
**WHAT COUNTS:
Rigorous and Diverse Educational
Programs for All**

**Citizen Advisory Committee
to the Calvert County Board of Education
School Year 2011 – 2012 Study**

2011 - 2012 CAC Report

August 16, 2012

Board of Education
Calvert County Public Schools
1305 Dares Beach Road
Prince Frederick, Maryland 20678

Dear Board Members:

On behalf of the 2011-2012 Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to the Calvert County Board of Education, it is my pleasure to present the CAC's annual study. We very much appreciate having the opportunity to address the central question of the day: how to continue to provide the level of educational excellence that is the hallmark of Calvert County Public Schools in a challenging fiscal environment.

There are of course no easy answers to this question. However, we appreciate the opportunity to be a part of a process that seeks to do so. We hope that you, as well as the larger CCPS community, including parents and students, find our perspective to be a valuable one and one that aids the implementation of the *What Counts* process as it moves forward.

For your convenience, the report is organized into the following sections:

- I. Introduction/CAC membership
- II. Background
- III. Review Process/Methodology
- IV. Results
 - A. Summary
 - B. Program by Program analysis
- V. Final Notes
- VI. Conclusion

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you and the citizens of Calvert County.

Sincerely,

[signed]

Harry E. Wedewer
CAC Chairperson

2011 – 2012 CAC Report WHAT COUNTS

I. INTRODUCTION AND CAC MEMBERSHIP

This report provides the recommendations of the Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS) Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) regarding implementation of specific aspects of *What Counts*, which is a partnership between the Calvert County Board of Education (BOE) and the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) to develop clear organizational priorities based on community input.

CAC Membership¹

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¹ CAC members are selected on the basis of high school district and are listed alphabetically.

II. BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2010, the BOE partnered with MABE to hold a community forum entitled *What Counts* in order to assist the BOE in establishing priorities in anticipation of reduced revenues and funding. In hosting this forum, the BOE stated its belief that it is imperative that CCPS leaders set priorities that focus on the elements that support successful schools, lay foundations for student achievement, emphasize efficiency and efficacy, and are aware of community values in relation to public education.

The *What Counts* forum was held on February 3, 2011 and was attended by 120 individuals—parents, students, community members and leaders to discuss two questions:

1. What do you value about your public schools?
2. What factors contribute most to student success?

In response to these questions, *What Counts* participants developed recommendations in five specific areas:

1. Rigorous and Diverse Academic Programs for All;
2. Strong Leaders, Quality Staff, and Clear Communications;
3. Safe, Orderly and Well-Maintained Schools;
4. Community Support and Parent Involvement; and
5. Meeting the Needs of the Whole Child.

Additionally, the *What Counts* participants listed five factors that contributed to student success. These included among others:

1. Teachers Who are Well-Trained, Knowledgeable About How to Teach Effectively, and Know Content;
2. Staff Who Believe All Students Can Learn;
3. High Parental Involvement;
4. Availability of Technology; and
5. Happy Children Who Like School.

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The *What Counts* participants also listed additional factors that contribute to school success including, small class sizes, strong principals, teachers who care about students, wide range of services, wide range of arts programs, and clean, well-maintained school facilities.

Subsequently, the BOE tasked the CAC to study implementation of these topical areas as part of the 2011-2012 school year study topic. In view of the breadth of these areas the CAC decided to focus on the first element Rigorous and Diverse Programs for All (Rigorous and Diverse).

Pursuant to the CAC's charter to serve as a "channel for feedback, advice and information on matters affecting the school district"² and to "Conduct studies in areas of concern to the Board of Education,"³ the CAC subsequently undertook a study of how well CCPS is implementing programs that address the three core principles of Rigorous and Diverse programs as presented in the *What Counts* report and discussed further in the results section of this report.

III. REVIEW PROCESS/METHODOLOGY

In its study of how well CCPS was implementing programs and policies to effectuate the goal of rigorous and diverse programs for all students, the CAC used as its standard the three principles outlined by participants in the February 2011 meeting and contained in the *What Counts* report from that meeting. These three principles were:

1. Individual student needs must be recognized and met, high standards must be set, students must be respected, and high quality learning must be supported;
2. Academic programming must be designed to prepare students for a variety of options after high school graduation; and
3. While standardized test scores are one important measure of student success, citizens believe that students need opportunities to feel successful beyond performance on tests.

² Policy Statement #1210 (Administration) of the Board of Education Regarding the Citizen Advisory Committee to the Board of Education.

³ Administrative Procedure for Policy #1210 (Administration) Regarding the Citizen Advisory Committee to the Board of Education.

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In addition to these principles underlying Rigorous and Diverse, the CAC also took into account the factors stated by the *What Counts* participants that contributed to school success. These factors along with the aforementioned three principles were the criteria by which CCPS programs were studied and assessed.

In its response to how well it was addressing these three principles CCPS staff provided to the CAC eight presentations in the following areas during the course of the seven CAC meetings held during the school year. Specifically, these presentations were made in the areas of:

1. Thinking-based Learning and CCPS Master Plan and School Improvement Program
2. CCPS World Language Program
3. CCPS Fine Arts Program
4. CCPS AP and Honors Programs⁴
5. Common Core State Standards (Common Core)
6. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
7. Special Education

The CAC studied and discussed these presentations and the results of this process are discussed in the following section.

IV. RESULTS

A. Summary of Findings

Overall, the CAC found that the programs presented by CCPS are supportive of a rigorous and diverse education, as articulated in the three principles in the *What Counts* final report. These programs generally fall into two categories: (1) those programs that are in the process of implementation and that are a part of the transition of CCPS to 21st Century learning; and (2) more mature programs that will be impacted by the transition to 21st Century learning but are themselves not part of the transition.

⁴These programs were the subject of separate presentations that are grouped together in the results section discussion for the convenience of the reader.

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Generally speaking these specific programs can be grouped as follows:

Category I – Programs that Implement the Transition to 21st Century Learning:

Thinking-based Learning

Common Core State Standards

STEM

Category II – More Mature Programs that Will be Impacted by the Transition to 21st Century Learning

World Language Program

Fine Arts Program

AP and Honors Programs

Special Education

Regarding the three Category I programs, the CAC found that while these programs offer exciting and significant potential to meet the three principles underlying Rigorous and Diverse, they are at present works in progress. Moreover, further implementation of TBL, Common Core and STEM during the next few years is ambitious and will present important challenges, particularly in the present fiscal climate. A summary of the challenges identified by CAC members (not necessarily in the order of priority) include: (1) teacher professional development; (2) how teacher performance will be evaluated; (3) teacher's time and impact on the traditional 45-minute class; (4) impact on grading policy; (5) impact on standardized tests; (6) development of a curriculum that is not a "mile wide and an inch deep;" (7) impact on the achievement gap; (8) understanding and buy-in by parents; and (9) whether CCPS will be able to maintain the necessary level of rigor and accountability in view of budget reductions and the consequences of not doing so. These challenges are discussed in more detail in the following section.

With regard to the Category II programs, the CAC identified some of the same concerns depending on the program. Additionally, as noted in the following section, the CAC identified specific concerns for each program.

Finally, the CAC found that the *What Counts* process itself appears to be a valuable tool for assisting the BOE and CCPS in setting priorities. The CAC views this as a multi-year process

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that will be particularly important in the coming years and encourages its continuation. Moreover, the CAC recognizes that some of its observations and issues that it raises in this section are more within the purview of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Nonetheless, the CAC raises these issues with the intent of potentially informing the BOE's thinking as it addresses these issues with MSDE. Finally, the CAC recognizes that this report is unusually long and perhaps more detailed than those issued by the CAC in the past. This was due in part to the dense policy nature of the study topic presented along with the CAC's goal to provide the BOE with as comprehensive a view as possible on its thinking in these topics.

B. Program by Program Analysis

(1) Thinking-based Learning

Overall, the CAC agrees that thinking-based learning (TBL) is an integral element of providing rigorous and diverse programs. In this regard, the CAC believes that TBL offers an exciting opportunity for students to learn in different ways and will better prepare them for employment and life in the 21st Century. In particular, the emphasis of TBL on reasoning and analytical skills as well as more immersion in a subject appears to allow students to better process the seemingly ever increasing amounts of information they have access to, and will be presented with, in their daily lives. Moreover, TBL appears to better prepare students for the kind of learning environment they will be exposed to in college should they pursue that as an option following graduation. As such, the CAC views TBL as being entirely consistent with and supporting the three principles underling a rigorous and diverse education in CCPS.

However, the CAC members expressed several concerns regarding the implementation of TBL. A summary of these specific concerns and further elaboration are provided below (not necessarily in order of importance):⁵

- a. The impact of TBL on grading policy. As described by CCPS, under TBL, students will be evaluated as much on the process by which they arrive at an answer as in the answer itself. A concern expressed by some CAC members was, will this and should this have an impact on present grading policy? Furthermore, if the present grading policy is going to be revised, what will be the process and timeline for doing so?

⁵This is the case as well with concerns and recommendations presented in subsequent paragraphs—i.e. they are not necessarily listed in order of importance.

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- b. How TBL will be translated to standardized tests. This is of prime concern to CAC members with several voicing their concerns regarding the seeming incompatibility of standardized tests that employ multiple choice type questions with a learning process that seems to focus on analysis and reasoning and articulating that analysis and reasoning—even while the end result of that process may vary. In short, TBL seems to focus on process rather than one correct result. Given this, CAC members are concerned that standardized tests in the future should reflect an entirely different learning process instead of the one correct answer as seems to be the case with present tests. Of note, CCPS acknowledged that this is an issue and one that has been expressed to MSDE.
- c. The impact of the implementation of TBL on the achievement gap including African American students; special needs students; and economically disadvantaged students. The impact of the implementation on TBL on the achievement gap, whether positive or negative, seems at this point unknown. Some CAC members expressed concern that as the implementation of TBL proceeds that it not widen a gap nor create new gaps in achievement among various groups of students.
- d. Level of teacher TBL-related training. CCPS outlined in detail its steps in providing teachers with training in TBL. Some CAC members voiced their concerns that uniform teacher training is of significant import in ensuring the consistent and uniform application of TBL across classrooms. In this regard, such training will be important to avoiding a circumstance of some teachers applying TBL to different degrees leading to uneven student expectations and outcomes.
- e. Whether teachers will have sufficient time to effectively implement TBL. As described by CCPS, learning in a TBL environment is an interactive process with students that requires more immersion in a subject. The CAC is concerned that this level of immersion will require more time than that allotted under the traditional 45-minute time frame. Separately, related to paragraph d. above, the CAC is concerned that teachers will have sufficient time for staff development in order to learn and develop the skills necessary to apply TBL.
- f. Whether class sizes will be sufficiently small to accommodate effective implementation of TBL and differential levels of learning among students. This concern relates to others regarding whether CCPS finances will allow for class sizes that in turn allow for the level of individualized student attention that TBL may require. Related to this is whether TBL instruction will be able to accommodate different rates of learning

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among students and whether the instruction can accommodate those students who may struggle with core concepts and require additional attention—particularly in larger classrooms.

g. The potential impact of TBL on teacher compensation. The CAC noted that with the further implementation of TBL and the separate acceptance by CCPS of Race-to-the-Top (RTT) funds, there may be some impact on the formula by which teachers are compensated. Specifically, how students' performance is assessed under TBL may change along with the necessity to in part tie teacher compensation to student performance. Taken together, these factors at least in part, appear to tie teacher compensation to the introduction of TBL. The CAC expresses no other observations in this regard other than to highlight this connection.

h. The impact of TBL on teacher evaluations. As noted in f., teacher evaluations may be impacted by TBL. Again, the CAC expresses no other observations in this regard other than to highlight this connection.

i. How has/will TBL be introduced to parents. The CAC believes that an important and perhaps key element in the successful implementation of TBL will be the extent to which parental support can be gained. As noted by some CAC members, TBL is a significant and perhaps revolutionary transformation of how students are taught in a context in which most if not all parents will not have experienced this form of learning. In short, TBL could be new to many parents. Given that parental involvement and support is one of cornerstones of student achievement, the CAC believes that a robust and recurrent familiarization effort for parents will be important to the continued implementation of TBL.

j. Metrics for assessing the effectiveness of TBL. Are there or will there be metrics and processes in place for measuring the effectiveness of the implementation of TBL? Furthermore, will there be means (i.e. reports, information made available on the CCPS website etc.) by which the effectiveness of TBL can be assessed? Finally, will these measures of effectiveness include feedback from students during and after their experience at CCPS?

Steps for the BOE to consider regarding TBL

- a. Address grading and standardized test concerns as soon as possible
- b. Ensure consistency of application through teacher professional development

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- c. Make extra efforts to explain TBL approaches and goals to parents
- d. Pay particular attention to class sizes and the ability to address the needs of students who may be slower learners
- e. Continued outreach through the CAC and other organizations
- f. Develop metrics and put processes in place for assessing the effectiveness of TBL including its impact on the achievement gap(s)

(2) Common Core State Standards (Common Core)

The reaction by the CAC to the presentation regarding Common Core and its implementation was generally favorable. In this regard, the CAC was, and is, impressed by the level of rigor under Common Core and its potential for taking student achievement across the board to the next level. In particular, the CAC was impressed by the apparent incorporation in Common Core of an understanding of the interrelated nature of subject areas and practical skills developed in those areas. Having said that, several CAC members expressed concerns regarding the complicated and perhaps confusing concepts associated with Common Core as well as the practical impacts of its introduction as it relates to grading policy, retroactivity, standardized tests and whether there will be the resources fully in place to properly support its successful introduction.

A summary of specific comments/reactions to the Common Core presentation by CAC members along with further elaboration of each point is provided as follows.

- a. The terminology associated with Common Core is confusing and could potentially undercut the effectiveness of Common Core as it relates to student and parent buy-in. CAC members expressed significant concerns regarding the confusing nature of CCSS terminology that seeks to define its structure and the interrelated nature of its concepts. In this regard, terms used in a Common Core context such as “Strands,” “Objectives,” and “Standards” among others appeared confusing to CAC members and were of limited use in defining the structure of Common Core and the interrelationships among subject areas. Even the laudatory efforts by CCPS staff to present these terms and Common Core concepts through a practical exercise did not entirely dispel the confusion and uncertainty among CAC members. Given the seemingly confusing nature of the terminology associated with Common Core, the CAC is concerned about how it may be explained to parents.

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- b. How will the introduction of more rigorous writing standards under Common Core (as an example) impact students who are in more senior grades? CAC members expressed concern regarding whether students in more senior grades will be held accountable for having developed Common Core skills following its introduction without having had the benefit of a Common Core -based curriculum in earlier grades. At this point, it appears to be uncertain what the process/policy will be regarding retroactivity.
- c. What will be the impact on grading policy of Common Core and what does mastery of a subject mean in the context of letter grades? Like retroactivity as discussed above, the impact of the introduction of Common Core on grading policy appears at this point to be uncertain. The CAC has no conclusions in this regard other than to note that this is an area of concern that should be addressed as Common Core comes closer to being introduced. Furthermore, keeping parents informed will be important as more becomes known regarding potential revisions to CCPS grading policy.
- d. What will be the impact of Common Core implementation on standardized tests? As presented by CCPS staff, at this point, it does not appear to be certain to what extent Common Core implementation will impact standardized tests (MSAs/HSAs). Given the importance of standardized tests, and their visibility with parents, several CAC members highlighted this concern as one that should be addressed as the implementation of Common Core proceeds. Similarly, CAC members expressed the same concern regarding the impact of Common Core on AP tests.
- e. What will be the impact of Common Core implementation on teacher's time? Like TBL, some CAC members observed that Common Core will potentially create additional demands on teacher time in the form of class length and structure as well as planning and professional development. No conclusions were expressed by CAC members in this regard other than to note that this should be a consideration in the introduction of Common Core.
- f. Will teachers be sufficiently trained to introduce Common Core? Also like TBL, CAC members expressed concern that the level of teacher training in Common Core is commensurate with its introduction in order to avoid uneven application and different expectations of student performance.
- g. Whether the CCPS budget will support the level of staffing required. CAC members expressed the concern that Common Core is an ambitious undertaking that

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will require adequate numbers of trained teachers to implement it successfully. Given the current fiscal climate, whether that level of staffing is affordable is a concern.

h. What will be the impact of Common Core on students with reading and other learning disabilities? Common Core tailored to students with special needs was a concern expressed by some CAC members. As explained by CCPS staff, Common Core designed specifically with special needs students in mind appear to be a work in progress at MSDE. Therefore, while offering no conclusions in this regard, the CAC notes that this should be an area of attention going forward.

Steps for the BOE to consider regarding Common Core:

- a. Consider appointment of a multi-year parent advisory sub-committee to advise CCPS on the implementation of Common Core
- b. Provide an easily understood summary of the Common Core for parents
- c. Provide a phase-in schedule for parents as soon as practicable
- d. Ensure the consistency of application of Common Core through teacher professional development
- e. Develop/update the grading policy for evaluating students under Common Core

(3) Special Education

The CAC requested a presentation regarding CCPS' Special Education program based on its belief that this program is a core feature of a rigorous and diverse education. Put another way, the CAC does not believe that the three principles underlying a rigorous and diverse education can be fully attained without a robust Special Education program. In response to the CAC's request, CCPS provided a comprehensive presentation detailing its Special Education program. This presentation generated perhaps as many questions as any other received by the CAC indicating a high level of interest among members and underscored the CAC's belief that Special Education is an integral part of a rigorous and diverse education.

A summary of the areas of the Special Education program discussed and the general impressions of some CAC members is as follows.

- a. Co-teaching method. The co-teaching method under which general education and special education teachers are teamed in a class with a mixed population of general education students and those with special needs, seems to be the optimal method of

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meeting the needs of some special needs students (who are not otherwise better served by “pull-out” instruction). The CAC’s understanding is that this method is, or soon will be, employed at all CCPS schools. A concern voiced by CAC members was whether future budgets would be able to support fully staffing this effort.

b. Standardized tests. It is the CAC’s understanding that the “Mod-HSA” and “Mod-MSA,” both of which are designed for special needs students, are being phased out in favor of tests that address the requirements of special needs students and integrate Common Core. As more becomes known about the forthcoming tests, then this information should be disseminated to parents.

c. The impact of Common Core. Related to b., it is the CAC’s understanding that Special Education will be impacted by the introduction of Common Core. Given this, the CAC encourages that as much information as possible regarding the impact of CCSS on Special Education programs be distributed to the parents of special needs students as it becomes known. Furthermore, the CAC notes that the same concerns expressed above with regard to Common Core as a whole would apply equally in the Special Education context.

d. Regional programs. The CCPS Special Education presentation noted the success of the regional programs, which serve students with specific needs and low incidence populations. The CAC agrees with the effectiveness of these programs as being an optimal means of serving students while reducing the impact on families.

e. Students with reading disabilities and Dyslexia. There was concern expressed by some CAC members that the CCPS Special Education program is not fully responsive to students with reading disabilities and Dyslexia. A specific concern was whether CCPS staff were fully trained to identify those students with reading disabilities and Dyslexia. Furthermore, as more becomes known about reading disabilities, there may be more students identified who have reading disabilities. A related concern expressed by a CAC member was whether school systems as a whole, and CCPS in particular, would be able to meet the needs of a potential increase in the number of these students—particularly with potential cuts in the budget. Finally, a CAC member voiced concerns about the potential ramifications when these needs are not fully addressed. These ramifications could include behavioral problems, dropping out, and eventually landing in the juvenile or criminal court systems.

Steps for the BOE to consider regarding Special Education:

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- a. Continued support of co-teaching methods
- b. Continued support of regional programs
- c. Ongoing outreach to parents of children with special needs as more becomes known about the impact of Common Core on Special Education
- d. Ongoing outreach to parents of children with special needs as more becomes known about replacement tests for Mod-MSAs and HSAs
- e. Evaluate the processes by which students with learning disabilities and Dyslexia are identified
- f. Evaluate the ability of the CCPS Special Education program to respond to a potential influx of students with reading disabilities

(4) Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

The CAC agrees that similar to TBL and Common Core, STEM is an important element of a rigorous and diverse education that appears to incorporate the applicable principles underlying such an education. Specifically, the STEM program appears to challenge students on an individual basis and allows for achievement outside of tests. It also appears to be a program that is further along in its implementation than TBL and Common Core. Even so, going forward, STEM appears to share some of the challenges of TBL and Common Core while also having those that may be specific to STEM. Specific comments and questions regarding Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics or STEM follow.

- a. Full implementation and grant funding. As presented to the CAC, STEM techniques and principles will be applied across all subject areas. STEM appears to rely to a significant degree on grant funding. If these sources of funds are unavailable in the future how much of an impact will there be on STEM and are there contingency plans if grant funds are not available?
- b. Integration with Common Core. As one CAC member queried, there appears to be some overlap between Science, Technology, Engineering and Math or STEM and Common Core. Is there a process in place, or planned, to fully integrate the two?
- c. Teacher training. The continued implementation and success of STEM will to a significant degree be based on teacher training. Will there be sufficient funding going forward to continue this level of implementation?

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d. Implementation of TBL. To what degree will STEM be impacted by TBL and are TBL principles being incorporated in STEM?

e. Defined implementation milestones for STEM. As described to the CAC, the techniques utilized by STEM will eventually be applied across all subject areas at which point STEM will no longer exist as a separate program. CAC members expressed the view that development and/or dissemination of milestones under which STEM will be fully implemented across all subject areas would be beneficial to stakeholders.

(5) World Language Program

The CAC was impressed by the level of rigor in the CCPS World Language program. In many respects, this program appears to incorporate the core principles of the Rigorous and Diverse standard as articulated in the *What Counts* report. Specifically, the CCPS World Language program appears to allow students to feel successful outside of tests, challenges students on an individual basis, and in this increasingly connected world, potentially prepare students for more options following graduation from CCPS.

Having said that, the CAC expressed concern regarding the relatively low number of minority students enrolled in the high school World Language program. For example, African American students showed a participation level of 22.5% for Level 1 instruction, which dropped off to 12.5% in Level 4. Additionally, CAC members discussed specific recommendations regarding how the curriculum may be improved with the goal of making a good program better. With the above general comments as background, the CAC recommends consideration of the following steps.

a. Adding World Language offerings such as Chinese (different dialects) Arabic and Hindi based on student interest

b. Adding American Sign Language instruction

c. Encouraging, and offering as feasible, as early an entry point as possible for students into the World Language program

d. Encouraging the entry of students from minority backgrounds into the World Language program and tracking the progress of such entry

e. Emulating the best elements of the World Language program in other subjects to assist students in attaining equal levels of achievement including:

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- Ability to achieve individual excellence
- Achievement outside of grades
- Focus on the individual student
- Exploration of the envelope of World Language learning
- Practical application

(6) Fine Arts Program

Like the CCPS World Language program described above, the CAC was generally impressed by the CCPS Fine Arts program with one area of concern as further noted below. This program also seems in many respects to exemplify the best aspects of rigorous and diverse principles. Given this, the CAC reemphasizes those features of the Fine Arts program, which to the extent that they are portable to other subject areas are worth further examination for potential replication.

These features include:

- Ability to achieve individual excellence
- Achievement outside of grades
- Allows students to compete
- Focus on the individual student
- Exploration of the envelope of Fine Arts learning
- Practical application

The one area of concern expressed by some CAC members was regarding the consistency of the Fine Arts program across schools. Specifically, it was observed that the effectiveness of Fine Arts programs and productions seem very teacher dependent. In this regard, the CAC recommends that the BOE may consider gathering more information regarding the consistency among such programs in order to ensure students have uniform access to quality fine arts programs across schools.

(7) AP and Honors Programs

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Overall, the CAC believes that the CCPS AP and Honors programs are integral elements of providing a rigorous and diverse education. However, some CAC members expressed concerns about current practices as well as some thoughts for the BOE's consideration. A summary of these concerns and thoughts follows below.

- a. The impact of Thinking-based Learning. As stated elsewhere in this report, the CAC noted that with regard to TBL, more should be understood and explained regarding the impact of TBL—in this case on AP and Honors programs. Of specific concern is the potential impact on AP and Honors programs entry requirements, the teaching process and testing requirements.
- b. Teaching to the test remains a particular concern in AP classes. Several CAC members voiced this concern about the over-prioritization of test preparation in AP classes. While noting that AP test preparation is a necessary and important component of AP classes, the CAC sees a potential need for perhaps further examination by CCPS as to whether this imbalance exists and if so, what steps can be taken to address it. Of final note, such a concern was not just limited to AP classes but to MSA preparation as well.
- c. Whether excessively dividing classes between Honors and Non-Honors students deprives some students from exposure to role models. Some CAC members expressed the concern that by overly separating Honors and non-Honors students, a two-tiered classroom setting may be unintentionally created. Similar to the teaching to the test discussion above, this may be an area where additional monitoring is warranted.
- d. Whether consistently high standards are being set in Honors classes across schools. Some CAC members voiced concerns over whether there were uniform standards across all Honors classes citing as an example reading requirements in some English/Language Arts classes that students were required to adhere to while in equivalent classes at other schools such requirements were relaxed. The concern here is that such a relaxation of requirements will dilute class effectiveness and however unintended will create a sense of unfairness among those students who have to meet the full requirements.
- e. Whether Honors classes are being kept to manageable sizes. Some CAC members expressed a concern regarding overcrowding in some Honors classes. Like the foregoing observation regarding consistency of standards, the concern here is whether overall educational effectiveness is being diluted and whether students will truly benefit

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from Honors programs when teacher to student ratios are at the limit. While the CAC cannot quantify the extent to which this could be a problem, as noted below it may be an area worth monitoring.

f. Whether Calculus can be offered on a non-AP basis. Some CAC members voiced the concern that there was significant interest among high school students in taking calculus. However, there was a reluctance by some students to do so out of concern about testing.

Steps for the BOE to consider regarding AP and Honors Programs:

- a. Ensure that consistently high standards are set in Honors classes across schools
- b. Ensure that Honors classes are kept to manageable sizes
- c. Consider offering Calculus on a non-AP basis
- d. Consider the impact of TBL on Honors and AP classes and provide feedback to parents

V. FINAL NOTES

As a final consideration, during various presentations, some CAC members raised the questions of if and how CCPS receives feedback on the progress of its graduates as they move on to college or other schooling. These questions were raised in the context of whether obtaining this feedback may be a useful input for CCPS in helping to determine the effectiveness of its programs.

In response, CCPS referenced National Student Clearinghouse data which depicts information such as: the number of CCPS students who attend college; college choices made (i.e. in-state, out-of-state, 2-year or 4-year; public or private etc.); number of students who remain in college; and a listing of the most popular colleges attended by CCPS graduates.⁶

The CAC believes that information such as the National Student Clearinghouse data can be valuable information in assisting CCPS in determining how rigorous and diverse its programs are. This may particularly be the case as programs such as TBL and Common Core proceed. Specifically, feedback from CCPS graduates and National Student Clearinghouse data may be useful in determining how well TBL and Common Core are truly preparing students for a college

⁶ It is the CAC's understanding that equivalent data does not exist for trade/technical schools.

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atmosphere along with other employment or trade/technical school paths they may pursue following graduation. Therefore, the CAC encourages the continued and perhaps expanded use of this information by CCPS.

VI. CONCLUSION

The CAC believes that CCPS is generally providing a rigorous and diverse education for its students. Its ability to do so should be buttressed by the introduction of Thinking Based-Learning (TBL) and Common Core State Standards (Common Core) along with the continuation of the programs discussed above. Implementation of TBL and Common Core are ambitious, multi-year efforts. Given this, in the current fiscal climate, there is a risk that TBL and Common Core will not fully achieve their intended aims if their implementation is not fully resourced. The same is true with regard to existing programs with the overall risk that CCPS will be unable to fully maintain the level of achievement and accountability that have been its hallmarks.

A final consideration for the BOE is the continued inclusion of the CAC in the conversation as the *What Counts* process continues. Because the *What Counts* initiative along with the programs discussed in this report are ongoing efforts that in some cases will reach important milestones in the next few years, the CAC believes that it would be valuable for the CAC to continue to perform its advisory and study role with regard to whatever elements of *What Counts* the BOE may deem suitable.

In conclusion, the CAC respectfully submits the foregoing report to the BOE for its consideration. The CAC is prepared to address any questions and/or comments the BOE may have at the latter's convenience.