Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

October 25, 2010

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Update on Student Instructional Program Planning and Implementation

Executive Summary

Central to the major goals of achieving equity and excellence for every student, identified in *Our Call to Action: Pursuit of Excellence*, is ensuring that each student receives the most challenging and appropriate instruction. This memorandum provides an update on the development of a systemwide process designed to reveal and address issues of equity and ensure that all students have access to challenging curriculum and instruction while providing parents with timely communication about their child's instructional program. This process, Student Instructional Program Planning and Implementation (SIPPI), supports the system goal of equitable preparation and access to a rigorous instructional program for every child.

The SIPPI pilot supported educators in some of their most vital decisions and provided them with an important new process and tool to improve how students are recommended for advanced instruction. In addition, it shows great promise as a monitoring tool to see that students are receiving the appropriate services. The development of SIPPI is not unlike other instruments we have developed, such as the Honors/Advanced Placement Identification Tool (HAPIT), that have proven to be of great support in instructional decision making. As with the early implementation of HAPIT, the pilot year resolved many technical implementation issues. The pilot year also confirmed early beliefs that in order for SIPPI to be successful it must be part of systemic reform efforts to raise expectations for every child and provide a high level of instruction in every classroom.

Background

In 2006, the Deputy Superintendent's Advisory Committee (DSAC) on Gifted and Talented Education provided feedback on the implementation of Board of Education Policy IOA, *Gifted and Talented Education*, and the milestones regarding advanced instruction identified under Goal 2 (Provide an Effective Instructional Program) of *Our Call to Action: Pursuit of Excellence*.

After review, research, and discussion of practices and issues regarding the education of gifted students, DSAC made the following four major recommendations:

- Strengthen accountability measures.
- Improve and expand programs.
- Implement systematic collection and analysis of data.
- Provide all students with equal access to Gifted and Talented (GT) programs and services.

As detailed in the September 8, 2009, update to the Board of Education, *Goal 2: Provide an Effective Instructional Program—Sequence of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction,* Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has demonstrated significant progress in improving and expanding programs for students working at advanced levels of instruction. However, as evidenced in the analysis of several years of gifted identification data and review of student outcomes, a persistent disproportionality, or opportunity gap, remains between African American and Hispanic students and their Asian American and White peers. In particular, African American and Hispanic students are less likely to be recommended for, and gain access to, accelerated and enriched instruction.

For two decades, all Grade 2 students have participated in global screening, an annual process that uses multiple measures to make GT identification decisions. Analyses by the Global Screening Project Team, made up of MCPS staff and community members, revealed disproportionate results with regard to race/ethnicity and services provided. Simply stated, African American and Hispanic students, as well as students receiving Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and special education services, have been consistently underserved with regard to advanced instructional programs and consistently underrepresented with regard to gifted and talented identification. However, the singular focus on identification of students has not necessarily informed the system about how accelerated and enriched instruction is provided at each school. Without a systematic data collection tool in place, gathering data on services has proven to be difficult. The limited data that were gathered about the services indicated a disproportionate provision of services. Anecdotal data from parents also indicated a disconnect between services recommended and services provided.

Current research from the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) also supports a focus on the delivery of services. In the publication *Aiming for Excellence: Gifted Program Standards,* NAGC recommends that student assessment for identification ". . . is an organized, systematic, ongoing process that seeks to identify student needs for purposes of matching students to programming options." Such a systematic approach for continuous identification, matching, and monitoring of student strengths and services is essential. NAGC further posits that underserved students need challenging programs if they are to develop their ability and realize optimal levels of performance (2010). Stanford University psychology professor Carol Dweck stresses the importance of cultivating a growth mindset in education and presents research that demonstrates

that intelligence is not fixed, but rather it can be nurtured through access and provision of services.

Driven by a system commitment to equity and excellence, stakeholder recommendations, data analyses, and current research, MCPS designed the SIPPI process to develop consistent methods for documenting and recommending advanced-level programming for each student and, more importantly, to ensure that such recommendations are enacted. SIPPI combined global screening and course placement recommendations, ensured that data from this process were reflected in articulation processes, and expanded the focus from solely analyzing identification results to also including an emphasis on ensuring the delivery of services for all students.

The Pilot Year: Student Instructional Program Planning and Implementation

In 2009–2010, the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs (OCIP), the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO), the Office of Shared Accountability (OSA), and the Office of School Performance (OSP) collaborated to pilot the SIPPI process in 31 elementary schools (Attachment A). Meetings were held throughout the year with the principals of the pilot schools and representatives from the central office were charged with leading the effort on the SIPPI project. Information and ideas exchanged at each meeting resulted in the SIPPI process outlined below.

The purpose of SIPPI is to—

- match students' strengths and areas of need with instruction and programs;
- recognize those students whose performance, motivation, or potential ability indicates the need for accelerated and enriched instruction;
- recognize students who need specialized instructional support;
- communicate the recommendations of a team of professionals to families and the next grade level teacher, including placing recommendations within the context of college readiness;
- include parents in decisions regarding instructional recommendations; and
- ensure that recommendations for instruction are carried out.

Step 1: Gathering Data that Best Inform School Staff Members about the Whole Child

The team developing the SIPPI process identified consistent data points, including performance data such as mathematics unit assessments and reading instructional levels, verbal and nonverbal cognitive assessment results, and parent and staff input as the critical data points needed to inform instructional decisions. Once data points were identified, an application was developed within *m*yMCPS that allows the school committee to access these data points in one place.

Parent input is an important component to the SIPPI process. Through the pilot, parents had the option of completing translated parent input surveys electronically or on paper. For the pilot,

OCTO developed a secure, user-friendly application where parents could access information about their child and enter information about their child that would help inform instructional decisions.

Step 2: Reviewing the Data and Making Instructional Decisions

Committees representing the diverse roles and perspectives of professional staff in each of the pilot schools were trained to use the new tools to interpret the data in order to make the best instructional decisions for each child. After reviewing the data, committee members made and recorded an instructional decision about reading, mathematics, and GT identification for each Grade 2 student in their school. Based on data points, the SIPPI application generates proposed recommendations for instructional level. These recommendations serve as guides for the school's committee, which makes final instructional decisions. To support the committee, an application was developed within *my*MCPS that allows users access to the electronically generated proposed recommendations for each student and to enter the school's instructional decisions.

Step 3: Making Articulation Decisions

During the pilot, it became important that the data generated from the recommendation and placement process be reflected in the articulation card from Grade 2 to Grade 3. Principals shared the articulation cards they currently use, and together they informed the design of an electronic articulation card that was populated with the Step 2 instructional decisions and supporting data for each child. During this process, principals expressed the desire to have an electronic articulation card populated with important student data points and instructional recommendations for all grade levels. This need will be met this year with the development of a systemwide articulation analyzer housed within *m*yMCPS, informed by stakeholders across subject areas and grade levels and intended to facilitate ease in course placement decision making and reporting.

In addition to individual electronic cards for each student, schools were provided with detailed reports that included numbers of students requiring instruction at specific levels; thus serving to support the instructional schedule and informing professional development needs. These reports will be included as part of the larger articulation analyzer housed in *my*MCPS.

Step 4: Communicating Decisions

In addition to assessment results and GT identification decisions, the new SIPPI parent report includes instructional recommendations. This is a significant upgrade; instructional recommendations never have been included in the global screening parent report. This consistent form of communication was translated into six languages and delivered to parents.

Step 5: Monitoring Implementation

SIPPI provides "real time" data to monitor instructional programming. Schools and central services staff members can access these data at any time. This fall, monitoring will ensure that students are appropriately placed, allowing for corrections throughout the school year. In addition, staff members at schools and central office have access to meaningful, current data on student progress in reading, mathematics, and other assessment measures through the many reports housed within the Performance Center of *my*MCPS. Data found in these reports will be used to monitor student performance on key instructional concepts and ensure students receive the continued supports they may need.

Qualitative Results of Pilot Implementation

Qualitative data were collected from multiple stakeholders including parents, principals, and school-based staff members. Multiple school-based stakeholders praised the seamless, streamlined process, and recognized the benefit of "real time" data and access to consistent data points across schools for making instructional decisions for students. While the pilot was intended to serve students transitioning from Grade 2 to Grade 3, many schools elected to use the parent survey and articulation portion of SIPPI for students in all grades. SIPPI also brought to light the need to clarify expectations for accelerated and enriched instruction for all schools and to expand efforts from the Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction (AEI) to create a broader awareness for school staff members on the characteristics of gifted students who are not traditionally being served by accelerated and enriched instruction.

Parent Feedback

SIPPI included a new web-enabled form, as well as a traditional hard copy, so parents could provide input on their child before Step 2 of the process was under way. Parent participation increased to 45 percent of parents whose children went through the SIPPI process, either electronically or in hard copy, up from 32 percent over past global screening hard copy parent input forms.

To determine parent perceptions of SIPPI, telephone interviews were conducted with a small sampling of parents who completed the SIPPI parent input form in spring of 2010. The parents surveyed were nominated by principals. In this nominated group, 43 parents were contacted and 15 parents completed the interview. This was a response rate of 34.8 percent, typical of MCPS survey response rates.

Data collected from the SIPPI parent input form was included in the pre-populated forms the school committee reviewed for Step 2 and Step 3 (articulation). Findings related to the parent input form include:

- More than seven out of ten parents remembered seeing the parent input form (73.2 percent). Among those remembering the form, a backpack delivery or a mailing home were the ways they most often reported receiving it.
- About two-thirds of the parents who remembered the form) said they completed it electronically and the rest said they completed a paper form.
- One hundred percent of the parents surveyed stated that the parent input form was easy to understand, easy to complete, and was a good way to provide input on their child's educational process.

The SIPPI Parent Report was sent home in the summer 2010 with individual student results and was available in six languages. Information included test results and gifted identification results, as well as the school recommendations for reading and mathematics instructional level and a definition of services provided for those levels. Findings related to the parent report include the following:

- Most parents (86.6 percent) remembered seeing the parent report. About two-thirds of the parents who remembered the report said it was mailed home.
- At least two-thirds of parents who remembered seeing the report "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the information was easy for them to understand (76.9 percent), useful in understanding their child's learning needs (69.2 percent), covered topics parents most wanted to know about (69.2 percent), and arrived at a good time for them to be thinking about school matters (69.2 percent).
- Parents most frequently identified the instructional program information as most useful, followed by the mathematics recommendation, then reading recommendation and GT identification. Assessment results ranked last in terms of use to parents.

Anecdotal parent feedback indicated some portions of the form were difficult to follow. Staff members are working to make these portions of the form easier to understand. Parent perceptions of the SIPPI process will continue to be collected and analyzed to ensure that these tools are helpful to parents and support their efforts to advocate for a high-quality education for their children.

Recommendation Results (SIPPI Step 2)

To reach the goals of equity and excellence, it is essential for MCPS to closely monitor how students are recommended for, and ultimately receive, accelerated and enriched instruction. Historically, MCPS has measured GT identification alone, providing no systemic quantitative way to monitor the access and provision of accelerated and enriched instruction. This pilot year establishes baseline quantitative data for the identification of services recommended for students entering Grade 3 in 31 schools.

Table 1 of Attachment B compares the results of the global screening process in 2009 and the SIPPI process in 2010 for the 31 pilot schools. The comparison clearly demonstrates that with

SIPPI in 2010, above-level reading recommendations nearly doubled for all racial subgroups. With SIPPI, 10.7 percent more students receiving FARMS were recommended for above-level reading instruction in 2010 than in 2009. Similarly, recommendations for above-level mathematics instruction increased in all racial/ethnic subgroups. While the GT identification remained flat between the two processes, SIPPI provided more students with a recommendation for above-level reading and mathematics instruction. These results clearly show that this process is helping us better identify students who are ready for accelerated instruction.

Monitoring Current Level of Instruction Preliminary Results (SIPPI Step 5)

SIPPI provided level of instruction data to school and central office staff members for each student in early October, allowing a valid comparison between services recommended and services currently being received by students. If needed, adjustments may be made immediately. The data in Tables 2 and 3 of Attachment B compare the recommendations made in spring 2010 with the current instructional level, as of October 12, 2010. Based on the following data, schools have made adjustments to student schedules since this date:

- 81.3 percent of the students recommended for above-level reading instruction were receiving above-level reading instruction and 18.7 percent of the students recommended for above-level reading instruction were not receiving above-level reading instruction
- 85.8 percent of the students not recommended for above-level reading instruction were receiving on-level reading instruction; 14.2 percent of students who were not recommended for above-level reading instruction were receiving that instruction
- 87.6 percent of the students who were recommended for above-level mathematics instruction were receiving above-level mathematics instruction and 12.4 percent of the students who were recommended for above-level mathematics instruction were not receiving that instruction
- 90.5 percent of the students not recommended for above-level mathematics instruction were receiving on-grade-level instruction, 9.5 percent of students who were not recommended for above-level mathematics instruction were receiving above-level mathematics instruction

The data on instructional levels for reading and mathematics revealed a disproportionate number of African American and Hispanic students not receiving the above-level instruction for which they had been recommended. Fortunately, as schools reviewed individual student data based on the October 12, 2010, review, they made appropriate adjustments in student schedules. Prior to the implementation of SIPPI, processes did not provide school or central administrators with a way to easily see such discrepancies until the school year was over, well after the opportunity to make changes had past.

Next Steps

- Central office and school staff members are continuing to collaboratively review the results of the first round of Step 5 monitoring and are making adjustments to student schedules as necessary. The principals of the pilot schools will meet in November to debrief Step 5 results and suggest improvements to the full process.
- Adjustments are being made to the process based on parent and school feedback. To better identify the traditionally underserved, a teacher checklist and survey for students exhibiting nontraditional characteristics of giftedness will be added to Step 1, assessments and student data results used in the process are being analyzed and reviewed, and the parent report is being revised to be more user friendly.
- Implementation procedures are being developed for use on the SIPPI portion of *my*MCPS. Webinars and professional development plans are under development for key stakeholders in the process, including principals, counselors, GT liaisons, and instructional data assistants.
- Over the next few months, the central office SIPPI management team will train key school staff to implement a SIPPI rollout to all MCPS elementary schools in the winter and spring of the 2010–2011 school year.
- In January and February 2011, discussions will begin with elementary/middle school principals to identify needs for the Grade 5/6 SIPPI, with anticipated development in the 2011–2012 school year.

Conclusion

SIPPI is providing schools with a powerful new tool that not only gives principals and teachers data about gifted and talented identification, but also provides detailed data about what services students need to be challenged. The data from the global screening process have remained consistently flat, revealing the same disproportionate results with regard to race/ethnicity and services provided for intellectually able students that we have seen in the past. We know that African American, Hispanic, FARMS, ESOL, and special education students were underserved with regard to advanced instructional programs and were underrepresented with regard to GT identification for at least two decades. What is so hopeful about the SIPPI process, piloted by 31 elementary schools in 2009–2010, is that it takes us closer to our system goal of providing equitable preparation and access to rigorous instructional programs for underrepresented and underserved populations. Staff members now have far more robust data to make appropriate adjustments to school schedules early in the school year ensuring that the needs of students are being met. While further refinements will be incorporated, the preliminary results of the SIPPI process offer more encouraging and optimistic outcomes for children related to access, opportunities, equity, and excellence.

At the table for tonight's discussion are Mr. Erick J. Lang, associate superintendent, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs; Mr. Martin M. Creel, director, Department of Enriched and Innovative Programs; Mr. David T. Chia, principal, Rock Creek Forest Elementary School;

Mrs. Karen L. Johnson, principal, Twinbrook Elementary School; Reverend Thomas Pumphrey, retired MCPS principal, assistant pastor, Inter-Denominational Church of God, and member of the global screening project team; and Dr. Monique T. Felder, director, Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction.

JDW:EJL:smw

Attachments

Montgomery County Public Schools
Student Instructional Program Planning and Implementation (SIPPI) Pilot Schools
2009–2010

Elementary School	Principal
Beverly Farms	Dr. Beth L. Brown
Brookhaven	Mr. Robert B. Grundy
Brown Station	Mr. Douglas M. Robbins (acting)
Burning Tree	Mrs. Nancy L. Erdrich
Rachel Carson	Mr. Lawrence D. Chep
Chevy Chase	Mrs. Jody L. Smith
Clearspring	Mrs. Holly A. Steel
Clopper Mill	Ms. Stephanie B. Curry
Damascus	Ms. Rebecca Jones
Fields Road	Mrs. Kathryn Schiavone-Rupp
Fox Chapel	Ms. Diana L. Zabetakis
Garrett Park	Ms. Elaine L. Chang-Baxter
Georgian Forest	Ms. Aara L. Davis-Jones
Great Seneca Creek	Mr. Gregory S. Edmundson
Greenwood	Mrs. Cheryl A. Bunyan
Highland View	Miss Anne M. Dardarian
Laytonsville	Ms. Hilarie Rooney
Spark M. Matsunaga	Mrs. Judy L. Brubaker
Meadow Hall	Mr. Cabell W. Lloyd
Mill Creek Towne	Mr. Kenneth L. Marcus
North Chevy Chase (this is a Grades 3–6 school)	Mr. Gary B. Bartee
Oakland Terrace	Mrs. Cheryl D. Pulliam
William Tyler Page	Mrs. Debra A. Berner
Rock Creek Forest	Mr. David T. Chia
Rock Creek Valley	Ms. Catherine A. Jasperse
Rosemary Hills	Mr. Ralph Viggiano
Rosemont	Mr. James A. Sweeney
Stedwick	Dr. Margaret B. Pastor
Strawberry Knoll	Mr. Egon (Frank) Kaplan
Summit Hall	Mr. Keith R. Jones
Twinbrook	Mrs. Karen L. Johnson

Montgomery County Public Schools
Table 1
Number and Percentage of Students Screened and Services Recommended
in 31 SIPPI Pilot Schools in 2009 and 2010*

	Student Group	2009			2010		
		Screened N	Recommended N	%	Screened N	Recommended N	%
Above-Level Reading	All Students	2,293	404	17.6	2,467	951	38.5
	African American	477	53	11.1	464	133	28.7
	Asian American	337	98	29.1	379	219	57.8
	Hispanic	547	55	10.1	592	120	20.3
	White	923	197	21.3	1,026	477	46.5
	FARMS	713	78	10.9	777	168	21.6
	ESOL	457	21	4.6	382	49	12.8
	Spec. Education	191	8	4.2	216	23	10.6
Above-Level Math	All Students	2,293	740	32.3	2,467	992	40.2
	African American	477	85	17.8	464	109	23.5
	Asian American	337	187	55.5	379	241	63.6
	Hispanic	547	75	13.7	592	106	17.9
	White	923	390	42.3	1,026	535	52.1
	FARMS	713	151	21.2	777	147	18.9
	ESOL	457	46	10.1	382	39	10.2
	Spec. Education	191	18	9.4	216	25	11.6
GT ID	All Students	2,293	824	35.9	2,467	871	35.3
	African American	477	109	22.9	464	106	22.8
	Asian American	337	190	56.4	379	199	52.5
	Hispanic	547	95	17.4	592	109	18.4
	White	923	426	46.2	1,026	456	44.4
	FARMS	713	182	25.5	777	134	17.2
	ESOL	457	53	11.6	382	39	10.2
	Spec. Education	191	26	13.6	216	24	11.1

When fewer than five students are identified in a subgroup category, data are not disaggregated by subgroup. American Indian students are included in the total data but not disaggregated.

*In 2009, the global screening process was followed and in 2010, the SIPPI process was piloted.

Table 2
Comparison of Spring 2010 Student Recommendations for Above-Level Reading
to Fall 2010 Level of Reading Instruction for SIPPI Schools

	Student Group	# of Students	Fall Above Grade Level		Fall On or Below Grade Level	
			n	%	n	%
Spring Recommended for Above-Level Instruction	All Students	880	715	81.3	165	18.7
	African American	120	90	75.0	30	25.0
	Asian American	205	167	81.5	38	18.5
	Hispanic	109	82	75.2	27	24.8
	White	444	375	84.5	69	15.5
	FARMS	153	114	74.5	39	25.5
	ESOL	41	30	73.2	11	26.8
	Spec. Education	19	17	89.5	2	10.5
Spring Not Recommended For Above-Level Instruction	All Students	1,346	191	14.2	1,155	85.8
	African American	289	31	10.7	258	89.3
	Asian American	144	19	13.2	125	86.8
	Hispanic	405	39	9.6	366	90.4
	White	504	100	19.8	404	80.2
	FARMS	548	50	9.1	498	90.9
	ESOL	289	13	4.5	276	95.5
	Spec. Education	154	6	3.9	148	96.1

Total number of Students in the two recommended groups: 2,226 When fewer than five students are identified in a subgroup category, data are not disaggregated by subgroup. American Indian students are included in the total data but not disaggregated.

Table 3
Comparison of Spring 2010 Student Recommendations for Above-Level Mathematics
to Fall 2010 Level of Mathematics Instruction for SIPPI Schools

	Student Group	# of Students	Fall Above Grade Level		Fall On Grade Level	
			n	%	n	%
Spring Recommended for Above-Level Instruction	All Students	962	843	87.6	119	12.4
	African American	104	76	73.1	28	26.9
	Asian American	235	210	89.4	25	10.6
	Hispanic	102	86	84.3	16	15.7
	White	520	470	90.4	50	9.6
	FARMS	147	116	78.9	31	21.1
	ESOL	34	23	67.6	11	32.4
	Spec. Education	25	19	76.0	6	24.0
Spring Not Recommended For Above-Level Instruction	All Students	1,394	133	9.5	1,261	90.5
	African American	333	21	6.3	312	93.7
	Asian American	130	16	12.3	114	87.7
	Hispanic	460	20	4.3	440	95.7
	White	466	75	16.1	391	83.9
	FARMS	613	18	2.9	595	97.1
	ESOL	326	4	1.2	322	98.8
	Spec. Education	168	9	5.4	159	94.6

Total number of students in the two recommendation groups: 2,356. When fewer than five students are identified in a subgroup category, data are not disaggregated by subgroup. American Indian students are included in the total data but not disaggregated.