

Breakout Sessions

All breakout session will occur both AM and PM unless otherwise noted.

1. **Tracking: What is it and How Does it Manifest in Montgomery County?**

This session is an overview of how tracking is defined and the various mechanisms through which it is implemented in Montgomery County. Attendees will be encouraged to tell stories about how they or their children are/were tracked and the implications it had for them. General discussion.

2. **Detracking – How it can work – Elementary School – “Unpacking Differentiation”**

Staff of Burning Tree Elementary School will describe and demonstrate concepts they learned at a week-long training in Differentiation at Dr. Carol Tomlinson's Summer Institute on Academic Diversity, at the University of Virginia. After a brief overview of the concepts and underlying principles of differentiation, teachers will demonstrate instructional strategies used in the current school year that have been effective in making learning meaningful for a wide variety of learners. Tools such as interactive notebooks, card sorts, open-ended investigations in science and big ideas will be modeled and discussed. **AM only.**

3. **Detracking – How it can work –High School**

Vice Principal, Carol McDonald and a high school social studies teacher, from Dominion High School in Loudon County, will present an interactive session on successful “detracking” instructional strategies implemented for the first time last year.

4. **Language Instruction and Tracking**

For many of our children who are native speakers of other languages, MCPS ESOL classes are a first step on the path to limited learning opportunities, poor academic achievement, marginalization, and for too many, eventually dropping out of school. Can we do better? Could all of our students become fluent and literate in at least two languages? We will discuss existing forms of language instruction and possible alternatives, including pull-out ESOL programs, single-language immersion, and dual-language immersion. We hope to formulate an action plan going forward, for study and advocacy.

5. **Dropouts and Graduation Rate Disparities**

The disparity in high school graduation rates is the ultimate K-12 education equity gap -- with approximately 50% of Black and Latino students dropping out without a HS diploma. We will discuss proposed legislation to ensure accurate counting and reporting of dropouts by all schools in MD. Other school policies, practices and mechanisms used to push-out minority students will be discussed with students who dropped out, school staff, and high school reform advocates. Delegate and former BOE member, Ana Sol Gutierrez will present.

6. **Sorting Us Out: Educational Grouping and Tracking and the Right to Quality Education**

When schools and school systems place students in different programs or groups for instruction, they have certain legal obligations to make sure that each program is high-quality and enables every student to meet the same high standards for what the state and district say all student should learn, that decisions about which students go where are made fairly and accurately, that the programs do not unnecessarily segregate students (for example by race or disability), and that the programs actually are achieving their purposes and meeting the needs of the students. In this session, we will look together at: (1) what the legal obligations are, (2) how well our schools in Montgomery County are meeting those obligations when grouping or selecting students for different programs, and (3) what we can do to improve the MCPS practices in this area. We will also look at the potential of an Educational Quality Bill of Rights as a tool for assessing MCPS practices and planning for improvement. Jamin Raskin, of the Washington College of Law at AU, and Paul Weckstein, of the Center for Law and Education, will present.

7. **Mobilizing for Equity**

This breakout session will focus on the steps in the political process by which progress must be made to achieve equity in education in Montgomery County. The panelists (two educators and two organizers with experience in political campaigns and union activities) will lead a group discussion of the following topics: building a dialogue throughout the community; expanding the base of citizens who recognize the extent of inequitable educational practices in Montgomery County; engaging critical elements of the establishment (including the Board of Education, MCPS, and County Government); and identifying and electing progressive candidates who choose to run for positions on the Board of Education, County Council, etc. The goal is to achieve some level of consensus as to which activities are most likely to be effective in upcoming electoral cycles and to energize individuals/groups to begin with action agendas. Panelists include: Tom Hucker, Executive Director, Progressive MD, Rosalyn Pelles, Director Civil Rights Division AFL-CIO and former campaign manager for Valerie Ervin, and George Vlasits, Blair HS teacher.

8. **How Diverse are We Really? High School Students Speak Out**

This is an interactive session on the social and educational problems caused by tracking--led by the students who are affected by it. It is meant to serve as a follow-up to the student testimony. We will be examining whether diversity really exists in the individual experiences of today's high school students through discussion and personal experiences. Our goal is to provide adults with a student perspective of what high school is really like under tracking and to brainstorm possible ways to combat the effects of tracking as individuals and at the school level.

9. **Advocating for your child within a flawed system**

This session will highlight various ways for parents and community members to be active participants in the educational process. We will outline several ways that you can effect change at the school as well as the county level, thereby greatly increasing the chances of a quality education for your child. Carla Lambert, Co-coordinator of AAPMC will present.

10. **Getting the Best Teachers for Students with the Greatest Needs—What works and what doesn't?**

All of the research says that it is the quality of the teacher in the classroom who has the greatest impact on student success. There is a question about who is teaching in the schools with the highest percentages of minority and poverty. In this session we will examine the perceptions and realities and make some recommendations for high quality programs in all schools. Panelists include: Kimberly Oliver, Broadacres Elementary School kindergarten teacher and MD teacher of the year. **PM only**.

11. **Creating Opportunities for Success for Latino Youth with Limited or Interrupted Education in Their Home Countries**

This breakout session will discuss the challenges faced by immigrant youth who have had limited or no formal education prior to coming to Montgomery County. It will examine the limitations of the process used to assess and identify these students when they enter MCPS and why so many of them fall through the cracks. It will also explore cultural and linguistically competent alternatives to provide them with options to develop their potential. A former MCPS student will share his experiences.