

Talking points (June Zhou, parent of MCPS student)

My name is June. Single mom, work full time. I live in Wheaton area, so I am not rich. My two kids group up in a household without father. This is my son, a ESL student in ES and qualify for FARM until his high school year when I lived in Louisiana. This is my daughter, she is currently MCPS student. She switched four elementary schools because of my job relocation. So, my life is a miss up. My kids should also be “low achievement students” by common assumption.

Fact: Son graduated from GT program and college in Louisiana where I come from. He is now software engineer at Silicon Valley CA. Daughter is 7th grade Straight A student in Takoma Park magnet program, previously at HGC in Silver Spring.

How I made it?

First, not by 3a! Both of my kids were tested into GT program with exactly the same standard as their classmates, which is very important and essential for their self-esteem while they interact with other GT students. It is terrible to teach our kids that they can be treated differently and have a low expectation than others, if they are from certain family statuses or race.

Particular,

- (1) **Outreach:** I heard the word “GT” from my son’s teacher. However, many parents don’t know this program, although county sent letters to every family regarding on GT testing. It surprise to me when I talked to my co-workers who live in this county, they don’t even notice that the letter has been sent to their house. I think the best way for outreach is mouth by mouth though teachers and parent conference. However here is a problem, which teacher want to send “high performing” student out? These students are the ones who make school test score look better. So, county has to figure out a way to award school that sends “underrepresented” students to HGC program.
- (2) **Community help:** As a single working mom, I cannot emphasize enough for the importance of afterschool care. My daughter went to boy’s and girls club, which has one hour homework time every day. Kids have to study during that time, regardless of having homework or not. When I learned GT program test is two grade level above, I bought the above grade level material for my daughter. She got free tutor by volunteer of high school students for two grade level work during that time. Therefore, I suggest county use this approach to get those “underrepresented” kids ready for the testing. I know there are many organizations can volunteer tutoring. I heard there is an organization called BLACK CAP at Blair, their purpose is to increase minority students in those academically changed program. Those high school kids can do it and earn SSL hours, also put something meaningful for their college applications. Most magnet school bus has stops near those place where those needed kids located.

(3) **Parent**, which is myself. I always tell my kids, if they want to a good future, work hard for it. Education is not only teaching our kids reading and math. Rather, our kids should know their achievement is a reward of their work, not other factors. I think “Group-specific norm” will damage my kids in a long run, because these kids will be labeled with a “low expectation” than others, and how we encourage them to work hard in the future?

Conclusion: let kids test into get into GT/magnet program by the same standard, so they feel it is a right place and right challenge for them. Eventually, our kids will graduate from college and facing those bar or license exam for professional job (teacher, doctor, lawyer, CPA, engineer, nurse, and electrician etc.). The reality is that those exams will not have lower test standard for them.

Thanks for your hard work to make our school system great, and prepare our kids to become future productive citizens