

FY 2010 QUESTION NUMBER: 7

QUESTION:

How many students are coming into the Middle School Magnet Consortium from out of the area? What is the process for student selection? Is there a preference given to FARMS students? How many out-of-area applications were there last year for this year's enrollment in 6th Grade?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: N/A

ANSWER:

During the 2008–2009 school year, 578 students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 are attending Middle School Magnet Consortium (MSMC) schools from outside the consortium boundaries. There are 1,869 students attending the schools who reside within the Consortium boundaries for a total of 2,447 students across Grades 6, 7, and 8 in all three schools.

The MSMC was established with a federal grant that ended with the 2007–2008 school year. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) adapted the goals established by the grant to meet current system needs. The MSMC goals are to:

- increase student performance in the three target schools,
- broaden local student program choices and expand student program choices in MCPS, and
- decrease socioeconomic isolation in Consortium schools without increasing socioeconomic isolation in sending middle schools.

To help meet the last program goal students are recruited from outside the Consortium and a lottery process selects applicants. In the fall counselors share magnet options with all Grade 5 students, the Options book is sent to families of all Grade 5 students in MCPS, and parent information meetings and open houses are held to share information about the program. Families in the Consortium must submit a student choice form ranking their first, second, and third school preferences and interested families outside the Consortium may submit a choice form as well. In fall of 2008, 698 out-of-consortium choice forms were received, up from 688 in 2007.

In-consortium and out-of-consortium forms are entered into a computerized lottery. The factors considered in the lottery process are described in the MSMC Program booklet distributed to parents and available online. The booklet states:

“A variety of factors are considered when selecting students for MSMC schools. Factors in the lottery process may include the total number of available seats, total number of applicants for those seats, choice ranking, sibling link, socioeconomic status of the applicant, gender of the applicant, and, for out-of-consortium students, the percentage of

students on the Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS) at the applicant's home school. No one factor determines whether a student is invited to attend one of the three schools. Some students may receive a school assignment other than their first choice.”

To meet the goal of decreasing socioeconomic isolation at the three schools the lottery may consider the FARMS status of applicants. In addition the FARMS status of the applicant's home school also may be considered to avoid increasing socioeconomic isolation at the sending school.