



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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MARYLAND

May 1, 2014



The Honorable Cherri Branson, Councilmember
Montgomery County Council
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Ms. Branson:

This is in response to your memorandum of April 28, 2014, regarding data from the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) *Schools at a Glance*. In your memorandum to County Council President Craig Rice and Councilmember Phil Andrews, you indicated that the data provided in *Schools at a Glance* does not show “a clear connection between personnel cost per student and FARMS [Free and Reduced-price Meals System] rates.” You further stated, “I expected to find a clear pattern with funding and staffing ratios at each high school being the greatest where FARMS rates are the largest and a gradual reduction in spending as FARMS rates step down.”

When I responded to your question during the Education Committee meeting on April 28, 2014, and suggested that the information about expenditures for individual schools is available in *Schools at a Glance*, I was not clear that this information includes all special education program staffing, including those programs which serve students from outside the school cluster. Special education program funding can significantly distort the school-by-school per pupil calculation because of the way in which special education programs, students, and resources are assigned to schools. For example, the following chart highlights the disparities between schools that result in significant per pupil cost differences as a result of special education staffing.

	<u>Special Education Staff</u>	<u>Total Staff</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Rockville High School	48.1	163.8	29.4%
Springbrook High School	34.0	185.6	18.3
Montgomery Blair High	31.4	275.4	11.4
Walter Johnson High School	60.0	232.2	25.8

As you can deduce from the table above, a schoolwide per-pupil calculation that includes special education funding for self-contained programs makes school cost comparisons difficult.

Funding Schools

Our staffing and funding of schools is differentiated based on the needs of students so that schools with greater needs are allocated more staffing and additional resources. This letter provides further information to explain how this is done.

Office of the Chief Operating Officer

We have a long-standing commitment to fund our schools according to the needs of the students in each school. This process is based on the following four principles:

1. Consistent—schools with similar needs receive similar resources
2. Transparent—everyone understands how and why decisions about allocations are made
3. Equitable—schools with greater needs receive greater resources
4. Flexible—adjustments can be made to meet the needs of individual schools, programs, and students

All schools are allocated “base staffing,” which is determined by a variety of enrollment and program factors. For some positions, the staffing is the same (e.g., every school is allocated one principal). For other positions, staffing is based on enrollment (e.g., classroom teachers are based on the number of students). In addition to staffing, other resource allocations, such as extracurricular stipends, materials, textbooks, and clerical support, are made based on programs and enrollment.

In addition to “base staffing,” allocations are provided to schools based on needs of the school, including staff and other allocations. Enclosure A provides a table of the staffing allocations made to schools based on needs. These positions include:

- Focus teachers—allocated to schools with higher FARMS enrollment to reduce class size in English and mathematics classes. Formula is based on FARMS and enrollment.
- Academic intervention teachers—allocated to schools with higher FARMS enrollment to lower class size and address the achievement gap. Formula is based on FARMS and enrollment.
- Alternative programs teachers—schools with higher FARMS enrollment, mobility, retention, and suspension rates receive greater allocations.
- Special program teachers—allocated to schools to establish specific programs and provide additional support to students.
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers and paraeducators—allocated to schools to support instruction of ESOL students.

As shown in the table and noted above, these positions are allocated to schools with greater needs. There is a distinct correlation between schools with a higher FARMS rate and the staffing allocation above the base staffing.

In addition to staffing, other resources are allocated to schools based on needs. Enclosure B provides examples of some of these supports and some of the programs offered and funded at schools. For example:

- High School Intervention to Graduation funds are used to provide additional support and programming for students who have not been successful in core content areas. Note the amounts in the table are for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 as FY 2015 funds have not been allocated yet.
- Minority achievement funds for after-school programs (\$100,000 budgeted in FY 2014 and \$150,000 budgeted in FY 2015) to implement programs to support Black and Latino students and to address the achievement gap between these students and their White and Asian peers.
- Mini-grants to provide support for drama, newspaper, and yearbook.
- The Career Lattice program included in the FY 2015 budget is intended to help attract and retain highly qualified teachers in our most impacted schools. Participants in the Career Lattice program receive supplemental pay and assume greater levels of responsibility for improving student learning, both inside and outside the classroom.

- Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) is a collaborative program among MCPS, Montgomery College, and the Universities at Shady Grove. ACES focuses on identifying and supporting students who are underrepresented in higher education and those who may be the first in their family to attend college.
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a college-readiness system designed to increase schoolwide learning and performance by accelerating student learning through research-based methods of effective instruction.

Additionally, there are other programs we offer at each school that are shown on Enclosure B, including Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS). This chart also shows that when we initiate the Career Lattice program next year, it will be funded at schools with the greatest need. MCPS has a long-standing commitment to equity, as evidenced in that it is one of our core values. Demographics have changed throughout the county, and we continue to increase our efforts to provide support for students with the greatest needs. Our approach to differentiated funding to meet the needs of students is at the heart of how decisions are made. We recognize that improving achievement and closing the gap only can occur if we continue to work not only on funding formulas, but also on how the dollars are used in each and every school. We continue to improve our programs and practices to address the achievement gap and improve achievement for all our students.

I have contacted your office to set up a time for us to meet to review this information. I will be able to provide further explanation of our funding formulas and strategies and answer any additional questions you may have. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,



Larry A. Bowers
Chief Operating Officer

LAB:lsh

Enclosures

Copy to:

Montgomery County Councilmembers
Montgomery County Board of Education Members
Dr. Starr
Dr. Schiavino-Narvaez
Dr. Statham
Dr. Zuckerman

