



MCCPTA Testimony to BOE on High School Plus, May 21, 2007

Good Evening President Navarro, Dr. Weast, and members of the Board of Education. My name is Kay Romero and I serve on the Montgomery County Council of PTAs.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate on the High School Plus committee. MCCPTA Board of Directors members expressed a number of concerns regarding High School Plus and the intended implementation in Fall, 2007, three months away. Our understanding is that the program targets those students who failed courses required for graduation or related to the HSAs.

Several issues remain unclear and the majority of high school parents are unaware of the plan for High School Plus. For example, how will schools address the needs of students who fail electives? Will clusters be allowed to create collaborative models to offer courses for a small group of students? In order for High School Plus to succeed, the principals, teachers, counselors, parents, and students need clear guidelines to understand the program.

High School Plus is a big step. It potentially represents a significant shift in culture. This should not be rushed. Among the concerns shared by principals and parents are: finding qualified staff to teach High School Plus given the problems the four pilot schools have had finding staff; addressing the challenges posed by repeater sections during the regular day with regard to the impact on staffing, elective programs, Master Schedule as well as the well-being of students who have to repeat classes rather than move ahead; moving ahead with credit recovery without concurrence on its value, guidelines to implement, or track record. If MCPS moves ahead with credit recovery, it should be done as a pilot, at demographically distinct schools, with stringent guidelines so analysis can be comparable and also address the issue of why credit recovery should be allowed when the MCPS Grading and Reporting policy already allows for reteaching during the regular class time.

The implementation plans need to include guidelines to address the needs of students who fail due to loss of credit, have IEPs or 504 plans. There are concerns that the schools will be unprepared at this time to implement the many components of the program given that schedules are nearly complete and the implementation plan has still not addressed all these concerns. We urge you to ask questions and consider whether MCPS is ready to move ahead with all aspects of High School Plus and Credit Recovery in August, 2007.