

Overview:

As many of you know now, I stumbled upon some “college readiness” information this fall that, after presenting last month to the MCCPTA BOD, it seemed worthwhile to pursue further to see if we could learn anything about our students’ pathways. As a result, we are now in the process of gathering information through a Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) request that, while it will give us insight into the past, what we really want is an idea of how to improve the options for our students in the future.

While we anticipate the request could shed light on a number of areas, we are particularly interested in what we can learn in math. For the last two years, there have been a number of questions surrounding math, particularly regarding decisions being made at some middle school to eliminate some on-level courses and require all 7th and 8th grade students in those schools to engage in above level courses. Could some of the “readiness” numbers of our past students correlate to students advancing in math without mastery?

Do parents realize they can have a child repeat credit bearing courses, taken in middle school, as part of the transition to high school? When course schedules are sent home each February with the recommended courses filled in, do parents really understand the choices the students are making and engaging in the pathway decisions for the child? Or, are we simply signing the paper?

In the coming months, I expect we will be having many more conversations about course pathways. Some discussions will be stimulated by the MPIA request. Others will come into play because of the recently released College and Technology Education (CTE) report that was delivered last month.

I know I have signed a dozen of those “next year’s course” papers for three of my middle/high school-aged children over the years. Sometimes I knew why my child was recommended for a class the following year, sometimes I didn’t. If I didn’t understand, I just trusted that if this is the class my child is being recommended to take, it must be the right one. What do I know? Indeed. Hopefully, by the end of this MPIA exercise, many more parents will feel empowered to discuss the course selections with the students (and if needed, the school) and have a renewed confidence the course a child is anticipating taking in the coming year is the best option for the individual child.

October Meetings:

10/2 – MCCPTA Executive Committee meeting with Superintendent

10/5 – MCCPTA Executive Committee and BOD Meeting

10/10 – Testimony during Public Comment period of BOE meeting

10/16 – NAACP Parents’ Council kickoff meeting

10/19 – Planning meeting for joint MCPS/MCCPTA College-Career Planning Night (tentatively a January date)

10/24 – MCCPTA Delegates Assembly

10/25 – MCCPTA BOD/BOE/MCPS roundtable discussion

October Activity Summary:

- **Math (Secondary):** Continued conversations with MCPS staff regarding concerns about schools that are creating “one size” pathways. How are we ensuring students that aren’t “thriving” through this “one size” option have viable pathways to carry them through their high school career? This is a conversation we hope to further develop via the MPIA request (referenced above).
- **Math (Elementary):** Raised questions with OSSI directors regarding the possibility of comparing the criteria being used from school to school in determining who is eligible/invited to participate in the Compacted Math opportunities. Because these are local level decisions, it would be interesting to better understand how this might vary from school to school. Parents are also interested in discussing

where those critical points reside where parents can most easily accelerate (or decelerate) a student's instruction.

- **High School -- Honors for All:** Along the same lines as the math concerns raised in the middle school, several clusters have reached out with concerns related to the elimination of on-level courses at the high school level – most often in English but, there is reporting this is occurring in social studies and science also. The concern with math is a little different than with these other courses. Math requires certain foundations/mastery to continue successfully into the next course. The concern raised with these other courses (with English, in particular) is whether the course is eliminating some of the rigorous elements to ensure more students can succeed. Another topic – to be continued...
- **Gifted and Talented Students:** Followed the discussion for Eastern/Takoma Park on the revised selection process – as it is a very different process this year from prior years (Clemente will remain on the application process we know from prior years). From the video (linked below – about 46:30 minutes into the presentation), a specific question was asked and the presenter stated “we will look to see if the child has an intellectual peer group...” Knowing there are a number of challenges with master scheduling, parents of high achieving/GT students might want to raise with their home middle schools how the schools will be fostering the “intellectual peer group” since a student might be recommended to remain in their home middle schools rather than going to the magnet schools. That conversation – to be continued... <http://mcpsmd.swagit.com/play/10122017-1163>
- **Superintendent's Blog.** I'm going to take a moment to give a plug for parents to check out this blog “All In.” This every-week-or-two blog has very few “views” – but, it should be on the advocates' radar as this provides insight into topics, from the Superintendent's perspective that might be of interest to our parents. If you read to the end of each blog, you'll find some additional resources and reading materials that I think parents will find very interesting. Enjoy (and bookmark)!
 - [All In: Respect Helps Equity Thrive](#)
 - [All In: Building Our Budgets](#)
 - [All In: Building Our Budgets](#)
 - [All In: Readyng Students for College and Career](#)
 - [Persistent, Resilient and Safe](#)
 - [All In: The Superintendent's Blog](#)
- **MPIA Request:** As mentioned in the summary above, presented information to the BOD, BOE, and DA to get subject-level information related to the drop in the percentage of students meeting University System of Maryland entrance requirements. Included math-related inquiries to help launch the discussion since that is a subject area parents have been questioning for the last several years.
 - The video feed at the BOE meeting is available here by selecting the 10:10 am <http://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=AMGNCG55AEE5>
 - Written testimony outlining the concerns and the data we have requested to help foster this conversation within each of our clusters.
[http://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/ARYQCV68B664/\\$file/Cynthia%20Si%20monson.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/ARYQCV68B664/$file/Cynthia%20Si%20monson.pdf)

We are hoping by raising this conversation now – well in advance of selecting next year's schedules – we can elevate the awareness among parents so everyone is better informed and parents can better assist students in mapping out their plans for next year (and beyond).