

**EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
CMS EQUITY COMMITTEE
TO THE
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG
BOARD OF EDUCATION
AND
SUPERINTENDENT
DR. PETER GORMAN**

January 15, 2010

Table of Contents

- I. Executive Summary**
- II. Limited English Proficiency**
- III. Advance Placement**
- IV. School Tours**
 - a. Merry Oaks Elementary**
 - b. Montclair Elementary**
 - c. Mallard Creek High School**
- V. Acknowledgements**
- VI. Appendix**
 - a. LEP Section Appendix I**
 - b. ESL Teachers to LEP Students Excel Worksheet**
 - c. Parent Advocate Data Appendix III
Excel Worksheet**
 - d. AP Course Comparisons PDF**
 - e. AP Courses 2009-2010 PDF**

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CMS Equity Committee is pleased to present to the Board of Education its 2009 Equity Report.

The following summary outlines the equity topics the committee examined this past year and highlights the results and conclusions of our studies.

The following two topics were examined in depth:

1. Limited English Proficiency programs (LEP)
2. Advanced Placement participation and accessibility

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Recently we have seen a rapid growth in the numbers of students arriving in school who cannot speak English. Between 2006 and 2008 the number of current and former Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students in CMS grew by 7,972 or from 10.4% of our total student population to 16%

This growth has occurred more significantly in certain areas of the community than others, leading to varying issues. In pockets of concentrated LEP populations schools can address the needs of these students more broadly, but it may be difficult to encourage immersion into the English language. On the other hand, in schools with smaller LEP populations it can be difficult to secure the resources necessary for adequate communication with students and parents.

This report seeks to examine the challenges facing LEP students and their families and how CMS is addressing these challenges. It covers three specific communication challenges.

I. Communication Between School and LEP Student

This section of the report includes a description of resources available at the **Family Application Center**, as well as transportation issues which many LEP families may experience when attempting to use the center. This section also includes a description of **ESL Services**, and a discussion of **The Bilingual Challenge**, which our LEP students and educators face.

Our recommendation includes suggestions for making Family Application Center services more accessible.

Of concern is the varying concentration of LEP students across the district and the number of peer role models available to LEP students.

II. Communication Between School and LEP Parent

This section discusses **Interpretation and Translation Services** available for parents, the importance of **Parents involvement in School** and how that is being facilitated, and the important role of **Family/Parent Advocates**.

Recommendations include increasing the number of parent advocates in schools with high LEP populations and the use of Latino community organizations to help facilitate parent involvement.

Of concern are interpretation issues for parent teacher communications, including conferences.

III. Communication Between Administration and School

This section highlights communication challenges between the Ed Center and the schools. Areas of concern include the utilization of **Interpretation Services**, awareness and use of **Translation Services**, and the difficulties Spanish speakers may face in registering for **Parent University**.

Recommendations include the promotion of these services to LEP parents.

A concern is the difficulty of effective communication in this large and complex district.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

AP courses offer high school students the opportunity to earn college credit for courses taken in high school. The Equity Committee gathered data to determine the numbers and type of AP courses offered at each of CMS' high schools, the demographics of students enrolled in the courses, and the pass rates on the exams.

The data highlighted two equity issues, neither of which is unique to our district:

I. The Opportunity Gap

This section describes how courses are offered and distributed among CMS high schools. The number of course offerings vary greatly between the schools, with fewer AP classes being taught in high poverty schools than in low poverty schools.

Recommendations for addressing this issue include providing a baseline array of AP courses at every high school and guaranteeing that these courses will be taught even if enrollment is low. A further recommendation includes offering AP courses at smaller high schools on a two-year cycle to increase the number of course offerings.

II. The Enrollment Gap

This section addresses the issue of minority enrollment in AP classes. For many reasons, including cultural and academic backgrounds, both within CMS and nationally there is a disparity in numbers of African American and Latino students enrolled in AP classes as compared to Whites and Asians.

Some of the recommendations for closing this gap include increasing parent awareness of AP opportunities, expanding the use of the College Board's free AP Potential online program, recruiting and training more AP teachers of various ethnic backgrounds, and expanding academic and counseling programs designed to encourage strong academics and interest in AP classes.

II. LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the numbers of newcomers to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area has grown tremendously. These families hail from all over the country – and the world. More recently, we have seen a rapid growth in the numbers of students arriving in school who cannot speak English. Between 2006 and 2008, the Limited English Proficient (LEP) student population grew by 7,972 – or from 10.4% of our total student population to 16%.¹

This growth has occurred more significantly in certain areas of the community than others. Some schools, like Montclair Elementary, have a student population over 50% LEP – whereas others, like Mallard Creek High School, have only a handful of these families. These pockets of concentrated LEP populations create an interesting dynamic. On one hand, the larger concentrations mean that the school can address the specific needs of LEP students more broadly. But, it also means it is more challenging to encourage immersion into the English language. And for the schools with smaller LEP populations, it can be difficult to secure the resources necessary to communicate with students and parents.

Finally, the performance of our LEP students on end-of-grade tests is consistently 20% below the performance of the CMS student body. Last year, CMS did not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for its LEP students.² Only 42.9% of LEP 3rd through 8th graders were at or above grade level last year. Given the population growth and low student performance, it is clear that there may be some equity-related issues in the way we are serving this new group of students.

¹ CMS District Profile 2008. <http://apps.cms.k12.nc.us/departments/instrAccountability/schlProfile05/profiles.asp>

² CMS has undergone a Title III Needs Assessment and Improvement Plan to address not meeting AYP targets for two years. This plan is available at: <http://documents.cms.k12.nc.us/dsweb/Get/Document-23231/2009+CMS+Title+III+Improvement+Plan.doc>

Composite Scores on EOGs across CMS (grade 3-8)

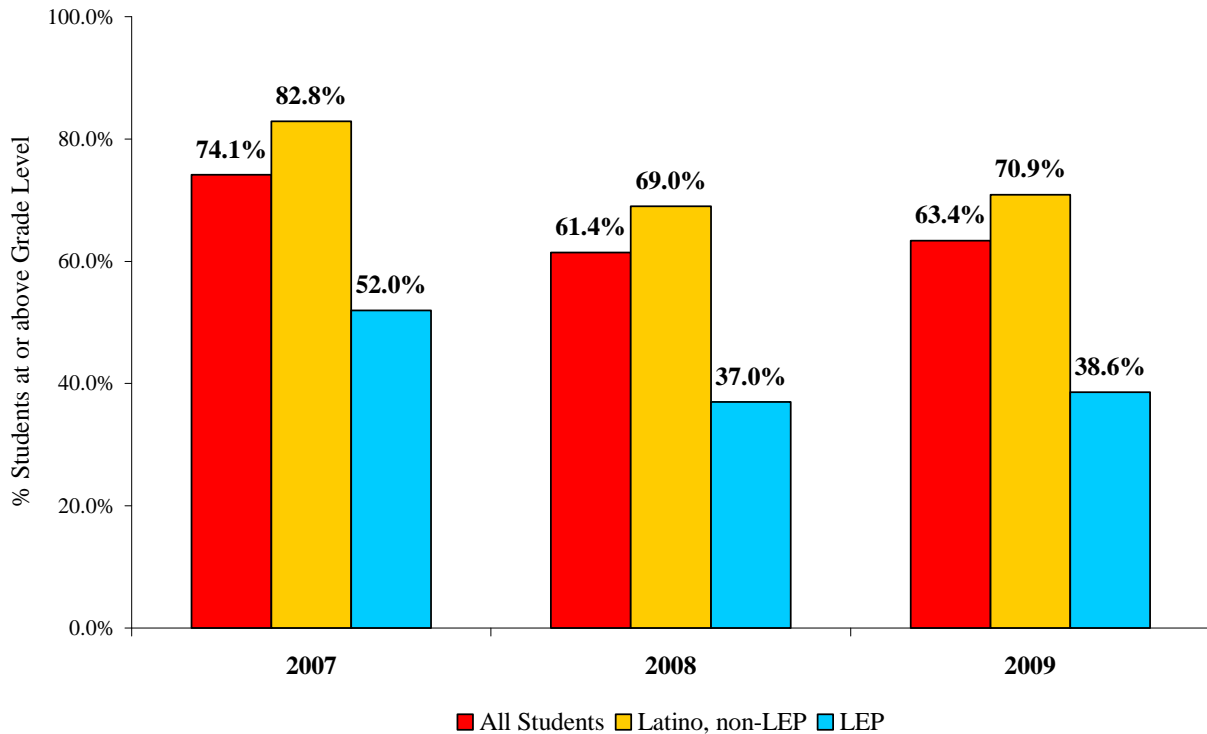


Figure 1 Data provided by CMS staff. Scores reflect composite of reading and math across 3rd through 8th grade for the entire district. Math scores of LEP students were typically closer to those of all students, whereas reading scores for LEP students were significantly behind those of all students.

This report seeks to examine the particular challenges facing our limited English Proficient students and families, and the steps CMS is taking to address those challenges. Regardless of how students arrive in our school system, we believe that equity can only be achieved if students are afforded equitable opportunities. If education is provided in a language that the majority of students understand – and the minority do not understand, it is our responsibility to ensure that this minority has the opportunity to learn the material being presented. Primarily, this means that we need to ensure students have an opportunity to learn English. Nevertheless, this report looks beyond the simple provision of English as a Second Language services (ESL) and into other opportunities that are out of reach for families who do not speak English. Communication in a second language is our largest barrier, but it manifests in different ways. This report will examine three specific communication challenges:

- Communication between schools and LEP students
- Communication between schools and parents who cannot speak English
- Communication between school district administration and schools regarding the LEP population

In each of these areas, we have outlined recommendations for the School Board, as well as concerns. Recommendations are issues that we believe should be addressed in a timely manner.

Our concerns reflect issues that are larger than a single recommendation and may need a long-term strategy – but should be taken into serious consideration as the Board and Superintendent determine future plans for CMS.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

LEP (Limited English Proficient): Term given to students who cannot speak English proficiently, according to standardized testing of literacy, verbal, auditory, and writing skills

ESL (English as a Second Language): Services provided to LEP students to help them learn English. These services can be provided in a pull-out setting or through inclusion in the mainstream classroom.

Translation: Converting written material from one language to another. In our case, translation is needed from English to other languages.

Interpretation: Converting verbal conversations from one language to another and vice-versa. For our purposes, interpretation is needed when school personnel are interacting with parents who are not fluent in English.

METHODOLOGY

Recognizing the extent of this topic, we divided our research into two key areas: (1) equitable distribution of resources across the district addressing the specific needs of LEP students and (2) the processes established to assist LEP families and the experience of LEP families in interacting with those processes. For the first set of questions, CMS staff provided sets of data requested for our analysis. In order to investigate our second set of questions, though, we took two approaches. We met with CMS officials in the areas of ESL, translation services, and other LEP-related offices. Second, we conducted interviews with families at the Latin American Coalition. The conclusions of this report reflect both sets of information. Descriptions of these conversations, data requests, and school visits are attached in the appendices of this report.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND LEP STUDENT

The Family Application Center

The first interaction a student who does not speak English has with our school district is enrolling in school. Almost all LEP families are sent to the Family Application Center in order to enroll. The Family Application Center is a one-stop enrollment location, where students can be tested to determine language proficiency, look into various magnet programs, and enroll in the appropriate courses. In addition, a nurse is available in order to immunize those students that are not up to date on their immunization. While having all of these services in one location is helpful to many families, those families that do not own cars must travel a great distance. The FAC is not on a bus line. From East Charlotte, where many of our LEP families live, parents must take the #39 (Eastway Line) or #9 (Central Line) into the Transit Center, transfer to the #19 (Park Road) and then walk nearly a mile to the FAC.³ If the transfer occurs efficiently, this process is about 1.25 hours – if not, it could take up to 2.5 hours from door to door. CATS used to offer bus

³ Route determined through Charlotte Area Transit Services (CATS) website: <http://triplanner.ridetransit.org>

service along Marsh Road, where the Family Application Center is located, but this service has been discontinued. CMS and the Board of Education should work with CATS in order to restore this service or find an appropriate solution. Our non English speaking parents will not argue for this change on their own. Because of the new documentation requirements for enrollment, parents may not have all the necessary paperwork on their initial visit. In this case, they must travel home, and return. The location of the Family Application Center is particularly disadvantageous to our LEP students because they are one of the few groups that must visit the Center in order to enroll.

ESL Services

Over the last few years, CMS has worked to provide adequate numbers of ESL teachers to address the needs of LEP students. This school year, one English as a Second Language teacher may have anywhere from 8 students to 76 students.⁴ For those schools that have a very small LEP population, ESL teachers are shared between two schools in the same learning community. The Equity Committee commends CMS for their efforts in increasing support in the classroom for LEP students by increasing numbers of ESL teachers, and not cutting these positions in the last year.

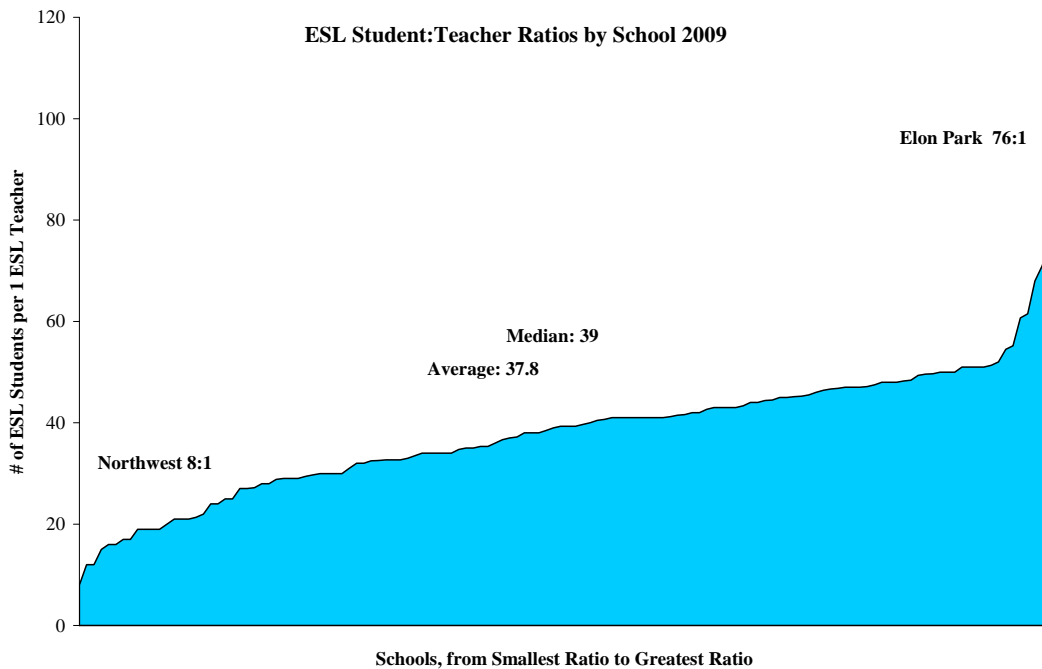


Figure 2: Data reflects only schools with full-time ESL teachers. If a school has a very small LEP population, ESL teachers are shared between two schools, and are not depicted here. All data was provided by CMS staff and calculated by the Equity Committee.

The Bilingual Challenge

As a student becomes more involved in school, the expectation is that the student will be able to immerse him or herself in the English language – and within a few years, catch up with

⁴ Data provided by CMS staff (# of ESL teachers and # of LEP students in each school). Calculations performed by Equity Committee. Appendix II.

his or her peers in the classroom. The first obstacle to this concept is that young children are learning a second language before they have developed cognitive skills in their native language. More support at these earlier grades for children to learn basic skills in their native language may provide a better foundation on which to build academic learning. This method functions effectively at Collinswood Language Academy, where all students learn both English and Spanish. Moreover, children are speaking English at school and their native language at home, which can create cultural barriers and challenges for family life. Bilingual role models- students speaking their native language correctly and modeling for those that are only beginning to learn that language - could help children struggling to adapt.

Conclusions

Recommendation: Make the Family Application Center more accessible to LEP families. Some solutions include: providing transportation, creating a satellite office in the uptown area or working with non-profits that serve the Hispanic/Latino community such as the Latin American Coalition, or moving the Family Application Center altogether. Our recommendation is that the Family Application Center be accessible to all students in our community.

Concern: We are concerned about the numbers of peer role models available to LEP students, and the varying concentrations of LEP students at schools across the district.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND PARENT

We know that parent involvement and parent support are key to a student's academic success. But what happens if a student's parent does not speak English? We examined the experience of LEP parents as their children matriculate through CMS (at varying levels of English proficiency).

Interpretation and Translation for Parents

One of the most important interactions for parents in their child's academic life is the parent-teacher conference. For LEP families, interpretation between teacher and parent must be available in order to have a productive conversation. We discovered that, when interpretation services could not be found easily, schools used custodial staff, high school Spanish students, or even the students themselves to interpret for parents. CMS does have the ability to hire interpretation services for these parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, or discipline meetings, but often these services are not utilized. In schools with smaller numbers of LEP students, parents do not receive verbal or written communications in a language they can understand. Interpretation and translation remain an enormous obstacle for our district.

Parent Involvement in School

The one-on-one interactions between parent and teacher may be the most important aspect of parent involvement; however, a strong PTA can often provide enormous support to a school. In order to build a culture of parent and family involvement, parents must feel welcome – and must know when and where meetings are taking place. Cultural differences become an obstacle in these instances, since many LEP parents are accustomed to verbal communication, as opposed to written. Word of mouth is a more effective means of communication – but how can schools build that parent community?

Family/Parent Advocates

It seems that bilingual parent advocates can provide support to schools with LEP parent populations in a variety of crucial roles. Parent advocates can ensure that interpretation is available at all parent-teacher conferences. They can translate materials for teachers and administrators sent to parents. They become a point of contact for families entering the school and can funnel questions and problems. Parent advocates can build a culture of parent involvement since they become acquainted with many of the parents. If we know that parent involvement is one of the most significant factors in ensuring student success, having a point of contact for parents to facilitate this involvement is essential – for LEP families and for all students. Unfortunately, parent advocate positions were cut drastically between the 08-09 and 09-10 school years. Currently, the parent advocate position is optional for principals. Between the 2009 and 2010 school years, the number of schools employing a parent or family advocate dropped from 50 to 32. This represents a 36% drop district-wide at a time when the numbers of LEP families are growing rapidly. For example, Berryhill Elementary has a 39% LEP population and lost its parent advocate this last year. This position could address both the interpretation/translation challenges and the parent cultural challenges. It is also important to keep in mind that even if the student becomes proficient in English that is not always true of the parent. Parent/family advocates play a critical role, and losing those positions may detriment the opportunities afforded to our LEP students.

Conclusions

Recommendation: Increase support for the parent advocate position by providing schools with high LEP populations at least one parent advocate position. We also recommend that CMS form a strategic partnership with non-profits that work with the Hispanic/Latino population for instance the Latin American Coalition and place a CMS staff parent advocate in that organization as well. For schools that do not have high LEP populations, they can leverage a staff person located at a community organization to help facilitate involvement in different schools.

Concerns: We are concerned about the liability issues associated with interpretation by students. First of all, students interpreting for their own parents could limit the teacher's ability to fully communicate with parents, and runs counter to the purpose of parent-teacher conferences. We also know that high school juniors and seniors in high level Spanish courses have interpreted in parent-teacher conferences. We are concerned about the privacy of these families, though we recognize that some kind of interpretation is better than none at all.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ADMINISTRATION AND SCHOOL

We saw a recurring trend in our research that we would like to highlight in this section: communication challenges between the Education Center and the schools in our district. This relationship is particularly challenging given the newness of the LEP population and the new strategies that must be employed to address their specific needs. This section examines the areas in which that relationship has broken down. When those relationships function correctly and seamlessly, it is difficult to identify. Therefore, these findings are not meant to suggest that every program established by the administration is not appropriately communicated across the district, rather to help the Board and CMS staff identify where communication has faltered in regards to LEP students.

Interpretation Services

CMS administration has funding set aside to utilize interpretation services. When established in advance, an interpreter can be present for parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, or school discipline meetings with parents, in whatever language – from Portuguese to Persian. In many cases, teachers were not we met aware that these services were available. While we commend the district for establishing a way to ensure all parents can be involved in their children’s education processes, we are concerned that these services are not being utilized to their full capacity.

Translation Services

Second, the Department of Public Instruction has materials available in many languages for parents. For those families that speak neither English nor a common language like Spanish, these translated documents could be extremely helpful. CMS has many of these documents available at the administrative level. Teachers and principals do not seem to be aware of this option, or they are not using this option. Interpretation and translation services need to be better utilized across the district.

Parent University

Finally, we have learned that CMS provides, through Parent University, several courses in Spanish, some of which are specifically geared to helping LEP families navigate an education system entirely different from that of their native countries. This is a step forward for CMS, and a wonderful opportunity for LEP families. Many parents seem unaware that these opportunities are even available. Although Parent University was difficult to find on the CMS website, we have found that the site has been revamped and Parent University now can be found on the front page. The difficulty is in finding a link to the description of classes in Spanish. Also, the registration form for the on-line courses is difficult for non-English speakers.

Conclusions

Recommendation: Increase publicity and inner-communication to promote Parent University and translation/interpretation services.

Concern: We are concerned that the disconnect between the Education Center and local schools is not limited to the few issues we outlined here. We hope that CMS Board and staff will consider ways to improve effective communication across our very large and complex district.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCERNS

Recommendations

- Make the Family Application Center more accessible
- Provide high LEP population schools with a bilingual parent/family advocate
- Provide a CMS staff parent/family advocate at a community organization, like the Latin American Coalition, to facilitate involvement for several schools
- Promote Parent University more clearly to immigrant families
- Increase utilization of translation and interpretation services at the school level

Concerns

- Limited numbers of faculty role models available to Hispanic/Latino students.
- Liability of translation by children to parents
- Privacy concerns regarding interpretation by high school students to parents
- Disconnect between Education Center and schools

III. Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement Courses

Advanced Placement (AP) courses offer high school students the opportunity to earn college credit for courses offered by high schools. Students may earn college credit by obtaining a satisfactory score on AP exams given by the College Board each spring. Individual colleges and universities then use AP scores to determine if a student can earn college credit or placement in a higher-level college course.

The Equity Committee gathered data from CMS staff to determine the number and type of AP courses offered at each of CMS' high schools, and the demographics of students enrolled in AP courses.

The data highlighted two equity issues related to the AP program. The Equity Committee found that:

- CMS offers considerably more AP classes in low-poverty high schools than in high-poverty schools. The number of AP courses offered at CMS high schools in 2009-2010 ranges from a high of 25 different AP courses to a low of 7 AP offerings creating a distinct "opportunity gap".
- CMS enrolls disproportionately fewer African American and Latino students in AP classes compared to their representation in the student population. This reveals an "enrollment gap" showing a profound under representation of Latino and African-American students in AP courses--even among those who are not economically disadvantaged.

It is understood that CMS' low AP participation rates among historically underrepresented groups are not unique on a national or state basis, but the Equity Committee does not believe that this is an area where the status quo should be allowed to stand.

I. The Opportunity Gap

Each winter, every high school distributes its own enrollment cards to students for course assignments. These enrollment cards present a menu of courses from which students may choose. While core classes are listed on each high school's enrollment card, Career Technical Education (CTE), Advanced Placement (AP) and magnet school choices differ from school to school. Furthermore, the listing of a class on the enrollment card is no guarantee that the course will actually be offered. There is no set minimum number of students required for a class to 'go'. The decision usually is made at the school level based upon the number of students requesting the class and the challenges of balancing the entire school schedule.

Among non-magnet high schools, Butler had the highest number of AP offerings in 2009-10. The Butler 12th grade enrollment card listed 23 AP classes, all of which are being offered. In contrast, Waddell High's enrollment cards offered students only 10 AP classes, only 7 of which are being taught. Waddell's figure represents the lowest number of AP courses among non-magnet high schools. A complete list of each high schools AP course offerings is appended to this report.

The lack of a diverse range of core and elective AP courses at all schools raises serious equity concerns. When CMS staff presented AP information to the Equity Committee, they maintained that the disparities were based primarily on student and parent interest. However, students and parents cannot select courses unless they are listed on the enrollment card.

Given the budget constraints affecting class sizes and course offerings, online classes are being presented as a potential alternative. The North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) currently offers on-line AP classes free of charge. Students are required to have daily access to a computer with an internet connection, which means computer access can be a significant barrier for some students. While some schools do make computers available during the school day, others provide no access. Public library computers are not a viable alternative for student use because of high public demand and student transportation issues. In 2009 -10, only 114 CMS students enrolled in NCVPS classes. While that number can be expected to grow, it is doubtful that it will serve as a viable alternative for underrepresented groups who historically must contend with the digital divide. Meanwhile, no high schools are using video conferencing to share AP course offerings (or any other regular class offerings) among schools at this time.

2009-2010 School Year	TOTAL #AP Courses
South Meck	25
Butler	23
Ardrey Kell	21
Providence	23
North Meck	23
Mallard Creek	21
Myers Park	21
Hopewell	20
Independence	20
Harding	19
Northwest	15
Vance	15
West Meck	14
OHS (all)	13
East Meck	12
Berry	8
West Charl	8
GHS (all)	8
Waddell	7
Cato	6

Opportunity Gap Recommendations

- Provide a baseline array of AP courses offered at every high school. These courses should include both “core” and elective subjects.
- Guarantee that a baseline number of AP courses will be taught at every high school, even if enrollment is low. Schools should then actively recruit and place students in those courses.
- Offer AP courses on a two-year cycle to increase the number of different courses offered at smaller schools. Offering courses every other year would concentrate students in those classes, thereby increasing enrollment. AP teacher schedules and school assignments might have to be changed to meet the students’ needs, and AP teachers might work at paired high schools. For instance, AP European History might alternate years with AP World History. Likewise, AP Chemistry might alternate with AP Physics. If students knew in advance of the scheduling cycles, they could plan their 11th and 12th grade course schedules.

II. The Enrollment Gap

It is a given that not all students should enroll in AP courses. The courses are designed to be rigorous and challenging for even the highest achieving high school students. But over the years, the College Board, administrator of the AP Program, has released reports on the under representation of minority students in AP courses. College Board findings show:

- Many low-income minorities come from families that do not have a tradition of attending college or of maintaining a family “book culture.”
- Influential peer groups may not consider college a realistic option.
- Minority students are not always exposed to rigorous instruction in the elementary and middle grades and may be subject to low expectations.
- Unequal access to AP courses based on low numbers of high school AP courses can have a chilling effect on enrollment.

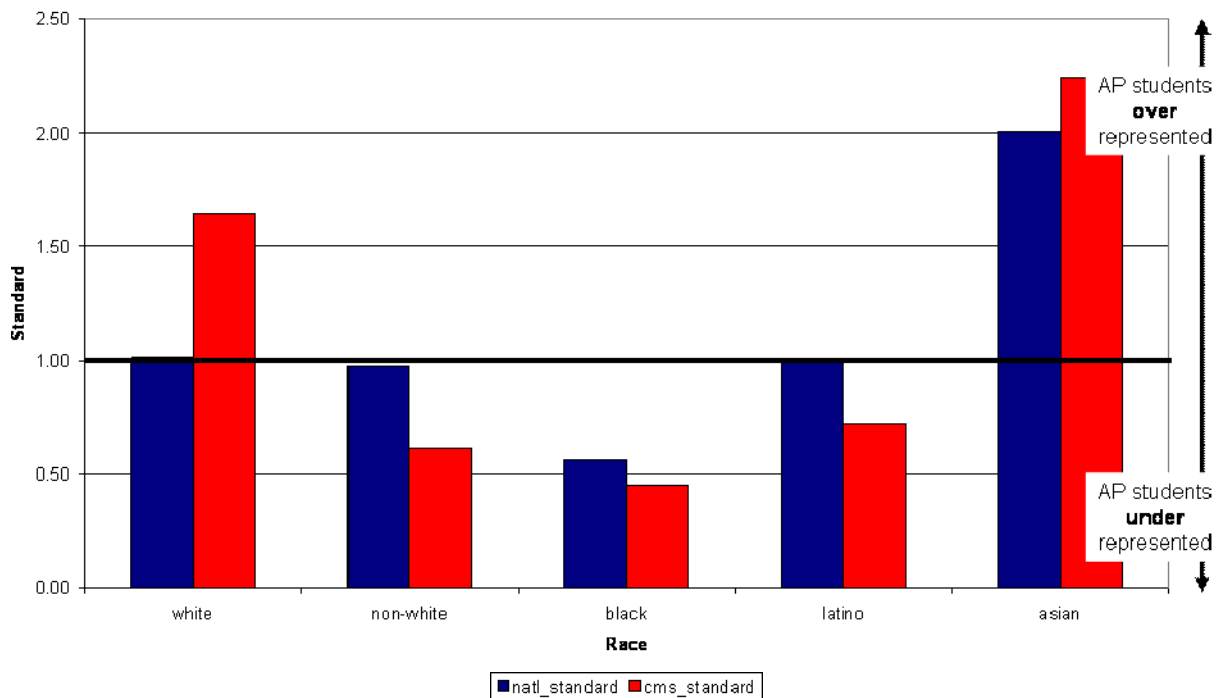
Our own experience as Equity Committee members and parents turned up anecdotal examples of disparities. During fall 2009, the Equity Committee visited Mallard Creek High School, which has a significant number of middle income blacks. However, a cursory check of black students enrolled in AP courses showed their enrollment was disproportionately low. In another example, Northwest School of the Arts boasts one of the most diverse student bodies in CMS. However, only one black student and one mixed race student are currently enrolled in the AP English IV class.

The following table compares the student AP test taking populations by race for the United States as a whole to the AP test taking populations by race for CMS for school year 2007- 2008 .

	White Total	Non-White Total	White AP	Non-White AP	Asian Total	Asian AP	Black Total	Black AP	Latino Total	Latino AP
CMS	~ 37.0	~ 62.0	~ 62.0	~ 37.0	~ 4.0	~ 9.0	~ 47.0	~ 21.0	~ 11.0	~ 7.0
U.S.	62.8	35.1	61.0	32.8	5.3	10.2	14.4	7.8	15.4	14.8

The bar graph shows this same information, using bars to represent ratios of AP test taker percentages to overall student high school population percentages. In the first bar (the U.S. sample), for example, white students comprise 62.8% of the total U.S. high school population and 61% of the U.S. AP test takers (a roughly 1 to 1 ratio). In the second bar, for the CMS sample, white students comprise 37% of the total CMS high school population and 62% of the CMS AP test takers (just over a 1 to 1½ ratio).

National vs CMS Standardized AP Comparison



These results are based on data that does not attempt to control for other demographic factors, including varying poverty levels, in CMS or elsewhere in the US. This graph also does not address overall AP participation rates (students enrolled but not taking AP exams) in CMS or the US, which could differ and thus affect comparisons.

There have been efforts in CMS to overcome these disparities. In 2000, CMS received a College Board grant to increase minority AP enrollment. CMS placed underrepresented groups in more challenging classes starting at the elementary level, offered more academic summer and afterschool boot camps, supported AVID courses, conducted professional training and offered free PSAT and AP course exams, among other efforts. At the time, those efforts were recognized nationwide for being at the forefront of movements to increase the academic standing of underrepresented groups. It appears that CMS should take steps to retain institutional knowledge of these past efforts.

The following graph illustrates the participation rates for CMS students, broken down by demographics over the past four years.

CMS AP Enrollment by Race 2005-06 to 2008-09

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>Change since 2006</u>
African-American	1,355	1,047	1,169	1,350	-0.4%
Asian	442	422	438	464	5.0%
Latino	334	273	309	444	32.9%
White	3,469	3,099	3,332	3,462	-0.2%
Other	168	137	174	360	114.3%

Data from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools 2010 Equity Report

The drop in African -American AP enrollment occurred at a time when the African-American student population was growing at a rate of 4.4% (from 58,543 African-American students in 2006 to 61,093 African-American students in 2008).

CMS is not alone in facing this challenge. Angel Dowden, AP/IB Coordinator for the NC Department of Public Instruction, noted that she often sees reluctance among underrepresented students to taking AP courses throughout the state and nation. One survey found that students avoid the courses because there was no one else in the class they could relate to even in schools with large majorities of children of color. As a result, even those schools had AP courses made up mostly of white students. Many underrepresented groups also felt academically unprepared for AP courses.

This report was compiled after conducting meetings with CMS officials and reviewing local, state and national reports. A primary source was the College Board’s 2004 publication, *AP and Higher Education*. Interviews also were conducted with members and staff of the NC AP Advisory Panel, including AP/IB Coordinator Angel Dowden; and Roni Jolly, College Board Staff Liaison for Maryland’s Department of Education. Ms. Jolly was contacted based on Maryland’s recent recognition for making major gains in cutting the AP enrollment gap among races.

The Enrollment Gap Recommendations

- Strongly promote and implement the College’s Board’s free AP Potential online program at EVERY CMS middle and high school to help identify AP students among underrepresented groups.
- Provide guidance counselors with required professional development on AP recruitment and retention strategies, as well as recruit and train more AP teachers of various ethnic backgrounds. Revisit counselor-student ratios.
- Encourage school administrators to cluster students of racial groups in AP courses in order to provide peer support.

- Fully commit to AP open enrollment with no pre-requisite course requirement, where appropriate.
- Widely utilize the sample parent letter offered in the AP Potential program and hold Parent Information Workshops at all middle/high schools
- Continue support of and consider expansion of AVID, academic boot camps, pre-AP enrichment summer programs, free PSAT/SAT/AP exams and other current efforts.

IV. School Tours

Merry Oaks Elementary Principal - Phillip Steffes

Introduction to Merry Oaks

As Equity Committee members were sitting waiting to meet with the principal, a woman walked in to enroll a young child. It was obvious that the woman did not speak English and the child handled the bulk of the translating with the school secretary. The secretary calmly laid out the requirements—such as a lease agreement—and the woman then called an uncle for help. We went into our meeting with the principal and toured the school and as we were leaving two hours later we saw that the woman and boy were still trying to navigate the enrollment process. Merry Oaks is probably better equipped than some schools to handle second languages, but that one incident underscored how difficult it is for people who do not speak English as a first language to navigate the enrollment process.

Background: Merry Oaks is a Title One school where more than 90% of the nearly 700 are economically disadvantaged students. Among its students, it is estimated that 19 languages are spoken. The student population is very transient and enrollment has decreased as more students have returned to Mexico due to the economic recession or families moving within the city. Merry Oaks also must deal with students who not only don't speak English, but may not have any experience with indoor bathrooms or electricity.

Progress: Despite students' socio-economic backgrounds, during the 2008-09 school year Merry Oaks had a school wide End-Of-Grade math, reading and science passing rate of 66.9 percent—(includes re-testing of students) an increase of 10 points over the previous year. The highest EOG passing rate was in math at 77.9%, followed by science at 66.3% and reading at 56%. The school also achieved High Growth last year and is recognized by the state as a School of Progress. Merry Oaks met all 21 No Child Left Behind school standards.

Demographics: The school's 2008-09 demographics were:

51% Hispanic
 32.4% African American
 8.7% Asian
 4.6% Other
 3.3% White

School Factors: Principal Steffes attributed Merry Oaks' progress to a number of factors touching students, teachers, parents and community partnerships. They included:

Teachers

- The staff has undergone a good deal of transition to help make it more reflective of the student body, among other issues. They now have someone bi-lingual on every level.
- The entire staff is SIOP trained.
- Teachers conduct "learning walks" in small groups (which we observed while at the school) to provide the administration with feedback.
- Two teachers are paired for instruction and classes are departmentalized based on subject matters.
- Although class sizes are up due to the budget cuts, 90% of the extra Title I money was used to hire five staff people.
- The class teacher-student ratio is:
K, 1st – 18-20 students per class
3rd – 14-20 students per class
4th – 18-20 students per class
5th – 21-26 students per class

Students

- The school uses an all inclusive ESL (English as a Second Language) model whereby ESL goes into the classroom. Newcomers are pulled initially.
- Single gender classes are used for the fourth grade and the Hispanic girls are doing "wonderfully," according to the principal.
- A two-week Transition Program is offered for kindergarten students.
- Students are grouped together for instruction in grades 1st – 3rd.
- The school has a Student Truancy Court led by Judge Diaz.

Parents

- The school has set aside the computer lab for parents, who are also offered a CPCC Parent Literacy Program.
- By having translators present and educating parents on involvement, PTA attendance has gone from 4 to 175.
- For the School Leadership Team, the administration provided mentors during the meeting to talk to parents in their language and help them understand what was happening.
- The school has a parent advocate.

Technology

- The principal personally assessed the school's technology and found that there was plenty of "stuff" available but it needed to be inventoried. Smart technology is available in all of the 3rd and higher classes.
- Most classes appeared to have one or two computers, but Principal Steffes said his goal is to have a laptop for every student within two years that would remain at school.
- The school is already conducting a technology-based global project.

Montclair Elementary
Principal - Leah Davis
Assistant Principal - Carmen Concepcion

Montclair Elementary School is located off of Tyvola Road between South Boulevard and Park Road. Student enrollment is approximately 480 students.

The school is bright and welcoming with a friendly staff. Members of the Equity Committee met with the principal, assistant principal, family advocates, and ESL teachers. Montclair has 4.5 ESL instructors, and 2 family advocates.

Academic Progress:

Montclair is a CMS Focus School. At the end of the 2008-2009 school year it had 59.3% of its students performing on grade level, with 48% performing at or above grade level in reading and 76% at grade level in math. Montclair made Expected Growth last year and was rated “Well Developed” on the CMS School Quality Review.

Demographics:

The student body is overwhelmingly Hispanic/Latino: 79% with 15% African American, 3% white, and 2% Asian. Nearly all, 97% are economically disadvantaged students. Montclair Elementary has the highest percentage of LEP students in CMS, at 64%. In Montclair’s grades k-2, that LEP percentage is even higher at 80%.

Parents:

The school has a small PTA board. The parent organizes coffees for parents for sharing information.

Challenges:

The staff reports that one of their biggest challenges is meeting the varied academic needs of the students. Many of the students are new to this country and 2 or 3 years below grade level. The biggest issue is the teaching of reading. Progress in math has been easier. As noted above, last year 76% of students attained proficiency in math.

With an overwhelming majority of students coming from non-English speaking homes, there are few English speaking peer role models for the lower grade children. Staff did report, however, that by the time the students are in fourth and fifth grade most are speaking English on the playground. Ideally the principal would like to see a more balanced population of LEP and native English speakers in the school. She would also like to teach classes in Spanish to reinforce students’ first language skills.

The assistant principal reports that the staff is very caring and nurturing, thus providing for the students a comfortable, welcoming school. However, she also notes that it can be a challenge for the staff to continually focus on higher expectations for the students.

The two parent advocates (both bi-lingual) divide the work. One focuses on translation work while the other does more social work type of duties. The school has found that for cultural reasons telephone conversations rather than newsletters or notes are the most effective means of communication.

Having enough interpreters for parent/student conferences is difficult, as few teachers speak Spanish. During the fall parent teacher conference days, Montclair was able to schedule just 3 hours of a CMS interpreter. The school has used AP Spanish students from Providence High School to help facilitate communication between parents and teachers.

In addition to interpretation issues, enrolling students in the school proves to be challenging for the staff since so many of the incoming students require English proficiency testing. As a result, about half of the enrolling families are referred to the Family Application Center for testing.

Mallard Creek High School **Principal - Dr. Kelly Gwaltney**

Mallard Creek is one of CMS's newest schools – and the fields and facilities shine. The principal is new this year, hailing from Gaston County, and is committed to equitable opportunities in her school. Staff are committed to their students and sought to improve. The Equity Committee met with the ESL teacher, principal, and a guidance counselor.

ESL

Mallard Creek has only 30 students needing ESL services, and 58 other LEP students for the ESL teacher to monitor. The teacher is able to meet the needs of this group, working with other teachers to ensure that her curriculum coincides with what students are learning in the classroom. ESL is its own course, and she is able to divide the 30 students into a few groups, depending on their level of English fluency. Mallard Creek considers it to be very fortunate that the ESL teacher remains at the school this year, and is not shared with any other school. The teacher did express some difficulties in communicating with parents, and had not heard of the translation services available through CMS.

Advanced Placement Courses

Mallard Creek students enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses depending on a recommendation from a teacher. The counselor did not use any kind of computer system to determine the student's eligibility for AP coursework. The principal and counselor were pleased to announce that students of all racial backgrounds participated in the AP program, but a closer examination indicated that minority students are under-represented in AP courses, relative to their percentage in the overall student body.

NC Virtual

The counselor explained that some students do take virtual classes, in addition to their regular course load. These courses must be taken outside of the regular school hours. Students are encouraged to take the courses, only if a computer is available at home on a daily basis. One Mallard Creek student tried to take a Virtual course by going to his aunt's house each afternoon to access a computer, but was unable to complete the course because this set-up proved too difficult.

V. Acknowledgements

The Equity Committee would like to express gratitude for the support and cooperation we've experienced from so many including the Board of Education and the Office of the Superintendent. Special thanks must be extended to Jose Hernandez-Paris, the CMS Diversity Specialist and staff liaison to the Equity Committee, for his unfailing support and dedication. We also want to recognize several CMS leaders who gave so much time and thoughtful assistance including Tyler Ream, Barb Pellin, and Ann Clark. Finally, we extend our sincere appreciation for the dedication of Rev. Tom Tate, School Board Vice Chair.

THE CMS EQUITY COMMITTEE

Maria Boral, *Vice Chair*

Patsy Burkins

Kelley Doherty, *Chair*

Rob Harrington

Carol Sawyer

Sharon Starks

Elizabeth Troutman

**APPENDIX:
LEP SECTION APPENDIX I**

Conversations with CMS Personnel

- Regina Boyd, Specialist, English as a Second Language, presentation to the full committee.
- Marshall Foster, Specialist, Language, Minority Students, presentation to the full committee.
- Anne Clark, Chief Academic Officer, available at meetings and throughout process to gather our data and answer follow-up questions.
- Dr. Bill Anderson, Executive Director of Communities in Schools, phone conversation
- Kathy Meads, Executive Director, Family Application Center, via e-mail

Parent Outreach

Conversations were held with a group of parents over a number of weeks. These parents were at The Latin American Coalition for a reading program and were asked to speak about their interaction with the staff at their children's schools.

Case 1-

Parent needed to change a bus stop due to safety reasons. Went to school to explain the problem but was told that a bus stop change needed to be submitted via the internet. Parent explained to me she could not do this since she did not speak or read English.

Case 2-

Parent was concerned about son since he had a speech problem and she had not heard from school regarding services for her son. A call was made by Maria Boral, on behalf of the parent, and explanations were made about concern and also parent's language barrier. CMS staff stated that the parent would be contacted the following week with a resolution and that they would find someone to interpret, "...even the gardener, who speaks Spanish."

Case 3-

Parent needs to enroll child into pre-kindergarten for the 2009-2010 school year but is unable to find the Family Application Center after traveling by train to South Blvd.

Data provided by CMS Staff

- Number of ESL teachers at each school (09-10)
- Number of LEP students at each school (09-10)
- Number of parent/family advocates at each school (08-09 and 09-10)
- Composite EOG scores district-wide , grades 3-8 (06-07, 07-08, and 08-09)

Blank Page

DRAFT