

My name is **Noemi Kedei**. I am a scientist who attended college and graduate school in Hungary. I came to the United States by getting a fellowship from the National Cancer Institute. Since 2005, I have been a staff scientist at the same Institution.

I arrived in the United States with two young children. My oldest child was five and she attended ESOL classes in kindergarden. My younger child began to learn English at home. Now both of them are in magnet programs. My daughter, now in tenth grade, attended the math, science and computer science magnet at Takoma Park Middle School and she is now in the magnet program at Blair. My son went to the Center for the Highly Gifted at Barnsley Elementary School starting in 4th grade and he is now in 7th grade in the magnet program at Takoma Park Middle School. My husband and I think that the children have benefitted greatly from the magnet programs. I came here tonight to talk about the importance of keeping the magnet programs even in difficult economic times.

Every child deserves to be challenged in school, and the level of challenge needed varies from child to child, some needing less, some needing more. The magnet program provides an excellent opportunity for children who need more challenge to be kept engaged. In the magnet program these children are together with other children with similar interests and work ethics. In this environment it is possible for the appropriately trained teacher to go over the MCPS curriculum at a different level, at a different pace, discussing the material from different points of view. For these children working hard and pushing themselves to do better, reaching to the top becomes natural, they do not feel special. Without the magnet program some of these students might get the education they needed but it is very unlikely that they would fill even a single classroom at any school. If the majority of children in a school have other priorities and interests, the academically oriented children might be stigmatized, considered weird, "nerds". These children do not deserve to be intimidated or ostracized just because they are more focused or harder working. This is especially important when children are young, because children should not be discouraged from academic pursuits.

The children in the magnet programs should be given the education they need because they could be the future leaders, future inventors and future scientists. The United States is one of the richest countries. The best scientific facilities in the world are here. Thus we in Montgomery County have a special responsibility to nurture the talent in all students. Giving the gifted children the education that fits them best benefits the community, the country and the whole world.