

Good morning. I am Donald Pelles; I am speaking on behalf of the Montgomery County Education Forum (MCEF) regarding a critical aspect of achieving Equity and Excellence in MCPS educational programs.

For over a decade we In MCEF have spoken out on behalf of students who are short-changed by existing MCPS policies and practices. We have argued against the evils of tracking and, most recently, have organized a campaign to end the labeling of students that begins with the Grade 2 Global Screening (G2GS) Process. We agree with the MCEA that this labeling serves no positive purpose and in fact has a number of negative consequences.

We believe that MCPS has made significant progress in this area, including the pilot *No Labels* programs at Burning Tree and Georgian Forest Elementary Schools.

We recognize that the SIPPI (*Student Instructional Program Planning & Implementation*) initiative may provide a path for using the screening process in ways that benefit students, by evaluating their strengths and weaknesses *without* damaging them by pointless labeling. *But we need to do more and we need to do more now.*

MCEF strongly urges you to end all policies and practices that label students as "gifted and talented" or "NOT". We would be happy to provide more detailed comment on how this transition might best occur. But as a *minimal first step* we specifically recommend that the letters sent to parents reporting the results of G2GS be stripped of any sentence(s) labeling a student as GT or NOT. The label only hurts, it does not help. The two pilot programs have proven that eliminating this label from the letter has *no* negative effects. If at two schools, why not system-wide?

Please take this first step. Remove that offensive and pointless sentence from the letter sent to parents. Surely we can all agree that the path to equitable and excellent education does *not* require that second grade students be given meaningless -- and damaging -- GT or NOT GT labels.