

BOE 4/19 Meeting Public Comments Written Testimony

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My name is Lily Liang and I am a parent of a 5th GT student and a 2nd grader. My kids' home school is a Title I school. I am also an education professional and a researcher at a title III university. My family and I are very grateful for the excellent education and services we received from MCPS in the past several years. I'd like to provide comments on the Study Report of Choice and Special Academic Programs recently released by MCPS [1]. I appreciate the effort and resource that MCPS has dedicated in evaluating the Choice and special academic programs. I read through the complete study report and **found Recommendation 3a of this report problematic.**

Recommendation 3a recommends using, in the selection process of elementary centers for highly gifted students and secondary Magnet programs, non-cognitive criteria and group-specific norms. In the complete report, it is specified that these non-cognitive criteria and group-specific norms refer to race and socioeconomic status. Recommendation 3a also recommends using a process that offers automatic admissions to the programs for students in the top 5-10% of sending elementary or middle schools in the district.

Apparently, when making this recommendation, the author(s) of this study assumed that gifted and talented programs are based on performance, while in fact they are based on needs. As it has been confirmed in GT research literature, and as MCPS has already recognized, gifted and talented students has special needs in learning. The GT center programs are to meet these needs which cannot be met at homeschool.

Will MCPS decide on accommodation for ADHD or autism students' needs based on their race, household income or performance percentile at their home school? If not, why do that to gifted and talented children? "Gifted and talented children are, in fact, deprived and can suffer psychological damage and permanent impairment of their abilities to function well". This is stated in the Marland Report of the U.S. Department of Education as far back as 1972 [2]. The recommendation of adding race and other factors that do not measure the intellectual needs into the selection criteria, would only add more barriers for these students to access the education they desperately need. And this is *not* the way to close achievement gap.

I'd like to end with a slogan that I saw a MCPS school "Fairness does not mean everybody gets the same thing, it means that everybody gets what they need to succeed". Let's focus on ensuring that ALL gifted and talented kids, comparing to their counterparts, have equitable access to the education that they need, regardless of their race or any other labels our society put on them.

[1] MCPS Study of Choice and Special Academic Programs: Report of Findings and Recommendations <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/choice/report.aspx>

[2] Marland, S. P., Jr. (1972). Education of the gifted and talented: Report to the Congress of the United States by the U.S. Commissioner of Education and background papers submitted to the U.S. Office of Education, 2 vols. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. (Government Documents Y4.L 11/2: G36) <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED056243.pdf>