

Montgomery County Board of Education  
Carver Educational Services Center  
850 Hungerford Drive, Room 123  
Rockville, MD 20850

April 7, 2015

Dear Members of the Board of Education:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Latino Advocacy Coalition, we ask that you direct your attention as you choose a new Superintendent to important issues that impact Latino students in Montgomery County Public Schools and their families. The new Superintendent will play an essential role in creating a truly inclusive, progressive, culturally competent school system where every student is welcomed and finds success. He or she must have the experience, qualifications and personal characteristics needed to carry out that role successfully. We see this leadership change as an opportunity to make significant systemic changes that will have a long-lasting and positive impact.

The Board must exercise its political will and hire a Superintendent who is not afraid to make difficult choices—someone who will lead with the vision and tenacity necessary to make a dramatic shift and address the special academic, social and emotional needs of the growing Latino population. MCPS must build from strength and make the system-wide reforms needed to fully integrate and insure the success of its Latino students.

The challenge is substantial. Social, economic, academic, and emotional factors heighten the difficulty Latino students face when trying to do well in school under the current system. Latino students are impacted by language and cultural barriers, poverty, and the effects of family separation due to immigration.

Budgets are tight, of course. Thus MCPS must rethink the most effective way to use its resources to address the needs of this growing student population. Failing to close the achievement gap has implications that go well beyond Latino students and their families. The future well-being of Montgomery County and its respected school system also are at stake.

Our next Superintendent must have demonstrated experience in successfully carrying out the following tasks and must commit to achieving the following results here as well:

- **Create new Career Pathways and Increase Technical Education Options** – Continue to fund the System’s college and career readiness plan. However, also create a “state-of-the-art” career readiness program for ESOL students, older youth with interrupted education, and students who are struggling academically, for whom the traditional college pathway may not be a desire or an option.

- **Build a Diverse and Culturally and Linguistically Competent MCPS Staff** – Implement the Staff Diversity Plan (including increasing bilingual staff) to ensure that staffing at all levels of MCPS—from the Board and Administration to personnel at individual schools—reflects the student body, as a first step to becoming a culturally and linguistically competent system. MCPS, working in collaboration with the Latino community, must understand and respond to social, emotional, and poverty-related issues in a way that is culturally competent and respects traditional and nontraditional ways of addressing such issues.
- **Provide Meaningful Ways for Parents to Access and Participate in Policy and Decision-Making Processes** – Articulate a strategy and create the mechanisms needed for the Latino community to fully participate in MCPS and Board of Education key debates and crucial policy decisions. This includes development of strategic plans, the budget process, and other policy decisions having large-scale impact (a recent example being the proposed change in school bell times). At a minimum MCPS, in collaboration with the Latino community, must meet parents where they are and accommodate their comfort level, education level, and English proficiency.

**Overarching goal: Engage in system-wide reform** – Issues of Latino students often are treated as new initiatives that require new resources. Rather than adding on to fix the “Latino problem”, the entire system should assess what they do and how well they do their work. In the areas where MCPS has a history of not being successful at meeting the community’s needs (academic or otherwise ), one option would be to partner with the Latino community to jointly develop, and implement innovative approaches to better respond to such needs. Two examples for potential partnership areas are increasing the cultural competence of existing staff to heighten their awareness and capacity to respond to our students’ unique needs and ensuring that additional attention is paid to the challenges of helping first-in-family college goers understand college readiness. These are areas in which MCPS is already invested but must execute more effectively and can do so with strengthened partnerships.

We ask that you select a new Superintendent who already has demonstrated his or her ability to achieve these goals elsewhere. Consider the impact of your selection on the future of the Latino community and the County overall. By investing in the success of Latino students and their families, MCPS will have invested in greater possibilities for all its students. The MCLAC stands committed to working with you.

Sincerely,  
Therese Gibson, Antonio Hernandez and Diego Uriburu

Co-Chairs, MCLAC

*The Montgomery County Latino Advocacy Coalition is comprised of an active group of Latino and non-Latino parents, community leaders, and organizations. Our mission is to advocate for the improvement of the quality of life of the Latino community in Montgomery County.*