Ms. Pat Hynes, Chairman  
Fairfax County School Board  
8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 5400  
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Ms. Hynes:

We are pleased to submit the Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee’s (MSAOC) Annual Report for 2016, including our findings and recommendations. This year’s report examines the role concentrated poverty plays in closing the achievement gap and the extent to which our recommendations from last year have been implemented.

We look forward to discussing observations and recommendations at the June 2, 2016 work session.

Sincerely,

Robert Shaw       Judith Hall Howard  
MSAOC Chair       MSAOC Chair-in-Waiting

cc.   Ms. Megan McLaughlin, School Board Liaison to MSAOC  
      Dr. Sloan Presidio, Superintendent’s Representative to MSAOC
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The Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee (MSAOC) submits this report as required and in response to the 2015-16 School Board charge:

Provide findings and recommendations in its annual report concerning, but not limited to: (a) the role that concentrated poverty, in addition to race and ethnicity, plays in efforts to close the achievement gap; and (b) the extent to which the Committee’s 2014-15 recommendations have impacted implementation of FCPS’s programs, strong metrics, and independent evaluation of closing the achievement gap efforts in the 2015-16 school year.

Context and Overview

For almost a quarter of a century, the MSAOC has advocated on behalf of minority students within Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) to insure that they are being treated equitably and fairly. MSAOC continues to applaud the efforts that have been made to date to improve education for all FCPS students. And, indeed, for a majority of FCPS students, academic learning is occurring at expected rates and thus supplying the basic foundational skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century.

Still, the achievement gap, the disparity between Black and Hispanic students and their Asian and White classmates, persists. And, for poor students, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities, who are Black and Hispanic, the past interventions have been ineffective in closing that gap.

We have found that concentrated poverty plays a significant, if not the deciding, challenge in closing the achievement gap. Unless and until FCPS institutes policies and practices to address our changing demographics and student needs, particularly the needs of students in high poverty schools, the achievement gap will continue to exist and to widen.

In our 2015 Annual Report, MSAOC expressed a renewed sense of urgency with regard to FCPS’s efforts to close the achievement gap, especially in light of the changing demographics of Fairfax County. We noted:

MSAOC feels a renewed sense of urgency with regard to this issue [closing the achievement gap] that FCPS does not yet appear to have realized. This urgency now is driven by the concentrated poverty we are seeing in certain areas of our school-community, particularly in the southeastern corner of the County, where minority and newcomer population[s] also are increasing. These areas have disproportionate numbers of high-risk schools that affect FCPS’s ability to close the achievement gap, and need FCPS’s immediate attention.

The growing concentration of poverty in this County, coupled with the absence of a viable strategic plan which addresses the achievement gap and insufficient resources to fund needed initiatives, have hampered consistent and sustained implementation of efforts to close the achievement gap for our children.
We appreciate the implementation of the Strategic Plan for FCPS that incorporated the Closing the Achievement Gap Plan. However, we are not sure who is responsible for implementation and accountability. For example, how will success be measured? What resources will be assigned to fund implementation and accountability? How will we track and measure progress?

We reiterate the concerns expressed in 2015 in this 2016 Annual Report. Indeed, there is no time to waste. Fairfax County is rapidly growing and changing, and the current needs of its citizens, especially its children, must be addressed and their future needs anticipated.

The Changing Face of Fairfax County and FCPS

Fairfax County is no longer the suburban county of the 1970s and 1980s that it once was. The County is more populous, more developed, and more diverse – racially, ethnically, and economically. And, it is growing.

“Communities of color are leading the County’s growth.” According to a 2015 Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County (EGP) report, “the Latino population grew by 57 percent over the past decade, adding 62,000 residents. The Asian population also grew significantly (56 percent) adding 69,000 residents.” These populations will continue to drive growth.

“By 2020, the County and FCPS will be majority people of color.”

Our diverse residents are spread throughout the County, but are “more concentrated in its major towns and on the border with Arlington to the east. Herndon and Reston have several areas with a high percentage of people of color as do Annandale, Springfield, Mt. Vernon, and Lorton.” (EGP) Schools in these areas tend to have high concentrations of poverty and racial/ethnic isolation, particularly those in Region 3.

“Poverty is on the rise in the County and the rate is higher for communities of color. More than one in ten Latinos and Blacks live in poverty compared to just under three percent of Whites. Black and Latino children have the highest poverty rates.” Today, 27.28% of FCPS students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals, compared to 19.79% ten years ago.

FCPS, which in 1987 educated 131,000 students, now has 186,714 students. It is the 10th largest school district in the nation and is facing the same challenges as other large, urban school districts.

Sources: PolicyLink and the USC Program of Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County (©2015 by PolicyLink and PERE) (language in quotation marks above is from the EGP); Virginia Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition Programs, Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program Eligibility Reports, 2005-2006; 2015-2016.

NOTE: MSAOC members participated on the advisory panel for the Equitable Growth Profile report.
Closing the Achievement Gap:  
The Role of Race, Ethnicity, and Concentrated Poverty

Challenges to Closing the Achievement Gap

MSAOC has spent much of its time in recent years (see, e.g., our last five Annual Reports 2011-2015) gathering information and insight regarding various efforts, to date, to address the achievement gap between various subgroups of its students. We remain discouraged when we observe that the difference in the pass rate for the SOL reading tests for Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students has not substantially changed since 2008, with Black and Hispanic students’ scores staying well below state benchmarks.

With the State’s schedule to revise SOL testing every seven years, we may never witness the closing of the achievement gap if FCPS continues at its current pace. For example, while the reading gap between Black and Hispanic students has decreased slightly, from twenty-two (22) percentage points in 2012-2013 to eighteen (18) percentage points in 2014-2015, by 2017 (the last year for the existing reading test), at this pace, the gap will still be ten (10) to twelve (12) percentage points apart.

In addition, in 2014-2015 the average SOL reading passing rate for Black and Hispanic students was 74 % and 70% respectively. If these were school rates, they would not meet state accreditation requirements for reading.1

We remain discouraged, but become alarmed when we consider how poverty impacts our students of color, especially because poverty is well documented as one of the most influential factors affecting student achievement.2 Poverty can be defined as: (a) individual student poverty – identified by eligibility of a single student for free and reduced-price meals; and (b) school poverty – identified cumulatively to reflect the overall percentage of students at a school who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

When we look at SOL reading data from 2014-2015 by race and ethnicity, and within them, by other demographic subgroups, the impact of both individual student and school poverty is evident. (See Figure 1 on following page.)

This data clearly shows that the deciding factor on student achievement is concentrated poverty in schools, which disproportionally impacts Black and Hispanic students. As of September 2015, thirty-three elementary schools (23.7%), seven middle (30.4%), and four (16%) high schools in FCPS had majority Black and Hispanic enrollments of 55% or more. For FCPS elementary school students, thirty-six percent (3,585) of elementary school Black and 45.5 percent (11, 736) of Hispanic students attend schools where a majority of their classmates are Black and Hispanic. These Black and Hispanic students also attend schools where a near

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1 In order for a school to be fully accredited, the SOL pass rate for English is 75%, and for mathematics is 70%, School Accreditation Ratings, 2016.

majority of their classmates are from low income families, and where none of their SOL reading pass rates met the State benchmark of 75%.

![Average Reading Pass Rate-2014](image)

Significantly, this data also shows that **regardless of their race or ethnicity**, students in schools with a high concentration of poverty\(^3\) do not perform as well as their peers in other schools that are not so categorized. More must be done at these schools.\(^4\)

MSAOC believes that FCPS must take affirmative steps to insure that closing the achievement gap efforts are given both the funding and support needed to insure the success of our increasingly diverse student body and workforce. Poverty is not the only contributing factor to the achievement gap because both race and socioeconomic status are related and overlapping factors.

We remain concerned that previous interventions to close the achievement gap have largely been ineffective. While MSAOC has supported the Closing the Achievement Gap Plan begun in

\(^3\) *I.e.*, a school where over 55% of the students in the school qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

\(^4\) High-poverty schools tend to have lower rates of teacher retention, more novice teachers, less parent involvement, and fewer community assets. FCPS must continue its efforts to address these challenges. But, such efforts alone are not enough.
2010, which draws upon current research and best practices, we note that implementation of this plan has been neither timely nor complete. In addition, the impact of previous efforts to close the gap has not been subjected to rigorous evaluation and, therefore, we do not know why these efforts did or did not work.

MSAOC believes that FCPS must develop a unified effort to close the achievement gap that provides desperately needed systemic oversight and coordination of FCPS’s CAG efforts. We believe that it is critical at this time that FCPS re-establish an Office of Minority Student Achievement to serve that function. An MSA Office would bring together under “one roof” various FCPS staff members now working under the auspices of various departments system-wide to develop a more comprehensive approach to providing value-added services to FCPS’s growing minority student population. In addition, the Office could serve a sorely-needed ombudsman function to address equity issues raised by minority parents and staff within FCPS. A more detailed proposal regarding this issue is included in Attachment A.

### MSAOC Recommendations on Closing the Achievement Gap

MSAOC recommends that the FCPS School Board should:

- Request that Staff develop a unified effort to close the achievement gap including staffing, accountability, monitoring, and evaluation, preferably through a re-established Office of Minority Student Achievement, that would be responsible for the Closing the Achievement Gap Plan (including the Advisory Committee), Project Momentum, Cultural Competency, and advising on innovative ways to deal with over-capacity and under-capacity schools.
- Require that the CAG Advisory Committee meet monthly and (a) report on how schools are incorporating and implementing closing the achievement gap in their school improvement plans, and (b) develop metrics to measure success and to track progress.

### Policy Considerations

MSAOC believes that additional resources may help schools mitigate and level-off some of the effects of poverty, but cannot counter poverty sufficiently to raise achievement at FCPS’ most impoverished schools. FCPS needs to develop policies that focus on reducing economic and racial isolation and promoting diverse schools. Such policies should address how FCPS could create student assignments that foster racially and economically diverse schools and develop plans to retain an experienced and diverse teaching staff at those schools.

The shifting of densely populated areas in Fairfax County due to changing demographics has led to an imbalance of available space and student population within FCPS. This has had an impact on enrollments at many schools, resulting in some schools operating at program capacity greater than 100%, and other schools operating below 85% of program capacity. Of
the eighty-eight schools at 91 percent of enrollment capacity, 28 percent of them were in Region 3.\(^5\)

The single most reliable predictor of the achievement gap is the extent to which students attend racially and socio-economically isolated schools. According to a recent The Century Foundation report, *A New Wave of School Integration, Districts and Charters Pursuing Socioeconomic Diversity*:

> Students in racially and socioeconomically integrated schools experience academic, cognitive, and social benefits that are not available to students in racially isolated, high-poverty environments. A large body of research going back five decades underscores the improved experiences that integrated schools provide. And yet, more than sixty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, American public schools are still highly segregated by both race and class. In fact, by most measures of integration, our public schools are worse off, since they are now even more racially segregated than they were in the 1970s, and economic segregation in schools has risen dramatically over the past two decades.\(^6\)

Socioeconomic and racial segregation have become related and often overlapping phenomena—a trend that the Civil Rights Project calls “double segregation.”\(^7\) Black and Latino students tend to be schools with a substantial majority of poor children but white and Asian students are typically in middle-class schools.\(^8\) At the kindergarten level, for example, a majority of black and Latino students nationwide attend schools with more than 75 percent non-white classmates and high average poverty rates. However, most white kindergartners, even those from poor families, attend schools with mostly middle-class, white classmates.\(^9\)

We see related patterns in housing: poor black and Hispanic families are more likely than poor white families to live in neighborhoods with the most extreme poverty.\(^10\) A neighborhood school model does not benefit these families.

MSAOC, therefore, posits: What is the role of, and how much priority should be given to, the neighborhood school model, in FCPS in 2016 and beyond? Should such a model have precedence when an increasing number of students in FCPS are not even attending their neighborhood schools? Currently, approximately 21,000 FCPS students (14%) attend schools

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\(^5\) Halley Potter and Kimberly Quick, with Elizabeth Davies, op. cit. These statistics are relevant to our analysis of significant predictors of the achievement gap in FCPS. According to The Century Foundation report, FCPS is one of 91 districts and charter networks in the country where socioeconomic status is a factor in student assignment.

\(^6\) Potter 1

\(^7\) Orfield and Frankenberg, op. cit. General information on the Civil Rights Project, Proyecto Derechos Civil, can be found at [www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu](http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu).

\(^8\) Orfield 2.


that are out-of-boundary for them. They do so for many different reasons (e.g., for Special Education services; Advanced Academic programs; personal transfers). According to the Facility and Enrollment Dashboard (http://www.fcps.edu/fts/dashboard/inde.shtml), FCPS not only allows these re-assignments but in some circumstances expends additional funds to transport these students.

The School Board needs to have some “courageous conversations” about school assignments and school boundaries as the County continues to grow and the needs of parents and students and family circumstances to change.

MSAOC Recommendations on Policies to Reduce Economic and Racial Isolation

MSAOC recommends that the School Board:

- Develop policies that focus on reducing economic and racial isolation and promoting diverse schools.
- Develop policies that consider race among other factors in creating diverse schools since schools with high proportions of Black and Hispanic students also have high concentration of poverty.
- Launch new magnet schools or choice schools that reflect community demand and interest to promote more racially and economically integrated schools.
- Consider not building or opening schools in racially or economically isolated areas of the County.

MSAOC Recommendations from 2014-2015: Status Report

As part of its charge for the 2015-2016 SY, MSAOC reviewed the extent to which the recommendations in its 2015 Annual Report have been implemented or have had an impact on the implementation of FCPS programs that impact closing-the-achievement-gap efforts. This section of the Report provides a status report on, and makes additional recommendations regarding, the following: (a) Region 3; (b) the ESOL Pilot Program; (c) the FCPS Cultural Competency Initiative; and (d) Pre-School (FECEP/Head Start) Programs.

Region 3

In its 2015 Annual Report, MSAOC recommended organizational changes within Region 3 and additional supports and resources for that Region, which in 2015-2015 enrolled 36,877 students, among five pyramids and 44 schools. (See MSAOC Annual Report 2015, at 4). No organizational changes were made to the Region’s structure per this recommendation, but extra resources have been given this year to support programs. Currently, thirteen schools are part of Project Momentum and eighteen schools receiving intensive support, including instructional

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11 Some of these recommendations are restatements of recommendations made in our 2015 Annual Report. We include them again because they remain outstanding.
coaches, extended contract time for instructional leaders, and support funds for summer professional development.\cite{12}

In the 2016-2017 SY, FCPS plans to open Edison High School Global STEM Challenges Program for any student completing Algebra I in 8th grade.\cite{13} Edison’s enrollment is under capacity, and the School Board, therefore, should consider whether the open enrollment policy there could be mixed with a controlled policy to promote diversity.

Pre-K classroom space and adequate funding continue to be a challenge in Region 3. Twenty-one of thirty-three Region 3 elementary schools have pre-K classrooms, resulting in twenty-seven FECEP/Head Start and two Early Head Start classrooms. The wait-list for FECEP/Head Start is 131 infants and toddlers in Region 3 -- about 30% of the children current served.

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**MSAOC Position/Recommendations on Region 3**

MSAOC makes the following observations and/or recommendations:

- Every effort should be made to reduce and eliminate racial and socioeconomic isolation in Region 3. This should include providing magnet, part-time academy, and transfer programs in high poverty schools in that Region.
- To deal with student, parent, and teacher expectations, schools that are racially and socioeconomically isolated should receive more than Project Momentum services to address the more structural issues of teacher experience and retention, parent involvement, and professional development.
- The School Board should consider a controlled policy to promote racial and socioeconomic diversity for the Edison High School Global STEM Challenges Program.
- The School Board should instruct Staff to identify under-utilized space at elementary schools that are under capacity that may be used for additional pre-K classrooms.

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**ESOL Pilot Program**

In its 2015 Annual Report, MSAOC expressed its concern that several key issues relating to the then-referenced “Newcomer Schools Pilot” had not been addressed, even as a September 2015 start-date was envisioned for Stuart and Lee High Schools. These issues, among others, included: “monitoring and compliance, especially with federal mandates; program evaluation procedures; wrap-around services; and facilities and transportation.” (MSAOC Annual Report 2015, at 8)

The ESOL Pilot implementation is less than one year along and only at two targeted high schools. It, therefore, is too early to judge effectiveness. Based on our initial observation and

\begin{itemize}
  \item MSAOC applauds the efforts and commitment of Region 3 Assistant Superintendent Terry Dade, who offered his insights to the Committee at its February 10, 2016 meeting.
  \item This program is a partnership with National Academy of Engineers (NAE) and George Mason University.
\end{itemize}
discussion with Staff, the Committee feels that ESOL Pilot is more appropriately a “phased rollout” where adjustments are made as the program is implemented.

MSAOC has posed many questions regarding FCPS’s design and implementation of this program to FCPS Staff. Many of these questions remain unanswered, even after the Staff report presented to the School Board on March 14, 2016, HS ESOL Programming: Expansion of High School ESOL Pilot, and follow up inquiries by MSAOC.

Greater transparency regarding this program is needed. MSAOC believes the Staff must clearly articulate how they will measure success (e.g., attendance, credits earned, English language proficiency, use of wrap-around services, etc.) not only for student outcomes but also for compliance with FCPS’s federal obligations to EL students, as articulated in the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents (January 7, 2015). Staff also must clearly demonstrate how they are monitoring this program to avoid unnecessary segregation of students, as required by Section II.E. of the Dear Colleague Letter.14

**MSAOC Position/Recommendations on ESOL Pilot Program**

MSAOC makes the following recommendations:

- FCPS Staff must clearly articulate how they will measure success (e.g., attendance, credits earned, English language proficiency, use of wrap-around services, etc.) not only for student outcomes but also for federal civil rights compliance.
- FCPS should wait until the first year of the ESOL Pilot Program is completed and objective evidence is available to make decisions about replication at additional schools.
- FCPS Staff needs to provide an accounting of all current expenditures and estimates of future costs and funding resources for expansion of this ESOL program.

**FCPS Cultural Competency Initiative**

In its 2015 Annual Report, MSAOC reiterated the recommendations from its 2014 Annual Report, which called for FCPS to fund cultural competency training for all schools. MSAOC also recommended that the School Board, “should ask Staff to offer mandatory professional development in cultural competency for all teachers, starting next school year.” (MSAOC Annual Report 2015, at 10). That recommendation has not been followed.

Overall, interventions for the Cultural Competency Initiative have stalled because of lack of resources and coordination. In a letter to the School Board Chairman, on February 2, 2016 (copy attached at Attachment B), MSAOC expressed its concern that there was no funding for the Cultural Competency Initiative in the FY 2017 Advertised Budget, other than funding for one

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14 MSAOC has voiced its concern to Staff on numerous occasions since the Dear Colleague Letter was issued and has not received answers or explanations that are responsive to our inquiries.
FTE (full time employee) devoted to this districtwide initiative. The recommendations from 2014 and 2015 remain outstanding.\textsuperscript{15}

### MSAOC Recommendations on Cultural Competency Initiative

MSAOC makes the following recommendations:

- The School Board must provide funding for additional staffing and program support for the Cultural Competency Initiative.
- The Cultural Competency Initiative and its staff should be part of a unified effort and program to close the achievement gap, preferably through a re-established Office of Minority Student Achievement.
- The School Board should ask Staff to offer mandatory professional development in cultural competency for all teachers starting in the coming school year, and should repurpose funds as needed to so provide.

### Pre-School (FECEP/Head Start) Programs

In past Annual Reports, the MSAOC has recommended support and funding for pre-school programs. We believe that implementation of early childhood initiatives has largely been ineffective because (a) necessary coordination between the County and FCPS has not taken place, and (b) the waiting list for FECEP/Head Start has not been eliminated.\textsuperscript{16}

In 2014-2015, FECEP/Head Start served a total of 1,732 students in Fairfax County. Early Head Start served an additional fifty-five infants and toddlers. At year's end, there were 905 three and four-year olds on the waiting list for FECEP/Head Start, and fifty-nine (59) children on the Early Head Start waiting list.\textsuperscript{17}

Lack of classroom space often is cited as a reason for the failure to provide early childhood education to all interested parties. According to our review of the new Facility and Enrollment Dashboard Site (http://www.fcps.edu/fts/dashboard/inde.shtml), there are at least 88 elementary schools that are at 91 percent of capacity that could provide needed space for preschool programs in the County.

\textsuperscript{15} In that letter, we expressed our disappointment that only one FTE was devoted to this county-wide project, "especially when the same budget provides, for example, for four FTE for the TJHSST Admissions Office, an effort that impacts only approximately 3,000 students countywide every year and is focused on just one school in FCPS."

\textsuperscript{16} We note that, even if FECEP/Head Start eliminates the waiting list, the program would still only be serving one-third of eligible children.

\textsuperscript{17} In addition, there were 875 applications processed where the applicants exceeded the program’s income guidelines. Those ineligible families were referred to HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) as well as to other private/community options.
A new study *How Much Can High-Quality Universal Pre-K Reduce Achievement Gaps?* by the Center for American Progress and the National Institute of Early Childhood Education finds that high-quality preschool programs for all youngsters could significantly reduce the racial achievement gaps in reading and mathematics.\(^{18}\) FCPS must focus more attention on this issue.

### MSAOC Recommendations on Pre-School Programs

MSAOC recommends that the FCPS School Board should:

- Expand family literacy programs (e.g., HIPPY) to serve the 6,128 or more pre-school aged children living in poverty in Fairfax County.
- Ask Staff to identify facilities within FCPS that could be used for FECEP/Head Start programs with the goal of eliminating all wait lists for FECEP/Head Start by the 2017-2018 SY.
- Insure that MSAOC recommendations to provide support and funding for pre-school programs are implemented.

### Beyond the Charge: Additional Issues and Recommendations

MSAOC has addressed several additional issues and community concerns in 2015-2016 that require additional attention and consideration, including (a) the Parent Advocacy Handbook/Toolkit; (b) minority teacher hiring and retention; (c) the principal selection process; and (d) the proposed renaming of certain FCPS high schools. Those issues and concerns are discussed briefly below.

**Parent Advocacy Handbook/Toolkit**

As we have in previous Annual Reports, MSAOC seeks a commitment from FCPS of funding and staff support to continue its work on the *Parent Advocacy Handbook* and on-line Toolkit resources the Committee has, on a volunteer basis, initiated and produced over the past thirteen-plus years. These resources are essential tools not only for minority parents, especially parents who are recent immigrants who may be unfamiliar with an American school system, but are resources from which all FCPS parents have benefited and can benefit in the future. A more detailed discussion of the history of the Handbook/Toolkit and current needs to reissue either or both is included at Attachment C.

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\(^{18}\) Allison Friedman-Krauss, W. Steven Barnett & Midagros Nores, *How Much Can High-Quality Universal Pre-K Reduce Achievement Gaps?* Center for American Progress (April 2016) (www.americanprogress.org). The study examines the success of the Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program in Oklahoma and the Pre-K Program of the Boston Public School System. The results of these two programs show that if similar high quality, pre-K programs were enacted nationwide, the gap in mathematical achievement for African American children would be reduced by 45 percent and the gap in reading achievement would be eliminated.
Minority Teacher Hiring and Retention

MSAOC continues to voice its concern regarding the hiring and retention of minority teachers in our increasingly diverse school system. Retention rates for minority teachers remain low. In addition, there is significant turnover of teachers in some schools, particularly (but not exclusively) in Region 3. MSAOC has many questions regarding minority teacher hiring and retention that need further consideration,\(^*\) including the following:

- Are there tools and resources currently available for MSAOC and members of the community to track staffing of teachers and administrators by school, by race/ethnicity, and by gender? If not, can such tools and/or resources be made available? When?
- What incentives can be put into place to recruit and retain minority teachers generally and/or minority teachers in Region 3 specifically?

Principal Selection Process

MSAOC has recently observed a shift or change in how some principals are being selected for their positions (e.g., Madison HS; Stuart HS; Glasgow MS) and is concerned about the perceived lack of transparency in this new process.\(^*\) MSAOC has many questions regarding the principal selection process that need further consideration, including the following:

- a. What is the rationale for the change in the principal selection process?
- b. Will this process be utilized systemically or on a school-by-school basis?
- c. What provisions in the FCPS Policy and Regulations support this selection process?
- d. How will community engagement and input regarding the selection of a school’s principal be insured if this process becomes the norm?

Proposed High School Name Changes

MSAOC reiterates its belief that Stuart and Lee High Schools should be renamed and supports efforts in the community to do so. We believe that school system supported school-sponsored use of Confederate symbols, including school names, are a constant reminder of the legacy of slavery and America’s history of racial prejudice and oppression, including Fairfax County’s less than exemplary response to the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1954 decision and mandate in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The use of such symbols, including school names, has offended, and continues to offend, many members of our community and, therefore, should immediately be discontinued. MSAOC has sent two letters to the School Board on this issue (Copies are included at Attachments D and E) and will continue to demand School Board action and accountability on this issue. FCPS should no longer perpetuate and celebrate FCPS’s history of discrimination and exclusion by retaining these school names.

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\(^*\) We look forward in 2016-2017 to addressing these issues with the new Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources.

\(^\star\) We do not find compelling the explanation given to MSAOC that most principals have been selected following FCPS HR policies and that only a very small percentage of principals were hired otherwise, especially when exceptions to standard practice involve minority principals.
## A. Summary of Committee’s Activities 2015-2016

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<td>April 19</td>
<td>MSAOC members participate in The Century Foundation Forum, Washington, DC</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>MSAOC Meeting: Final Review and Action on 2016 Annual Report</td>
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<td>May 31</td>
<td>MSAOC 2016 Annual Report Presentation to FCPS School Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 8</td>
<td>MSAOC Meeting: De-Briefing following School Board Presentation; Planning for 2016-2017 SY</td>
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B. Specific Actionable Recommendations

**Closing the Achievement Gap**

- Request that Staff develop a unified effort to close the achievement gap including staffing, accountability, monitoring, and evaluation, preferably through a re-established Office of Minority Student Achievement, that would be responsible for the Closing the Achievement Gap Plan (including the Advisory Committee), Project Momentum, Cultural Competency, and advising on innovative ways to deal with over-capacity and under-capacity schools.
- Require that the CAG Advisory Committee meet monthly and (a) report on how schools are incorporating and implementing closing the achievement gap in their school improvement plans, and (b) develop metrics to measure success and to track progress.

**Policies to Reduce Economic and Racial Isolation**

- Develop policies that focus on reducing economic and racial isolation and promoting diverse schools.
- Develop policies that consider race among other factors in creating diverse schools since schools with high proportions of Black and Hispanic students also have high concentration of poverty.
- Launch new magnet schools or choice schools that reflect community demand and interest to promote more racially and economically integrated schools.
- Consider not building or opening schools in racially or economically isolated areas of the County.

**Region 3**

- Every effort should be made to reduce and eliminate racial and socioeconomic isolation in Region 3. This should include providing magnet, part-time academy, and transfer programs in high poverty schools in that Region.
- To deal with student, parent, and teacher expectations, schools that are racially and socioeconomically isolated should receive more than Project Momentum services to address the more structural issues of teacher experience and retention, parent involvement, and professional development.
- The School Board should consider a controlled policy to promote racial and socioeconomic diversity for the Edison High School Global STEM Challenges Program.
- The School Board should instruct Staff to identify under-utilized space at elementary schools that are under capacity that may be used for additional pre-K classrooms.
### ESOL Pilot Program

- FCPS Staff must clearly articulate how they will measure success (e.g., attendance, credits earned, English language proficiency, use of wrap-around services, etc.) not only for student outcomes but also for federal civil rights compliance.
- FCPS should wait until the first year of the ESOL Pilot Program is completed and objective evidence is available to make decisions about replication at additional schools.
- FCPS Staff needs to provide an accounting of all current expenditures and estimates of future costs and funding resources for expansion of this ESOL program.

### Cultural Competency Initiative

- The School Board must provide funding for additional staffing and program support for the Cultural Competency Initiative.
- The Cultural Competency Initiative and its staff should be part of a unified effort and program to close the achievement gap, preferably through a re-established Office of Minority Student Achievement.
- The School Board should ask Staff to offer mandatory professional development in cultural competency for all teachers starting in the coming school year, and should repurpose funds as needed to so provide.

### Pre-School Programs

- Expand family literacy programs (e.g., HIPPY) to serve the 6,128 or more pre-school aged children living in poverty in Fairfax County.
- Ask Staff to identify facilities within FCPS that could be used for FECEP/Head Start programs with the goal of eliminating all wait lists for FECEP/Head Start by the 2017-2018 SY.
- Insure that MSAOC recommendations to provide support and funding for pre-school programs are implemented.
C. Committee Membership Attendance 2015-2016

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* J. Bensinger appointed Nov. 2015
** P. Simpkins appointed Dec. 2015
**** Y. Yuan appointed Mar. 2016

NOTE: The June 2016 MSAOC meeting had not been held at the time this Report was submitted.
## D. Voting Record May 2016

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/s/ -- Members’ signatures of concurrence are on file and available for inspection.

NOTE: asterisk (*) indicates member did not attend required number of meetings to vote.
Introduction

On July 9, 2015, the Fairfax County Publics Schools (FCPS) School Board approved the new long-term Strategic Plan for FCPS, which includes among its priorities the elimination of achievement gaps to insure student success. (FCPS Strategic Plan Goal 1 Student Success; Overarching Strategy 1). As the FCPS School Board considers the FY2017 Budget and school division spending going forward, it is critical that FCPS matches its priority planning with its spending plan in order to close the achievement gaps that continue to exist between Black and Hispanic students in FCPS and many of their White and Asian Peers.

FCPS’s student growth and changing demographics have resulted in sixty percent (60%) minority student enrollment and an achievement gap that has not been closed. MSAOC supports and encourages current efforts underway to close achievement gaps. However, a closing the achievement gap effort without resources, proper coordination, and oversight is not a plan.

If closing the achievement gap is a top priority, there needs to be leadership, accountability, and transparency in managing this effort. MSAOC believes that now more than ever, FCPS should have an office focused on closing the achievement gap. FCPS, therefore, should include repurposed funds in the FY 2017 Budget to re-establish an Office of Minority Student Achievement to provide system wide oversight of FCPS efforts to close the minority student achievement gap and to advocate with and on behalf of FCPS minority students, parents, and staff.

During the tenure of two previous superintendents, FCPS had offices of minority student achievement, responsible and accountable for minority student improvements, working with schools, funding programs (e.g., Total School Approach, Excel, Focus, and College Partnership Programs), resolving complaints, and helping minority parents navigate the school system. These offices were eliminated, allegedly necessitated by budget cuts, during the tenures of previous superintendents.

MSAOC believes that FCPS must take affirmative steps during the FY2017 Budget process to insure that closing the achievement gap efforts are given both the funding and support needed to insure the success of our increasingly diverse student body and workforce. As the School Board works with stakeholders to finalize the Detailed Budget for the coming year, we respectfully ask you to consider our recommendation to repurpose existing funds to establish an
Office of Minority Student Achievement. A general proposal for a new Office of Minority Student Achievement, which would include at most one new FTE position and otherwise would repurpose current FTE positions within FCPS to the MSA Office, is provided below.

We cannot wait another budget cycle to address the needs of our largest and fastest growing populations. FCPS, therefore, should repurpose funds as needed to make CAG efforts more than a series of promises and unfunded mandates.

**School Divisions Nationwide Have Offices Focused on Minority Student Achievement**

FCPS should follow the lead of school districts nationwide that already have offices or departments focused on equity, diversity, and minority student achievement. For example, neighboring Arlington County Public Schools has an Office of Minority Achievement, which it describes as follows:

> The Office of Minority Achievement is dedicated to helping students discover and utilize resources that will help them progress toward their personal goals. This department works to create an equitable, hospitable, safe, and inclusive environment for students, families, and staff. The goal of this work is to create culturally affirming spaces where openness, inclusiveness, respect, and appreciation for diversity of thought, values, cultures, learning styles, perceptions, and actions flourish.


Montgomery County Public Schools’ Equity Unit of its Office of School Support and Improvement has as its stated mission: “The mission of the Equity Unit is to build capacity of MCPS staff to close the racial achievement gap and eliminate racial predictability in student achievement.” [http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/clusteradmin/equity/](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/clusteradmin/equity/). And, Anne Arundel County Public Schools’ Office of Equity and Accelerated Student Achievement has one goal: “Elevate All Students; Eliminate All Gaps.” [http://aacpsschools.org/oeasa/](http://aacpsschools.org/oeasa/)

A few examples of similar offices across the country include:

- Pittsburgh, PA Equity Office City Steps was organized to monitor the District’s progress in accelerating student achievement and eliminating racial disparities. [http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/domain/31](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/domain/31)
- Bloomington, MN Public Schools Office of Educational Equity. [http://www.bloomington.k12.mn.us/academic-student-services/educational-equity](http://www.bloomington.k12.mn.us/academic-student-services/educational-equity)

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21 The list of offices is too long to include in this brief document. Additional examples are available upon request.
Proposal: FCPS Office of Minority Student Achievement

Office of Minority Student Achievement (MSA Office) Function

The FCPS Office of Minority Student Achievement would serve as central administrative oversight of FCPS efforts to close the achievement gap, providing desperately needed systemic oversight and coordination of FCPS’s CAG efforts. The MSA Office also would bring to the table (e.g., FCPS School Board and Leadership Team discussions) specially, and specifically, charged advocates to insure that closing the achievement gap remains a central focus of the school division, per the FCPS Strategic Plan. In addition, the MSA Office would serve as a clearinghouse for information relating to FCPS CAG efforts and would provide outreach to minority students, families, and staff within FCPS to address issues of particular concern to those stakeholders.

The MSA Office would bring together under “one roof” various FCPS staff members now working under the auspices of various departments system wide to develop a more comprehensive approach to providing value-added services to FCPS’s growing minority student population. In addition, the Office would serve an ombudsman function to address equity issues raised by minority parents and staff within FCPS.

The MSA Office would be overseen by the Chief Academic Officer, with its manager reporting directly to the CAO under his delegated authority to coordinate equal educational opportunity for all students.

MSA Office Staffing

The MSA Office would be overseen by a Manager/Director, charged with overall oversight and monitoring of FCPS CAG efforts, and various staff members/specialists to support FCPS’s CAG efforts. These staff members would include the following:

- MSAOC Staff Liaison
- Cultural Competency Coordinator
- Parent and Community Outreach Liaison
- FCPS Program Liaison
- College Success Programs22 Coordinator

The duties for the Director and other staff members are outlined in the accompanying Table.23

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22 Many of the programs which now operate under the umbrella of College Success Programs were once part of the Office of Minority Student Achievement. The MSA Office, which had four full-time employees (FTEs), was eliminated in the FY 2009 Budget. At that time, the Department of Instructional Services (ISD) was reorganized and the College Success Programs were absorbed into ISD. They now fall under the Office of Counseling and College and Career Readiness.

Earlier cultural competency training, or “diversity training,” also was provided through the then-existing MSA Office. That training was eliminated due to the ISD reorganization. The MSA Office also served as the staff liaison for the MSAOC; support that now is provided to MSAOC by a staff member who holds a part-time, hourly position and has been assigned at different times to DCCO and ISD.
Table 1. Possible Staffing for FCPS Office of Minority Student Achievement

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| MSA Office Director             | • Oversees/monitors all FCPS efforts to close the achievement gap, and reports to Chief Academic Officer. Coordinates with Leadership Team and School Board on FCPS CAG efforts.  
• Oversees/monitors staff listed below who are tasked with oversight/coordination of various FCPS-related efforts related to closing the achievement gap.  
• Provides staff support for CAG 2.0 Steering Committee.  
• Serves as ombudsman for minority parents and their concerns. | New Position; One FTE |
| MSAOC Staff Liaison             | • Serves as FCPS liaison to School Board advisory committee, including assistance with monthly meetings, reports to School Board, etc.  
• Provides additional staff support for dissemination of information to parents and community—e.g., Toolkit, Parent Advocacy Handbook, etc. | Existing; Hourly |
| Cultural Competency Coordinator | • Oversees and provides cultural competency training to FCPS leadership, staff, schools, etc. | Existing; One FTE under ISD |
| Parent & Community Outreach Liaison | • Develops outreach programs for targeted community groups.  
• Oversees and coordinates production and dissemination of Parent Advocacy Handbook developed by MSAOC.  
• Serves as ombudsman for minority parents and their concerns. | One FTE repurpose from DCCO |
| FCPS Program Liaison            | • Coordinates outreach efforts for FCPS programs, e.g., AAP, academies, TJHSST, etc.  
• Develops and disseminates programs to inform minority parents of opportunities available for their children within FCPS | One FTE repurpose from TJ Admissions |
| College Success Programs Coordinator | • Coordinates and oversees existing college success programs, including AVID, CPP, EIP, and Pathway. | Existing; One FTE under ISD  
Counseling move to OMSA |

23 The Table also includes under the “Staffing Req.” column how current funds might be repurposed, and staff members reassigned, to re-establish the MSA Office.
February 1, 2016

Ms. Pat Hynes, Chairman  
Fairfax County School Board  
8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 5400  
Falls Church, VA 22042  

Dear Ms. Hynes:

I was not able to make comments on the FY 2017 Advertised Budget at the public hearing held on January 28th but now ask you to consideration our request to repurpose existing funds to support efforts to close the achievement gaps.

On July 9, 2015, the School Board approved the new long-term Strategic Plan which is at the center of all FCPS' planning activities and now a budget as a spending plan for the future. It is critical to match priority planning with the budget in order to close the achievement gaps.

We support and encourage the efforts to close the achievement gaps but without resources it is not a plan but an unfunded mandate. In addition we support the Cultural Competency initiative that will affect every school and teacher but are disappointed that only one FTE is devoted to this project compared to four FTE for the TJ admission office that impacts only 3000 students.

We have asked in our previous reports for resources earmarked for struggling schools with disproportionately high low income and minority students. These students are driving our enrollment growth and we need to repurpose resources to ensure that these schools and students have adequate support to close the achievement gap.

Sincerely yours,

/s/
Robert Shaw

Chair

Cc. Megan McLaughlin, School Board Liaison
Dr. Karen Garza, Superintendent of Schools
MSAOC Proposal Regarding the 
MSAOC Parent Advocacy Handbook and Toolkit

MSAOC seeks a commitment from FCPS of funding and staff supports to continue its work on the Parent Advocacy Handbook and on-line Toolkit resources, which the Committee has initiated and produced over the past thirteen-plus years. These resources are essential tools not only for minority parents, especially parents who are recent immigrants who may be unfamiliar with an American school system, but are resources from which all FCPS parents have benefited and can benefit in the future.

The original Parent Advocacy Handbook, produced by MSAOC, was published in 2003, with an updated edition produced in 2007. The content of the handbook was produced by an all-volunteer MSAOC working group, and FCPS provided funding for its layout and production by an outside vendor. The handbook was initially distributed through MSAOC member-facilitated group meetings in the community and through Parent Liaisons trained in its use by MSAOC members. Approximately 24,000 copies were printed, in multiple languages, and all but a few remain.

The MSAOC’s Advocacy Toolkit was launched in January 2014 and made available on the FCPS website. This Toolkit, which could be called the MSAOC Parent Advocacy Handbook 2.0, sought to offer monthly topics of interest to FCPS and provide tips on how parents could effectively advocate for their children in school. The MSAOC, once again through its all-volunteer working group, worked with the Department of Communications and Community Outreach (DCCO) and the Department of Instructional Services (ISD) to develop and test the Advocacy Toolkit web page. Through this, it was found that additional resources were needed to move this project forward. In the MSAOC’s 2014 Annual Report, MSAOC stated:

MSAOC is working with its FCPS partners to make the website more user-friendly, but additional resources are needed for improvements and to print a facsimile of the website that would be available for stakeholder who does not have Internet access. And, while MSAOC appreciates its collaboration with DCCO and other staff to initiate the website MSAOC requires a commitment by DCCO to the MSAOC Toolkit project that recognizes the importance to the community and provides for regular meetings and timely responses to MSAOC inquiries and need. MSAOC requires further assistance to enable the Committee to schedule an additional session regarding the Toolkit with Parent Liaisons beyond June 2014 and at least four such meetings in school year 2014-15.

MSAOC Annual Report 2014 at p. 7. No responsive action was taken by FCPS.

24 Several of the remaining copies, which contain some dated material, can be found in the School Board Office Library.
A MSAOC working group remains committed to updating existing material and developing ideas for additions to these resources if and when additional support and a commitment of funds are secured. Our work on the Handbook and Toolkit projects, along with our experience in distributing or disseminating information related to both, have led us to the following observations and recommendations:

1. There needs to be a new edition of the *Parent Advisory Handbook* – a hard copy document for parents. There was an overwhelming positive response to the Handbook when it was in circulation and MSAOC members continue to be asked by school staff for new editions of that Handbook in that format.

2. An online resource alone is not sufficient. Indeed, as long as there is a digital divide -- not only in terms of connectivity but more importantly in terms of access to technology -- many of the parents who may benefit most by the Handbook essentially would be denied access to the resource if it only appears in digital form.

3. The Toolkit, or another web-based resource building from the Handbook, should mirror the Handbook and offer time-sensitive information as well for parents. Any such web-based resource needs to be a more user-friendly service than any currently provided.

4. The *Parent Advisory Handbook* and a specialized *Facilitator’s Guide* relating thereto need to be in the hands of every Parent Liaison in FCPS so that they can teach and train parents how to navigate the school system.
Ms. Pat Hynes, Chairman  
Fairfax County School Board  
8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 5400  
Falls Church, VA 22042  

July, 17, 2015

Dear Ms. Hynes:

The Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee (MSAOC) respectfully requests that the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) School Board address the concerns raised by FCPS students, alumni, parents, teachers, and staff, and members of the Fairfax County community, regarding the naming of two FCPS high schools, Robert E. Lee High School and J.E.B. Stuart High School. MSAOC believes that school-sponsored use of Confederate symbols, including school names, are a constant reminder of the legacy of slavery and America’s history of racial prejudice and oppression, including Fairfax County’s less than exemplary response to the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1954 decision and mandate in Brown v. Board of Education. The use of such symbols, including school names, has offended, and continues to offend, many members of our community and, therefore, should immediately be discontinued.

MSAOC believes that the FCPS School Board’s naming of Stuart and Lee after Confederate soldiers in 1960 and 1964 were deliberate actions taken to demonstrate the school system’s defiance of federal authority regarding the desegregation of America’s public schools and its support of Virginia’s massive resistance efforts. Fairfax County named Stuart High School after a Confederate cavalryman, who had no significant connection to Fairfax County, in 1960. In that same year, a federal court judge rejected the School Board’s proposed incremental desegregation plan, which would not have finally desegregated FCPS until 1971. And, while FCPS had named Lee High School ostensibly for the Lee District in which it sits in 1959, FCPS renamed Lee High School as Robert E. Lee High School in 1964. That year, only one in every six black students in Fairfax County attended a desegregated school, and only two-fifths of FCPS was desegregated. There were no black teachers in any of the desegregated schools.

In naming two of its high schools after Confederate leaders during this important period in U.S. civil rights history, the FCPS School Board endorsed a notion that African American students were not welcomed in its schools. Indeed, six years prior to naming its newest high school after Stuart, Fairfax County did not even offer a high school education to African American students. Luther Porter Jackson School, FCPS’s high school for African American students, opened in September 1954 and remained a
segregated school until 1965. It would not be until the 1966-67 school year that FCPS would fully implement school integration. Any suggestion, then, that FCPS’s timing in naming Stuart and Lee High Schools was merely coincidence is disingenuous at best. It is not unrealistic to draw an inference that the decision to name schools after Stuart and Lee was racially motivated.

In recent weeks, several state governments have taken steps to move Confederate symbols, most significantly the Confederate flag, to the history books and museums in which they now belong. FCPS should follow suit and discontinue all school-system sponsored use of Confederate symbols, including school names and school mascots. The only places the names of Robert E. Lee and J.E.B. Stuart belong in FCPS are in the history books and Civil War lessons all of our students study. These names do not belong over any schoolhouse door. Stuart and Lee High Schools must be renamed immediately.

I respectfully urge you to start procedures to rename the two high schools and to set a date scheduled for School Board action on this matter.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Robert Shaw
Chair

Cc. Megan McLaughlin, School Board Liaison

Dr. Karen Garza, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Pat Hynes, Chairman  
Fairfax County School Board  
8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 5400  
Falls Church, VA 22042  

Dear Ms. Hynes:

This is a follow up to my letter of July 17, 2015, in which I strongly urged you to take prompt action to rename Robert E. Lee and JEB Stuart High Schools. The MSAOC is convinced that retaining the names of these two schools perpetuates vestiges of institutional racism and discrimination against Black students in the Fairfax County Public Schools that must cease. Prompt and affirmative School Board action, therefore, must be taken on this issue.

In my July 17 letter, I respectfully asked you to initiate the necessary procedures for renaming the two schools and to set a date-certain for School Board action on this matter. As far as I can determine, now over two months later, this important issue still has not been placed on the School Board’s calendar for discussion and/or action.

Would you please tell me if a date-certain has been set to start the process of renaming the two schools, and also whether or not the Board will take up this policy issue before the end of this October? If not, why not?

The MSAOC has been encouraged by local officials from neighboring jurisdictions (and, indeed, nationwide) who have already taken prompt and decisive action to remove symbols of racial prejudice and oppression from their schools and public buildings. We are dismayed that FCPS has not done the same. We urge you to demonstrate firm determination to remove FCPS-sponsored use of Confederate names and symbols from all of its schools with all deliberate speed.

I look forward to your prompt and affirmative reply.

Sincerely,

/s/

Robert Shaw, Chair

Cc. Dr. Karen Garza, Superintendent, Fairfax County Public Schools  
Ms. Megan McLaughlin, FCPS School Board Liaison to MSAOC