in the MCPS Strategic Planning Framework, ensures that “each and every student matters [and] outcomes should not be predictable by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.”

Throughout fall and winter 2015 and 2016, Metis engaged in extensive fact and data gathering. After hearing from numerous stakeholders including staff, students, parents/guardians, and community members, reviewing an extensive collection of historical documents, and consulting with experts, Metis developed a report detailing its findings and offering eight recommendations. On March 8, 2016, Metis presented the report to the Board and provided detailed information about the methodology and engagement efforts. Staff was charged with addressing Metis’ key recommendation and immediately began engaging the community in conversation about the findings, the recommendations, and a collective vision of choice within MCPS predicated on equity of access and excellence in teaching and learning.

There were three community dialogues held April 6, 2016, at Gaithersburg High School; April 18, 2016, at John F. Kennedy High School; and May 5, 2016, at Walter Johnson High School. More than 800 community members participated in the forums, engaging in a deep and sometimes difficult conversation about the role of choice. In addition to these community dialogues, staff met with various groups including the Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction (AEI) Feedback Committee, the 1977 II Action Group, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Parent Council, the Latino Student Achievement Action Committee, the African American Student Achievement Action Committee, and the Montgomery County Latino Advocacy Coalition to review Metis’ findings and recommendations. The community also was afforded the opportunity to share reactions, comments, suggestions, and questions about the report online and, as a result, almost 600 community members shared comments.

Executive Summary

Distilling the findings, recommendations, and stakeholder input, staff identified strands of work to address issues raised in the Metis report. Staff has developed a timeline for addressing the myriad of programs, policies, and structures identified by Metis’ findings (attachment). It should be noted that each strand contains a community outreach and engagement component. The two topics that have generated the most public discussion are the elementary school language immersion programs and the center programs for the highly gifted. In addition to these, there are strands focused on secondary school issues such as magnets, consortiums, and language pathways.

Community Conversations

As would be expected in a community as large and diverse as Montgomery County, there was a broad spectrum of interests and positions expressed about the findings and recommendations. Despite these differences, there were common themes that emerged across stakeholder groups. There was an almost universal expression of support for the concept that local schools, in every neighborhood, should be excellent and be able to meet the needs of a wide array of students, thereby increasing the possibility that most students could be served well in their home school. By strengthening local schools, the need for transportation across vast swaths of the county would be mitigated and students could attend a school within their neighborhood.

Stakeholders also expressed concerns about the limited number of seats in some programs. According to community commentators, this scarcity creates a hypercompetitive environment that places undue pressure on students and stress on families. Commentators felt this pressure was particularly acute with selective programs. The concern about the availability of spaces in programs often was linked to the role of the local schools. There were questions raised by stakeholders about the role of local schools in meeting the needs of highly able students and speculation that if families were confident in their home schools' ability to meet these needs, then there would be less anxiety about admission to a selective program.

Across the board, commentators were committed to the excellence that MCPS has come to stand for. This theme was underscored in every forum by community members who wanted MCPS to be mindful of this important foundational element of the school system's identity as upgrades are considered. This shared value of excellence often was coupled with conversation surrounding creating more equitable access to various programs offered by MCPS. There was significant interest in creating more equitable access and intentionally improving where and how MCPS does outreach work to families by informing them of the numerous opportunities available in the school system. The stakeholders urged MCPS to review the processes, procedures and structures, and to remove institutional barriers that limit opportunities for all students.

Year 1 2016–2017

Because the Choice Study encompassed a broad range of issues, particular strands have been prioritized for focus during the current school year. It is anticipated that the work in 2016–2017 will lead to implementation in the 2017–2018 school year.

Elementary Language Programs

Metis found that “[t]he district’s implementation of some provisions in the current Board Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, does not fully align with MCPS’ goal to provide equitable access to choice and special academic programs.” They recommended that MCPS “[c]onsider revisions to Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, to clarify that the sibling link for immersion and other choice programs is not automatic; while siblings of applicants should be able to attend the same school where the special academic program is located provided that there are available seats, those siblings should be required to participate in the application process, such as the lottery for immersion programs to earn a seat

in the program.” This consideration is under way with the Board Policy Management Committee as Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, is being discussed. The Board Policy Management Committee is aware of the tremendous interest and concerns shared by families currently in immersion programs as well as by families that were unable to obtain access to the program. The Board Policy Management Committee will bring forth recommendations for consideration by the full Board.

Metis also found that “[t]he overall demand for choice and special academic programs in MCPS exceeds the supply of seats in the programs,” and recommended that if MCPS expands seats it should consider using additional models such as the Dual Language Model. This recommendation dovetails with work MCPS had begun by looking at the sole dual language program within the school system located at Kemp Mill Elementary School. The work at Kemp Mill Elementary School with the Center for Applied Linguistics will help inform the development of a long-term vision for language programming at the elementary school level.

Career and Technology Education (CTE) Interest Based Transfers

The Metis report recommended that “[t]o the extent that the district considers revisions to Policy JEE, *Student Transfers*, to alter the automatic articulation from middle school to high school within the cluster feeder pattern or consider approvals for programmatic requests, MCPS should analyze the impact on both school capacity and its efforts to promote diversity and avoid racial isolation.” In order to maintain the integrity of local schools, the current transfer process is primarily limited to hardship transfers. This recommendation calls upon MCPS to consider a possible role for programmatic requests. Staff has identified CTE as an area for exploration.

Center Programs for the Highly Gifted

Metis found that “[t]here are significant racial and socioeconomic disparities in the enrollment and acceptance rates to academically selective programs, which suggest a need to revise the criteria and process used to select students for these programs to eliminate barriers to access for highly able students of all backgrounds.” This finding leads to the following two recommendations:

- “Recommendation 3a: Implement modifications to the selection process used for academically competitive programs in MCPS, comprising elementary centers for highly gifted students and secondary magnet programs, to focus these programs on selecting equitably from among those applicants that demonstrate a capacity to thrive in the program, that include use of non-cognitive criteria, group-specific norms that benchmark student performance against school peers with comparable backgrounds, and/or a process that offers automatic admissions to the programs for students in the top 5-10% of sending elementary or middle schools in the district.”
- “Recommendation 3b: Invest resources to expand and enhance early talent development programs for students of underrepresented groups in order to bolster participation of a broader segment of the MCPS student population in academically selective programs.”

These recommendations were the subject of passionate public comment and there is a significant level of interest in the system’s response to these recommendations. Talent development and elementary school concerns will be addressed first. To this end, staff has completed extensive research,

benchmarking, and consultation and will present the multiyear plan to address the issues raised by Metis at the October 10, 2016, Board meeting.

Secondary Magnets

Linked to the recommendations cited above, preliminary work will begin this school year to benchmark models at both the middle and high school levels. Programmatic changes will be considered for the 2017–2018 school year, first at the middle schools and then at the high schools. Staff will consult with experts and practitioners to identify best practices, effective models, and possible obstacles. This work will build off efforts accomplished at the elementary school level and will lead toward building a coherent articulation model that supports students from elementary school through graduation.

Program Flags

Staff has worked to develop a process for ensuring that program flags are used consistently. In order to ensure that the school system will be able to use program level data in decision making, a process is being developed to monitor the use of programmatic flags. The process and results of the monitoring will be reviewed at the end of the school year and adjustments and upgrades will be made accordingly.

Year 2 2017–2018

A number of the areas of work associated with priority strand from Year 1 will continue in Year 2. Additional strands of work will begin during the 2017–2018 school year.

Elementary Language Programs

In school year 2017–2018, a committee will convene to conduct a programmatic review of the elementary school immersion programs. This review will identify opportunities for strengthening the program and will set a timeline for completion. Work around the dual language model will continue and additional elementary school language models will be explored.

CTE Interest Based Transfers

Although some aspects of the work in the area of CTE Interest Based Transfers will be impacted by the outcome of MCPS' application for an i3 grant, work will continue to pilot and explore ways to increase students' ability to access CTE programs. During this process there will be significant community outreach and engagement.

Center Programs for the Highly Gifted

Based on the results of the work completed in Year 1, staff will begin implementing the upgraded process systemwide.

Secondary Magnets

Staff will consult with experts and identify best practices in order to develop viable field tests. The lessons learned from the efforts at the elementary level will inform this work.

Beyond Year 2

There are a number of issues raised by the Metis report that will be explored in Years 3 and beyond. The report raised issues about the design model for the consortia, for example. Exploration of the implications of the recommendations in this area will begin in Year 3, but may well take time to assess all of the aspects of the consortia models. Similarly, discussion of a secondary language pathway will begin in Year 3. As the work progresses there may be implications beyond those raised in the Metis report that need to be addressed so that the school system has a cohesive and coherent understanding of the role of choice with the district.

Conclusion

The Metis report provided MCPS with the opportunity to take an in-depth look at how students are afforded various programmatic opportunities, how these processes and opportunities align with the system's core values, and the role of choice in the vision for the future of MCPS. The complexity and breadth of the undertaking requires a multiyear approach that is iterative in nature and is continuously engaged with the broadest possible range of stakeholders. During the next several years there will be updates on the work that has begun under the auspices of the Choice Study. The Choice Study itself is an impetus for the school system to reflect on how programs, processes, and structures operate to provide students with opportunities to learn at the highest levels and explore ways in which the school system can continue working toward a more precise practice.

JRS:MVN:lcw

Attachment