



The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

May 6, 2010

Erick J. Lang, Associate Superintendent  
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Dear Mr. Lang and Ms. Brown,

The following resolution was adopted by the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA) Delegates on April 27, 2010. This resolution highlights ongoing concerns related to the MCPS advanced courses being offered in middle schools for English, Social Studies and Science.

Kay Romero, President  
MCCPTA

## **MCCPTA Resolution on Middle School Advanced Courses**

### **Whereas:**

- 1.** Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is currently developing and piloting advanced courses in English, Social Studies, and Science for middle schools with a goal of improving the level of instruction and program offerings in middle school;
- 2.** The school system already provides options for students to take high school mathematics courses and foreign language courses and a few schools also offer some electives for high school credit;
- 3.** The school system has been encouraging students to take high school mathematics classes in middle schools with a target of eventually having at least eighty percent of students to have taken Algebra I before entering high school. However there have been a number of reports that students who successfully completed Algebra I in middle school have then struggled with more advanced mathematics in high school. There have been sufficient concerns about the current strategy in mathematics that a work group has been formed to reevaluate it;
- 4.** At some of the schools that have been piloting the English, Social Studies, and Science courses, nearly all of the students in the school have been expected to take the advanced course;
- 5.** MCPS has made plans to allow students who get an A or a B in the eighth grade Advanced English class to get a high school elective credit and students who pass the eighth grade Honors Earth Systems Science class to get a high school science credit;
- 6.** The proposed Honors Earth Systems Science would be a new course which covers in a single year the majority of middle school and high school ideas about Earth Science as described in the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum, which is more than is currently required in either the existing middle school curriculum or existing High School non-honors Earth Systems Science course;
- 7.** MCPS considered offering Honors English 9 to eighth graders, but decided instead to create an Advanced English class that is intended to prepare students for Honors English 9. Students getting an A or B in the course would receive a high school elective credit. Since there is no high school course that corresponds to Advanced English, it would be the only High School course that is available solely at Middle Schools;
- 8.** A great deal of data on student achievement in Mathematics and Reading in middle school is collected and analyzed every year. For example, students take the Maryland State Assessments (MSAs) in Reading and Math in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. MCPS also analyzes the end of unit assessments in Mathematics. However, other than a Maryland State Assessment in Science for eighth graders, there is little data collected and analyzed on the achievement of middle school students in English, Social Studies, and Science;

9. Not all students are ready to work at an advanced level and would be better served by having on-level course options in middle school;
10. Receiving high school credit for a course may not always be in a student's best interest.

**Therefore be it Resolved:**

- A. MCPS should provide Advanced Level English, Social Studies, and Science at each of its thirty-eight middle schools so that students who would like the challenge they provide have the opportunity to take them;
- B. MCPS should also continue to provide on-level sections of its English, Social Studies, and Science courses at each of its thirty-eight schools so that students and their families have an option of courses to take;
- C. MCPS should provide more information about Advanced Level English, Social Studies, and Science that clearly describes what the differences are between them and the existing on-level courses;
- D. On level courses should be provided in each school even if the number of students who wish to take it is fewer than would normally be necessary to offer a class;
- E. At the start of each middle school course that can yield high school credit, MCPS should provide students and parents with clear information on how the student's grade will affect the high school GPA. Rules concerning such decisions as repeating a class later, or declining to take a final exam, as well as the impact of these decisions on the GPA, should be clearly stated in a uniform, county-wide policy. Families should be permitted to accept or reject high school credits earned in middle school through the first month of ninth grade;
- F. MCPS should develop better mechanisms for monitoring how much students are learning in English, Social Studies, and Science at all grade levels, but particularly at the middle school level.