

Good evening. The Montgomery County Education Forum and the Equity in Education Coalition of Montgomery County are pleased to hear that Dr. Weast has finally heeded our call to place race and class at the forefront of the discussion about excellence in our schools. We are also pleased with his goal of eliminating low math tracks beginning in 5th grade. We are eager to see an implementation plan.

So we know that it's a small leap to now expand that vision to eliminate the global screening process in 2nd grade that sets the stage for later inequities.

Today in our public schools, children are “identified” at the end of second grade as either “gifted-and-talented” or NOT gifted and talented. We have a two-track, segregated educational system, and the tracks go in different directions. Given this, is many students’ lack of preparedness for high level courses and their low SAT and other standardized test scores any surprise?

We charge this system on two counts:

First, it is inequitable, discriminatory, and institutionally racist. Whatever the mix of conscious and unconscious prejudice and expectations and systemic aberrations and inertia, the outcome is all too clear, and *we demand an end to the inequality – right now.*

Second, even if the labeling were completely equal with regard to race and ethnicity, which it is far from and probably actionably so, it would still be damaging to *all* of our children. When a child perceives – which they all do – that some classmates are “gifted” while he or she implicitly is not; when that child is immersed in an environment dominated by “lower order thinking skills”, then the innate excitement in learning and the impetus to master and excel is diminished or snuffed out altogether. And even with the “identified” child, the false perception of being smarter and more deserving than others is damaging and isolating and in the long run self-defeating.

MCEF and the Equity in Education Coalition call on the Montgomery County Public Schools to provide an accelerated and enriched education for all of our children. We officially call for an end to the 2nd grade global screening that separates children and institutionalizes inequitable learning opportunities.

No Labels, No Limits!