

Removing racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement

The Montgomery County Public School system is the 16th-largest school district in the United States, and one of its most diverse. Although the district has ample funding, excellent teachers, and a proven curriculum, there is a huge gap in test scores between white students and students of color. In 2002, the local business roundtable and the school district decided to try a new approach. They began a concerted effort to implement structured conversations in schools about how race and ethnicity affect student achievement.



They started in one school and have expanded to many schools and neighborhoods across the county. The district's "Study Circles" program has engaged thousands of administrators, teachers, students and parents in dialogues to address racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement and parent involvement. Recently, they invited the district's top leaders to examine the racial implications of institutional practices and policies.



Learn more by visiting
<http://bit.ly/mcps-story>

As a result of the program's success, the school district remains committed even when school funding is being cut. The dialogues have led to improved understanding and awareness, individual behavior changes, new and stronger relationships, and to institutional changes:

- Students of all backgrounds have avenues to talk with each other, with parents, and with administrators.
- New student leaders are emerging, equipped with knowledge of racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement.
- Teachers are developing awareness of how unintentional stereotyping affects their teaching, and are changing their behaviors.
- Schools are offering new support systems in multiple languages to help parents from every background get involved.
- Some schools developed new discipline plans to treat students of color fairly.

View and download the discussion guide, "Working Together to Remove Racial and Ethnic Barriers to Student Achievement," at <http://bit.ly/mcps-guide>.

About Everyday Democracy

A national leader in the field of civic participation and community change, Everyday Democracy helps people of different backgrounds and views talk and work together to create communities that work for everyone.

www.everyday-democracy.org