

Proposed Resolution on
Preferred Choice in Consortium High Schools
Submitted by the MCCPTA High School Committee

Whereas:

1. The Board of Education of Montgomery County Public Schools established “preferred choice” as the system by which students are assigned to the Northeast Consortium High Schools: James Hubert Blake High School, Paint Branch High School and Springbrook High School;
2. The Board of Education established by its Resolutions 799-96, 711-99, 37-00, 335-03, and 482-05 a process to implement preferred choice, by which students rank high schools in order of preference; assignment to the base area high school is assured if that high school is the first choice; and assignment to a non-base area high school choice is subject to utilization, ever-FARMS and gender parameter conditions;
3. The Board of Education’s purposes in establishing and maintaining the preferred choice system and process are to manage demographic change, eliminate “minority” group isolation and support academic performance;
4. In 2011, 97 percent of students were assigned to their first choice preferences and MCPS officials stated that MCPS’ goal is to maximize first choice assignments;
5. In 2011, the number of students attending certain Northeast Consortium High Schools exceeded the capacity specified by the Board of Education’s utilization parameter condition, while the number of students in another High School was well below capacity (adversely affecting its budget, teacher complement and programming opportunities for students); Average enrollment at 2 of the schools within the Northeast Consortia has been over 300 students over capacity, while enrollment at a third school within the Northeast Consortia has been more than 300 students “under” capacity, leading to canceled classes in Chorus, Show Choir, Multivariable Calculus, and IB Higher Math, as well as doubled up (combined) classes in Upper level language classes in Arabic, Italian, and German, IB and AP combo classes in science: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics C, and IB and AP combo class for Studio Arts.
6. A pre-existing imbalance among the High Schools in the proportion of their populations comprised of ever-FARMS students was perpetuated by MCPS’ 2011 implementation of the preferred choice process;
7. Academic performance appears to be impacted negatively by the preferred choice process as implemented by MCPS;
8. The process, algorithm, and parameters of Northeast Consortium High School assignment, as actually implemented by MCPS, are not transparent to the students, parents or schools participating in the process, or to the Board of Education;
9. The purposes established by the Board of Education for the Northeast Consortium preferred choice process continue to be vitally important purposes of Montgomery County Public Schools and the Montgomery County community;

Therefore be it resolved that:

- A. The school utilization, ever-FARMS and gender parameter conditions affecting assignment to non-base schools are all necessary factors to achieve the purposes of a fair consortium choice process.
- B. Schools that do not receive a high number of “first choice” requests should not be penalized with lost curriculum offerings or lower teaching slots or operating budget allocations, so that they can attract and retain “first choice” requests during the next year.
- C. MCPS should implement the preferred choice process in conformity with the rules and parameters established by the Board of Education Resolutions;
- D. MCPS should publish a detailed description of the process and rules by which it implements the preferred choice process, including the manner in which the parameter conditions are applied, and report on the assignment results each year.
- E. The Board of Education should oversee implementation of the preferred choice process to ensure that it is implemented in accordance with the Board of Education Resolutions and that its purposes are achieved.