

Comments by Carla Richardson-Lambert

**AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS OF MAGNET SCHOOL APPLICANTS
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL Press Conference
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
Monday, October 24, 2005**

It is my pleasure to come before you today to advocate on behalf of the children of this community. I first want to acknowledge the recent accolades that the Montgomery County Public Schools have received regarding accelerated instruction at local schools that cuts across all ethnic groups and socioeconomic levels. This shows a commitment to excellence and forward-thinking on the part of all who were involved in this initiative. That is why it saddens me to bring up an issue that contradicts this reality so blatantly. I am speaking of the latest results of the 2005 2nd Grade Global Screening, which I know you have all seen and had a chance to review. These results show the same abysmal data as the previous 15 years in regards to the extremely low number of African American and Hispanic students offered the opportunity to achieve at a high level academically. We can only presume that this is a harbinger of more disgraceful numbers in regards to the upcoming admission data for the Highly Gifted Center Programs and the Middle School and High School Magnet Programs.

On behalf of the African American Parents of Montgomery County, I am once again asking the Board of Education, as we asked some 7 months ago, that you take a strong stance on this issue and that you demand not only a complete internal investigation into the entire Gifted/Talented program, but also outside intervention, perhaps similar to the ongoing middle school audit. We are also asking for increased accountability at the school-level to ensure that all features of a new screening process are implemented in an equitable fashion. Clearly, whatever we are doing is not working for all children and a viable method of recognizing talent and potential in an unbiased manner is vital! Only when we develop such a tool will we be able to stop the intellectual stifling of our culturally diverse students and address each child's individual gifts to enable them to reach their full potential. Not only is this early designation (or NON-DESIGNATION as it were) important at the elementary school level, but this also predicts performance and level of achievement through middle school, high school, and college. Ultimately, this affects the quality of community members that are produced.

The administration admits the current screening process and tools are inadequate, but have not taken the necessary action to remedy this situation. We want to call an end to the incessant discussion and rumination regarding the process. The time for action is now and we demand that the Board of Education step up to the plate and be accountable to the community. Let us not continue this "business as usual" attitude and realize that this issue is one that must be addressed immediately. Thank you.