

My daughter Sarah is a senior in the Montgomery Blair Magnet Program. Through Magnet, AP, and honors classes, Sarah has enjoyed a top quality education that rivals any in the nation.

Sarah was well prepared for Blair's most challenging classes; she's been in GT and Center programs since third grade.

Not all students arrive at Blair so well prepared.

Although Newsweek's Challenge Index rated Blair as the 154th best high school in the nation, enough of our students flounder that No Child Left Behind's rating system put us on the failing schools watch list for the past two years.

A disproportionate number of students from low-income and minority families end up in low-level classes as a result of the second grade screening process. No wonder they don't meet today's high school standards; they've gotten a substandard education for years.

No Child Left Behind preaches that outcomes matter. The outcome of the second grade global screening process is a racially segregated school system, in which some students receive a terrific education while others get much less.

My Magnet daughter is pretty smart. She sees that her Magnet and AP classes are mostly white and Asian, and questions the equity of that situation. Her African American and Latino friends are pretty smart too. They see how things play out, and wonder why they and people who look like them have been shut out.

A high quality education is a civil right, and a necessity for all students, and for our nation in today's global economy. It is past time for all students to have access to the same opportunities my daughter has had. We need to eliminate the second grade gatekeeper process immediately, and open the doors to a bright future for all students.

Finally – and I say this as a mother who grieves with the mothers of Kanisha Neal and Stephone Wiggins – our children are in crisis. We have to teach every single one of them to value themselves and each other. We don't do that by labeling them "not gifted and talented."

Submitted by Fran Rothstein, MCPS parent and Montgomery County Education Forum member, 9-26-05