

ESOL Subcommittee

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Meetings with key people have been performed to help in shaping the best path forward to better support ESOL parents. The ultimate goal is to involve/engage more Latino parents into the scholar activities and local PTA and/or PTSA. Guidance and information is a priority for this purpose.

In order to increase the sensitivity and awareness of MCPS leaders regarding ESOL and international community in Montgomery County, several activities and meetings have been held recently.

On January 18, 2012, the Chair of the ESOL Subcommittee provided a Budget Testimony on behalf of the multilingual and international community in MCPS, as a member of the MCPS ESOL/Bilingual Advisory Committee (EBAC) (see <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/esol/parents/committee.shtm>). The testimony asked that the Board of Education honor the Superintendent's proposed budget for fiscal year 13 and not to make any additional cuts. Also, the EBAC reiterates its appreciation for the ongoing support and for continuing to build one of the finest ESOL programs in the nation. Next meeting of MCPS EBAC is scheduled on March 7, 2012 since the February meeting was canceled because attendance to the Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs in Annapolis on February 1, 2012.

A group of multicultural parents have met since last year to discuss shared educational issues. This group met with Dr. Starr in December 2011 to share some concerns which are negatively impacting the engagement of parents in scholar activities. At some point, the group called itself "Multicultural Parent Leadership Group" comprised by representatives from several ethnic groups identified during a multicultural Study Circle sponsored by the MCPS Department of Family & Community Partnerships (DFCP) last year. The total number of member of this group is about 20 individuals. However, the core group is comprised of 5 members: Byron (NAACP), Kristin (MCCPTA), Bowen (Asian-American coordinator), John Landesman (MCPS DFCEP) and Antonio (Latino representative). The group is looking for a scheme to allow them to positively impact the engagement of multicultural parents in scholar activities. There are several proposals in analysis at this time. The group will continue meeting in a regular basis. Next meeting is February 27, 2012.

In mid-December, 2011, I met with the Councilmember Nancy Navarro (D-4) during the 2011 Annual Legislative Breakfast. She personally invited me to participate in the creation of a Latino Civic Group. Her purpose is the integration of an umbrella organization for Latinos with several committees (Education, Health, Jobs, Transportation, Immigration, etc.). I was invited to be part of the core group (5 members) in order to define the objective and discuss the best structure for better supporting Latinos in the County. Of course, I would be devoted to Education. Several meetings have been taken place and one big meeting with high level representatives was performed on January 28, 2012. More than 60 attendees signed a pledged to found and grow the civic organization (see <http://www.gazette.net/article/20120127/NEWS/701279495&template=gazette> for more information). The ultimate goal is to address issues within the growing minority. The core group will work on the best mechanism thru periodic meetings. Next meeting is February 7, 2012.

On January 31, I met with Jennifer Nguherimo, MSEA/MCEA UniServ Director. The teachers of the county are aware about the huge need to support Latino parents and students. They are interested in the activities going on in order to help from their side. Jen was informed of several activities in progress. The Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA) comprises several committees with different assignments (budget, union, legislative, retirement, disability, etc.) and now they are thinking of a new committee devoted to support minorities. I recommend her to define the scope in terms of involvement of parents in schools. Teachers are able to identify parent leaders and then ask them if they are willing to participate in activities for their community. She was excited about the idea and will go back to the main group to propose those general ideas. There are teachers born out of the US and able to speak several languages. Therefore, they can be excellent liaisons with potential leader parents. We will meet in early-March, 2012.