

MCCPTA Testimony to the Board of Education about GT Identification
Monday, March 28, 2011
Presented by Laurie Halverson, MCCPTA VP of Educational Issues

Good evening. My name is Laurie Halverson, VP of Educational Issues with MCCPTA. Our President, Kristen Tribble was unable to be here tonight so I am speaking on her behalf.

Recently, you have heard testimony on the so-called “No Label, No Limits” initiative which advocates for an end to the practice of identifying students as “gifted and talented.” By taking away the gifted label, the assumption is that “everybody wins” and all students would have access to a quality education.

We all agree that expectations should be high for all children and that all children should have access to advanced learning opportunities. Here is where we differ:

- We disagree that the elimination of labels will benefit all children. All children are not fundamentally the same and cannot be equally and successfully challenged with a one-size-fits-all curriculum that is deemed “rigorous” enough for most. Students who need more challenge, and on the other end of the spectrum, who need more support will not have their learning needs met in a “one-size-fits-all” paradigm.
- We disagree with those who use “on grade level” as a derogatory term. Most students should be on grade level, by definition.
- We disagree that most students need “advanced” work in order to be prepared for success in college or work. Any class or program that is appropriate for all or most students cannot, by definition, be “advanced” but all students should graduate from MCPS prepared to succeed in college or work.
- We disagree that assigning a GT label affords privileged learning opportunities to GT identified students which cannot be “accessed” by other students. There are few if any genuine GT programs offered outside the magnet programs.
- We disagree that students without the GT label fail to access magnet programs because of the GT label. This confuses correlation with causation.

We look forward to a day when Policy IOA is fully implemented and the GT label becomes less important. Until that goal is accomplished, MCCPTA fully supports parental notification of the GT status so that parents have valuable evidence in hand to help them actively support their child’s academic potential. Every student should have a quality education that meets their unique needs. GT testing provides one set of data that helps educators and parents reach meaningful goals and outcomes.

I have attached to this testimony, a 2009 MCCPTA Resolution on the GT Label, to remind you of our position on this issue.

Resolution on Accelerated and Enriched Instruction

Whereas:

MCPS Strategic Plan states that “A high-quality education is the fundamental right of every child.”

MCCPTA believes that, to ensure that right, every child should be appropriately challenged in accordance with his or her academic ability, motivation and interests.

MCCPTA passed a *Resolution on Mathematics* on April 24, 2001, a *Resolution on Wider Use of the Methodologies Used in Magnet Programs* on January 24, 2006, and a *Resolution on Gifted and Talented Curriculum in Middle Schools* on April 25, 2006.

The MCPS Office of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction is working on recommended changes to *Policy IOA: Gifted and Talented Education* for the MCPS Board of Education’s consideration in 2009.

Therefore be it Resolved:

MCPS must identify students who need additional academic challenge beyond that which is provided to similar aged peers.

MCPS must continue to provide global screening for all students in grade 2 to identify students who need additional academic challenge.

MCPS must provide additional screenings throughout elementary school, middle school and high school to identify students who need additional academic challenge.

MCPS must inform parents when their children need additional academic challenge and must inform parents how MCPS will ensure that those needs are met.

MCPS must provide students who need additional academic challenge with instruction that is accelerated and enriched.

MCPS must ensure that accelerated and enriched instruction is delivered consistently and with fidelity in every school across the county.

MCPS must ensure that students are given the opportunity to work in groups of students with similar academic abilities, motivation, and interests.

MCPS must provide curriculum resources and professional development to teachers and administrators to ensure that students are provided with accelerated and enriched instruction in accordance with research-based best practices.

MCPS must monitor the implementation and effectiveness of accelerated and enriched instruction by collecting, analyzing, monitoring and publishing key data measuring student participation and performance in grades K-12 in all core subject areas.

Background Documents:

MCCPTA Resolution on Mathematics

Approved by the MCCPTA Executive Board on March 29, 2001 and Delegates Assembly on April 24, 2001

<http://mccpta.com/bulletins/MathResolution.html>

MCCPTA Resolution on Wider Use of the Methodologies Used in Magnet Program

Approved by the MCCPTA Delegates on January 24, 2006

<http://www.mccpta.com/resolutions/magnetprograms012406.pdf>

MCCPTA Resolution on Gifted and Talented Curriculum in Middle Schools

Approved by the MCCPTA Delegates on April 25, 2006

<http://www.mccpta.com/resolutions/gt042506.pdf>

MCPS Policy IOA - Gifted and Talented Education (Currently Under Review)

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdf/ioa.pdf>

MCPS Regulation- Gifted and Talented Education

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdf/ioara.pdf>