

Factors Contributing to Achievement Gap Level of Importance

The following table shows the level of importance Montgomery County teachers place on identified factors that contribute to the gap in student achievement. The list is in order of the “very important” rating MCEA members give each factor for contributing to the student achievement gap in Montgomery County.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not that Important	Not at all Important
Inadequate support at home	89%	11%	-	-
Oversized classes	69%	26%	5%	-
Poverty	67%	28%	4%	-
Lack of time to plan/implement new strategies	61%	29%	10%	1%
Insufficient support for at-risk students	56%	30%	4%	8%
Inadequate behavior/discipln policies	52%	33%	8%	7%
Student mobility	48%	29%	15%	7%
Schools that are too large	42%	29%	16%	12%
Standardized tests that are culturally biased	39%	37%	14%	10%
Lack of stratgys to differentiate	35%	38%	19%	7%
Staff preconceptions	32%	33%	18%	16%
Ineffective administration	31%	43%	16%	9%
Grouping practices	30%	32%	24%	13%
Culturally biased curriculum	16%	35%	30%	18%

Factors Contributing to Achievement Gap
Level of Importance
By Race

	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not that Important		Not at all Important	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
Inadequate support at home	90%	90%	10%	10%	-	-	-	-
Oversized classes	70%	67%	25%	28%	5%	5%	-	-
Poverty	70%	64%	26%	36%	4%	-	-	-
Lack of time to plan/implement new strategies	60%	56%	28%	36%	11%	8%	1%	-
Insufficient support for at-risk students	53%	74%	32%	23%	5%	-	9%	3%
Inadequate behavior/discipln policies	49%	67%	36%	26%	9%	5%	6%	3%
Student mobility	47%	56%	29%	23%	15%	21%	9%	-
Schools that are too large	40%	49%	27%	46%	17%	5%	15%	-
Standardized tests that are culturally biased	37%	51%	36%	39%	14%	10%	12%	-
Lack of stratgys to differentiate	31%	64%	38%	28%	22%	8%	9%	-
Staff preconceptions	26%	69%	36%	18%	20%	8%	17%	5%
Ineffective administration	25%	64%	46%	26%	19%	3%	9%	9%
Grouping practices	25%	62%	32%	23%	28%	13%	14%	3%
Culturally biased curriculum	13%	49%	38%	23%	29%	28%	21%	-

Factors Contributing to Achievement Gap
Level of Importance
By School Level

	Very Important			Somewhat Important			Not that Important			Not at all Important		
	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High
Inadequate support at home	90%	96%	82%	11%	4%	19%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Oversized classes	73%	82%	51%	25%	4%	45%	2%	13%	4%	-	1%	-
Poverty	73%	61%	62%	24%	32%	34%	3%	7%	4%	1%	-	-
Lack of time to plan/implement new strategies	74%	50%	49%	20%	33%	38%	6%	16%	12%	-	1%	2%
Insufficient support for at-risk students	67%	54%	41%	27%	29%	38%	5%	3%	2%	-	13%	18%
Inadequate behavior/discipln policies	57%	48%	46%	28%	29%	46%	10%	11%	3%	5%	13%	4%
Student mobility	65%	33%	32%	24%	29%	35%	6%	27%	22%	4%	10%	11%
Schools that are too large	52%	28%	36%	29%	26%	33%	15%	20%	15%	2%	27%	16%
Standardized tests that are culturally biased	56%	23%	24%	26%	36%	54%	11%	19%	18%	6%	21%	5%
Lack of stratgys to differentiate	40%	40%	23%	42%	9%	53%	15%	47%	4%	2%	4%	19%
Staff preconceptions	38%	31%	24%	22%	32%	50%	24%	16%	10%	14%	21%	15%
Ineffective administration	41%	32%	15%	40%	32%	56%	15%	14%	20%	4%	21%	9%
Grouping practices	36%	30%	20%	36%	22%	33%	20%	32%	26%	7%	15%	21%
Culturally biased curriculum	16%	10%	22%	39%	37%	29%	31%	28%	29%	13%	26%	21%

Teaching Improvement Factors

The following table shows a set of identified factors that may help teachers in Montgomery County. The list is in order of the “significantly improve” rating MCEA members give each.

	Significantly Improve	Moderately Improve	Wouldn't Improve
Smaller class sizes	83%	13%	4%
More parent support	77%	22%	1%
More behavior mangmnt support	76%	24%	1%
More prep time for adapting materials/instrctn	74%	21%	5%
More planning time	73%	23%	5%
More time for teachers to collaborate	65%	35%	-
Fewer interruptions	60%	35%	5%
Peer assistance and review	45%	48%	7%
Greater teacher involvement in decisions	44%	49%	6%
Improved school facilities	44%	43%	13%
More access to computers	40%	38%	23%
More secretaries for paperwork	36%	44%	20%
More professnal development	35%	55%	10%
Looping	24%	42%	19%

Teaching Improvement Factors By Race

	Significantly Improve		Moderately Improve		Wouldn't Improve	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
Smaller class sizes	83%	87%	12%	13%	5%	-
More parent support	77%	77%	23%	23%	1%	-
More behavior mangmnt support	74%	90%	26%	8%	-	3%
More prep time for adapting materials/instrctn	78%	46%	16%	54%	6%	-
More planning time	73%	70%	21%	31%	6%	-
More time for teachers to collaborate	67%	59%	33%	41%	-	-
Fewer interruptions	61%	56%	34%	41%	5%	3%
Peer assistance and review	43%	51%	49%	41%	8%	5%
Greater teacher involvement in decisions	44%	56%	51%	36%	5%	8%
Improved school facilities	47%	31%	40%	54%	14%	15%
More access to computers	38%	46%	39%	41%	23%	13%
More secretaries for paperwork	35%	44%	44%	51%	22%	5%
More professnal development	36%	31%	53%	62%	12%	8%
Looping	24%	28%	41%	59%	21%	8%

Teaching Improvement Factors By School Level

	Significantly Improve			Moderately Improve			Wouldn't Improve		
	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High
Smaller class sizes	85%	82%	82%	13%	18%	8%	2%	-	11%
More parent support	72%	77%	87%	27%	22%	13%	1%	1%	-
More behavior mangmnt support	78%	64%	83%	22%	35%	17%	1%	1%	-
More prep time for adapting materials/instrctn	85%	52%	72%	13%	35%	24%	2%	13%	4%
More planning time	81%	69%	61%	18%	25%	28%	-	6%	11%
More time for teachers to collaborate	72%	63%	55%	28%	37%	45%	-	-	1%
Fewer interruptions	64%	55%	58%	35%	45%	26%	1%	-	16%
Peer assistance and review	43%	42%	50%	52%	46%	42%	5%	12%	8%
Greater teacher involvement in decisions	48%	42%	39%	46%	51%	54%	6%	6%	8%
Improved school facilities	52%	25%	45%	42%	49%	40%	5%	27%	16%
More access to computers	42%	47%	31%	40%	27%	42%	18%	27%	27%
More secretaries for paperwork	48%	28%	24%	40%	44%	52%	12%	29%	24%
More professnal development	39%	33%	30%	49%	52%	66%	12%	15%	4%
Looping	27%	12%	29%	42%	44%	41%	30%	20%	-

Factors Closing the Achievement Gap Level of Importance

The following table shows the level of importance Montgomery County teachers place on identified factors that may close the gap in student achievement. The list is in order of the “very important” rating MCEA members give each factor for helping close the student achievement gap in Montgomery County.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not that Important	Not at all Important
Smaller class sizes	85%	15%	-	-
More supprt disruptive students	85%	15%	-	-
Early childhood interventions	82%	18%	-	-
Greater emphasis on reading compt	75%	24%	-	-
Centers for low income children	72%	28%	-	-
Expanded efforts at parent outreach	72%	28%	1%	-
Expanded Read Init Program	69%	23%	7%	-
Higher standards for students	68%	22%	9%	1%
Increased teacher input	67%	27%	6%	-
More time to work together	65%	28%	6%	-
More effective problem intervnt	63%	30%	7%	-
Expanded instrct strategies	63%	30%	7%	-
Additional instrct aides	63%	30%	8%	-
Social and health services	56%	40%	5%	-

continued

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not that Important	Not at all Important
One-on-one tutors	54%	33%	8%	4%
Full day kindergarten	51%	30%	12%	7%
Less reliance on standardzd tests	50%	32%	18%	1%
Evaluation system for under performers	49%	41%	9%	1%
Increased access to technology	47%	43%	9%	1%
Differentiated curriculum	46%	33%	14%	8%
Greater emphasis on algebra compt	41%	50%	8%	1%
Greater local autonomy to meet standards	39%	40%	11%	9%
Satisfaction surveys	34%	42%	23%	1%
Comparison data	32%	51%	16%	1%
Multi age and cross grade grouping	27%	35%	25%	12%

**Factors Closing the Achievement Gap
Level of Importance
By Race**

	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not that Important		Not at all Important	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
Smaller class sizes	84%	90%	16%	10%	-	-	-	-
More supprt disruptive students	84%	95%	16%	5%	-	-	-	-
Early childhood interventions	81%	87%	18%	13%	-	-	-	-
Greater emphasis on reading compt	74%	82%	25%	18%	-	-	-	-
Centers for low income children	73%	70%	27%	31%	-	-	-	-
Expanded efforts at parent outreach	75%	64%	24%	36%	1%	-	-	-
Expanded Read Init Program	69%	85%	24%	13%	7%	3%	-	-
Higher standards for students	68%	72%	21%	21%	9%	8%	1%	-
Increased teacher input	68%	62%	26%	31%	6%	8%	-	-
More time to work together	68%	44%	25%	51%	7%	5%	-	-
More effective problem intervnt	59%	82%	33%	18%	8%	-	-	-
Expanded instrct strategies	62%	59%	31%	33%	7%	8%	-	-
Additional instrct aides	61%	72%	30%	21%	8%	8%	-	-
Social and health services	53%	74%	42%	18^	5%	8%	-	-

continued

	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not that Important		Not at all Important	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
One-on-one tutors	55%	69%	35%	18%	2%	8%	3%	5%
Full day kindergarten	52%	64%	32%	18%	12%	13%	5%	5%
Less reliance on standardzsd tests	51%	46%	30%	41%	18%	13%	1%	-
Evaluation system for under performers	48%	49%	42%	46%	9%	5%	-	-
Increased access to technology	46%	47%	45%	26%	9%	8%	1%	-
Differentiated curriculum	45%	56%	33%	28%	14%	13%	8%	3%
Greater emphasis on algebra compt	40%	39%	52%	51%	7%	10%	1%	-
Greater local autonomy to meet standards	40%	39%	42%	40%	8%	18%	10%	3%
Satisfaction surveys	30%	47%	43%	44%	25%	10%	2%	-
Comparison data	27%	62%	54%	36%	19%	3%	1%	-
Multi age and cross grade grouping	24%	44%	38%	33%	26%	18%	12%	5%

Factors Closing the Achievement Gap
Level of Importance
By School Level

	Very Important			Somewhat Important			Not that Important			Not at all Important		
	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High
Smaller class sizes	86%	82%	85%	14%	18%	14%	-	-	1%	-	-	-
More supprt dis-ruptive students	94%	70%	81%	6%	29%	19%	-	1%	-	-	-	-
Early childhood interventions	83%	92%	73%	16%	9%	27%	1%	-	-	-	-	-
Greater emphasis on reading compt	87%	65%	64%	13%	34%	35%	1%	-	-	-	1%	-
Centers for low income children	81%	68%	61%	19%	30%	39%	-	-	-	-	1%	-
Expanded efforts at parent outreach	75%	66%	71%	24%	32%	29%	1%	2%	-	-	-	-
Expanded Read Init Program	74%	63%	66%	20%	31%	21%	5%	4%	1%	-	-	-
Higher standards for students	69%	71%	65%	20%	20%	26%	10%	7%	8%	1%	1%	1%
Increased teacher input	70%	51%	74%	28%	36%	19%	2%	13%	7%	-	-	-
More time to work together	69%	62%	63%	28%	29%	29%	4%	10%	8%	-	-	-
More effective problem intervnt	73%	49%	57%	23%	31%	40%	3%	19%	3%	1%	-	-

Expanded instruct strategies	66%	63%	57%	30%	23%	35%	3%	14%	8%	1%	-	-
Additional instruct aides	71%	67%	46%	27%	20%	40%	2%	13%	13%	-	-	-
Social and health services	59%	65%	45%	35%	31%	52%	6%	4%	3%	-	-	-

continued

	Very Important			Somewhat Important			Not that Important			Not at all Important		
	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High	Elem	Midd	High
One-on-one tutors	62%	68%	32%	34%	12%	48%	2%	13%	13%	2%	5%	7%
Full day kindergarten	62%	42%	39%	24%	35%	35%	10%	17%	11%	4%	5%	12%
Less reliance on standardzd tests	59%	29%	51%	23%	42%	37%	16%	29%	12%	2%	1%	-
Evaluation system for under performers	53%	47%	45%	38%	31%	50%	7%	17%	4%	1%	1%	-
Increased access to technology	52%	54%	35%	45%	26%	52%	4%	18%	12%	-	2%	1%
Differentiated curriculum	53%	40%	38%	37%	30%	29%	8%	26%	14%	2%	4%	19%
Greater emphasis on algebra compt	44%	25%	49%	47%	68%	40%	7%	7%	8%	1%	-	1%
Greater local autonomy to meet standards	44%	21%	48%	45%	38%	34%	5%	27%	7%	5%	14%	11%
Satisfaction surveys	36%	29%	34%	44%	40%	40%	19%	28%	25%	1%	3%	1%
Comparison data	35%	30%	29%	49%	45%	60%	15%	25%	11%	1%	1%	-
Multi age and cross grade grouping	33%	26%	19%	41%	17%	39%	20%	32%	29%	5%	26%	12%

Factors Contributing to the Achievement Gap

Montgomery County Superintendent of Schools Jerry Weast has set his focus on what he called the

“achievement gap,” that is, the gap in academic achievement between white and Asian students on one hand, and African-American and Hispanic students on the other. In this section of the survey, Montgomery County teachers were asked to rate fourteen possible factors that could contribute to the “achievement gap” as very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important. This analysis lists the factors in the order on which they appeared on the questionnaire.

Poverty. Poverty is rated as a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap by 67% of Montgomery County teachers surveyed, somewhat important by 28%, not that important by 4%, and not at all important by less than one percent. Elementary school teachers (72% very important) were more likely to place a great deal of importance on the factor of poverty, as were teachers who had been in the Montgomery County Public School System for 5 to 9 (80%) and less than 5 (75%) years. In terms of the “very important” rating, poverty placed third among 14 factors contributing to the achievement gap.

Student mobility. Student mobility was rated as a very important factor by 48% of teachers, somewhat important by 29%, 15% as not that important, and 7% as not at all important. The remaining one percent gave no answer. Elementary school teachers (65%) were twice as likely as middle (33%) or high school (32%) teachers to give mobility a “very important” rating. Mobility ranked seventh among the 14 possible factors.

Oversized classes. Oversized classes ranked second overall among factors contributing to the achievement gap, with 69% rating oversized classes as very important, 26% as somewhat important, 5% as somewhat important, and less than 1% as not at all important. Middle school teachers (82%) felt particularly burdened by big classes, high school teachers less so (51%).

Insufficient support for at-risk students. Fifty-six percent of teachers said that insufficient support for at-risk students was a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap, with 30% rating it as somewhat important, 4% as not that important, and 8% as not at all important. The remaining 1% offered no answer. Responses in this category were stratified in two areas: School level and race. Sixty-six percent of elementary teachers felt that insufficient support was a very important factor, compared to 54% of middle school teachers, and 41% of high school teachers. And 53% of white teachers rated the factor as very important, while 74% of black, and 71% of Hispanic teachers gave insufficient support a very important rating. Insufficient support rated fifth overall.

Schools that are too large. Forty-two percent of teachers said that schools that are too large was a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap, 29% said they were somewhat important, 16% replied that they were not that important, and 12% said they were not at all important. Less than one percent offered no answer. Too-big schools were more likely to be rated as very important by elementary teachers (52%), and less likely by men (32%) and high school teachers (36%), where there is likely a great deal of overlap. School that are too large ranked eighth among the factors contributing to the achievement gap.

Culturally biased curriculum. Just 16% of teachers felt that a culturally biased curriculum was a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap, ranking it last among the 14 factors tested. Thirty-five percent rated it somewhat important, 30% as not that important, and 18% as not at all

important. Less than one percent gave no answer. However, 48% of African-American teachers and 29% of Hispanic teachers ranked a culturally biased curriculum as a very important factor, compared to just 13% of white teachers. No Asian teachers rated a culturally biased curriculum as very important.

Staff preconceptions and attitudes about underachieving students. Thirty-two percent of Montgomery teachers said that staff preconceptions about underachieving students are a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap, with 33% rating it as somewhat important, 18% as not that important, and 16% as not at all important. One percent gave no answer. Responses were polarized racially, with white (26%) and Asian (39%) less likely to rate staff preconceptions as a very important factor, and black (76%) and Hispanic (77%) teachers more likely. Overall, staff preconceptions ranked eleventh among 14 factors.

Inadequate support at home. One factor that nearly everyone could agree on was that inadequate support at home is the Number One factor contributing to the achievement gap. Eighty-nine percent rated inadequate support as very important and 11% as somewhat important, with literally no one rating inadequate support as unimportant to any degree.

Ineffective school administration. Thirty-one percent of teachers rated an ineffective school administration as a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap, 43% as somewhat important, 16% as not that important, and 9% as not at all important. Less than one percent gave no answer. Ineffective administration was more likely to be rated as very important by black (64%) and Hispanic (59%) teachers than by white (25%) and Asian (39%) teachers. Ineffective administration ranked twelfth of 14 factors overall.

Inadequate behavior management and discipline policies in schools. Fifty-two percent of teachers surveyed said that inadequate behavior management and discipline policies in schools were a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap. Thirty-three percent thought this factor was somewhat important, 8% not that important, and 7% not at all important. Less than one percent gave no answer. Minority teachers were more likely than white teachers to rate this factor highly. Forty-eight percent of white teachers said inadequate behavior management was a very important factor, compared with 67% of black teachers, 76% of Hispanic teachers, and 69% of Asian teachers. Discipline ranked sixth of 14 factors contributing to the achievement gap.

Standardized tests that are culturally biased and don't accurately assess student learning. Thirty-nine percent of Montgomery teachers felt that standardized tests that are culturally biased or don't accurately assess student learning were a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap, more than twice the number who felt that a culturally biased curriculum was very important. Thirty-seven percent thought that culturally biased standardized tests were somewhat important, 14% not that important, and 10% not at all important. Less than one percent gave no answer. Culturally biased standardized tests were a hot button issue with Hispanic teachers, 77% of who rated them a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap. Black teachers (51%) were more likely to rate biased standardized tests as very important than white (37%) or Asian (15%) teachers. Biased standardized tests rated ninth of 14 factors overall.

Lack of strategies to differentiate instruction. Thirty-five percent of teachers surveyed felt that the lack of strategies to differentiate instruction is a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap, while 38% felt it was somewhat important, 19% not that important, and 7% not at all important. Less than one percent gave no answer. Black (64%), Asian (54%), and Hispanic (47%) teachers were more likely to rate a lack of strategies as a very important factor than were white teachers (31%). A lack of strategies rated tenth of 14 factors overall.

Student grouping practices. Thirty percent of teachers said that student groups practices were a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap, with 32% saying they were somewhat important, 25% not that important, and 13% as not that important. Less than one percent gave no answer. African-American (62%) and Asian (69%) teachers were much more likely to rate student grouping practices as a very important factor than white (25%) or Hispanic (35%) teachers. Student grouping practices rated thirteenth out of 14 factors overall.

Lack of time to plan and implement new strategies. Sixty-one percent of teachers surveyed felt that the lack of time to plan and implement new strategies was a very important factor contributing to the achievement gap. Twenty-nine percent felt it was somewhat important, 10% not that important, and 1% not all at important. The time crunch was more likely to be rated as very important by Hispanic teachers (82%), elementary teachers (74%), teachers with more than 15 years of service, and women (66%). Lack of time to plan and implement new strategies ranked fourth of 14 factors overall.

Teaching Improvement Factors

In the second section of the survey, teachers were asked whether a set of factors would significantly improve, moderately improve, or wouldn't improve their ability to teach effectively in Montgomery County. Again, factors are listed in this analysis in the order on which they appeared in the questionnaire.

More professional development for differentiated instructional strategies. Thirty-five percent of Montgomery teachers said that more professional development would significantly improve their ability improve their teaching, while 55% said it would moderately improve their teaching, and 10% felt it wouldn't improve it. There was very little difference in responses among the demographic subgroups in the survey. Ranked by the percentage who said that a factor would "significantly improve" their teaching, more professional development ranked thirteenth of 14 factors.

More planning time. Seventy-three percent of teachers surveyed indicated that more planning time would significantly improve their teaching, while 23% felt it would moderately improve their teaching, and 5% said it wouldn't improve it. Less than one percent gave no answer. The need for more time was felt even more acutely by elementary school teachers, 81% of whom said their teaching would significantly improve with more planning time. Overall, more planning time ranked fourth among 14 factors.

Smaller class sizes. A whopping 83% of teachers surveyed felt that their effectiveness would significantly improve if class sizes were smaller, ranking smaller class size as the top factor for teacher improvement. Thirteen percent felt their teaching would improve moderately with smaller

class sizes, and 4% said it wouldn't improve. Less than one percent gave no answer.

Fewer interruptions in instructional time. Sixty percent of those surveyed said that fewer interruptions in instructional time would significantly improve their teaching, 35% felt it would moderately improve their teaching, and 5% said fewer interruptions wouldn't improve their teaching. Less than one percent offered no answer. There were few differences among the survey's demographic subgroups. Overall, fewer interruptions in instructional time ranked seventh among 14 factors.

Greater teacher involvement in decision making about school programs and management. Forty-four percent of teachers said that greater involvement in decision making about school programs and management would significantly improve their teaching. Forty-nine percent said their teaching would moderately improve, and 6% said it wouldn't improve. Less than one percent offered no answer. Again, there were few differences among the survey's demographic subgroups. Overall, greater involvement in decision making about school programs and management ranked ninth among 14 factors.

More preparation time for adapting materials and instruction. Seventy-four percent of respondents said that more preparation time for adapting materials and instruction would significantly improve their teaching, while 21% said it would moderately improve, and 5% said it wouldn't improve their teaching. Elementary teachers (85%), teachers with 5 to 9 years' service (82%), Hispanic teachers (82%), and white teachers (78%) were most time starved. Overall, more preparation time for adapting materials and instruction ranked fourth among 14 possible factors.

More time for teachers to collaborate with each other. Sixty-five percent of teachers surveyed indicated that more time for professional collaboration would significantly improve their teaching, while 35% said their teaching would moderately improve, and less than 1% said it wouldn't improve their teaching. Elementary teachers (72%) were most enthusiastic about collaboration, with a steady fall-off through middle (63%) and high school (55%). Overall, more time for teachers to collaborate with each other ranked sixth of 14 factors.

Looping to allow elementary teachers to stay with students for more than one year. Teachers at all levels remain largely unsold on the idea of "looping." Just 24% felt that looping would significantly improve their teaching, while 42% thought it would moderately improve, and 19% felt it wouldn't improve their teaching at all. Fifteen percent gave no answer (though these non-responses came exclusively from middle and high school teachers). Looping to allow elementary teachers to stay with students for more than one year ranked last of 14 possible factors that might improve teaching.

Peer assistance and review. Forty-five percent of teachers said that peer assistance and review would significantly improve their teaching, while 48% thought it would moderately improve, and 7% felt it wouldn't improve their teaching. Less than one percent offered no answer. Responses were similar across the survey's demographic subgroups. Peer assistance ranked eighth out of 14 factors overall.

More secretaries to cut down on paperwork. Thirty-six percent of teachers surveyed said that more secretaries to cut down on paperwork would significantly improve their teaching. Forty-four percent said more secretaries would moderately improve their teaching, and 20% felt it wouldn't improve it.

Elementary (48%), black (44%), and Hispanic (47%) were more likely to indicate that additional secretarial help would improve their teaching. Overall, more secretaries ranked twelfth among 14 factors listed.

More access to computers and better technological support. Forty percent of respondents felt that more access to computers and better technological support would significantly improve their teaching, while 38% said it would moderately improve, and 23% indicated it wouldn't improve their teaching. Middle school teachers (47%) were more likely than elementary (42%) or high school teachers (31%) to say that more access to computers would significantly improve their teaching. Overall, more access to computers ranked eleventh among the 14 factors.

Improved school facilities. Forty-four percent of teachers said that improve school facilities would significantly improve their teaching, while 43% said it would moderately improve their teaching, and 13% felt it wouldn't improve it. Variance was greatest among teachers at different levels: Fifty-two percent of elementary teachers felt that improved facilities would significantly improve their teaching, compared to 45% of high school teachers, and just 25% of middle school teachers. Overall, improved school facilities ranked tenth out of 14 possible factors.

More behavior management supports for students with discipline problems. Seventy-six percent of teachers surveyed said that more behavior management support for students with discipline problems would significantly improve their teaching. Twenty-four percent said their teaching would moderately improve, and a scant one percent said it wouldn't improve. Numbers shot up through the eighties in some demographic subgroups: Eighty-three percent of high school teachers, 82% of teachers with 5 to 9 years of service, 82% of Hispanic teachers, and a whopping 90% of African-American teachers said their teaching would significantly improve with more and better discipline management supports. Discipline ranked third among 14 possible factors.

More parental support and involvement. Seventy-seven percent of teachers felt that their teaching would significantly improve with more parental support and involvement. Twenty-two percent said more parental involvement would moderately improve their teaching, and less than one percent said it wouldn't improve their teaching. High school teachers were particularly hungry for parental support, with 87% saying more of it would significantly improve their teaching. Overall, more parental support and involvement ranked second among 14 factors.

Factors Closing the Achievement Gap

The final section of the survey asked teachers to rate 25 possible factors in terms of their importance in closing the "achievement gap." Again, these factors are listed in this analysis in the same order in which they appeared in the survey questionnaire.

Early childhood interventions. Eighty-two percent of Montgomery teachers surveyed indicated that early childhood interventions are very important for closing the achievement gap, while 18% thought that interventions were somewhat important. Less than one percent said that such interventions were not at all important. Early childhood interventions ranked second among 25 possible factors that

could close the achievement gap.

Comprehensive social and health services for students. Fifty-five percent of teachers felt that comprehensive social and health services for students were very important in terms of their ability to close the achievement gap, while 40% thought they were somewhat important, and 5% said they were not that important. Less than one percent gave no answer. African-American (74%) and Hispanic (64%) were more likely to say these services were very important in closing the gap. Overall, comprehensive social and health services for students ranked tenth among 25 factors.

Expanded efforts at parent outreach and education. Seventy-two percent of teachers said that expanded efforts at parent outreach and education were very important in closing the achievement gap, while 28% felt such efforts were somewhat important, and a scant one percent said they were not that important. The important of parent outreach is rated higher among more experienced teachers: Eighty-two percent of teachers with 10 to 15 years of service and 80% of those with more than 15 years said that expanded parental outreach efforts were very important, compared with 55% of teachers with 5 to 9 years experience, and 62% of those with less than five years. Expanded efforts and parental outreach and education rank in a tie for fourth place among 25 factors.

Smaller class sizes. Eighty-five percent of teachers surveyed agreed that smaller class sizes would be very important in closing the student achievement gap, almost the same percentage that indicated that smaller classes would be the most important factor in improving their teaching. Fifteen percent said that smaller classes would be somewhat important in closing the gap, while less than one percent said they were not that important. Another fraction of a percent offered no answer. Smaller class sized ranked first among 25 possible factors in closing the achievement gap.

Additional instruction aides. Sixty-three percent of teachers thought that additional instruction aides would be very important when closing the achievement gap, while 30% said they would somewhat important, and 8% thought them not that important. Instructional aides were more important to elementary (71%) and middle school (67%) teachers than to those in high school (46%). Additional instructional aides were in a three-way tie for ninth place among 25 possible factors in closing the achievement gap.

Full day kindergarten. Fifty-one percent of Montgomery teachers said that full day kindergarten would be a very important factor in closing the achievement gap, while 30% said it would be somewhat important, 12% not that important, and 7% not at all important. The remaining one percent offered no answer. Full day kindergarten was valued most by elementary (62%) and African-American (64%) teachers. It ranked twelfth of 25 factors that might close the achievement gap.

One-on-one tutors or mentors for students. Fifty-four percent of teachers felt that one-on-one tutors or mentors would be very important in closing the achievement gap, while 33% thought tutors would be somewhat important, 8% not very important, and 4% not at all important. The remaining one percent gave no answer. Interestingly, high school teachers (32%) put a lot less stock in tutor and mentors than elementary (62%) and middle school (68%) teachers. Overall, one-on-one tutors or mentors for students ranked eleventh of 25 factors.

Differentiated curriculum. Forty-six percent of teachers responded that differentiated curriculum would be very important in closing the achievement gap, with 33% saying it would be somewhat important, 14% not that important, and 8% not at all important. Less than one percent offered no answer. There was a gradual drop-off of enthusiasm for differentiated curriculum from elementary (53%) to middle (40%) to high school (38%) teachers. Differentiated curriculum ranked sixteenth out of 25 factors important to closing the achievement gap.

Early childhood centers for low-income children and parents. Seventy-two percent of respondents said that early childhood centers for low-income children and parents would be very important in closing the achievement gap, while 28% said such centers would be somewhat important, and a scant one percent said they would be not at all important. Less than one percent gave no answer. The highest levels of enthusiasm for this proposal were found among elementary teachers (81%), teachers with more than 15 years service (83%), and, interestingly, men (84%). Early childhood centers for low-income children and parents ranked in a tie for fourth among 25 possible factors.

“Satisfaction surveys” of students, staff, and parents to measure school quality. Thirty-three percent of teachers surveyed felt that “satisfaction surveys” would be very important when working to close the achievement gap, while 42% said they would be somewhat important, 23% said they were not that important, and 1% felt they were not at all important. The 23% “not that important” rating was the second highest in this section of the survey. Overall, “satisfaction surveys” ranked nineteen out of 25 possible factors (third from last).

Comparison data measuring change in student performance. Thirty-two percent of teachers said that comparison data measuring change in student performance would be very important in closing the achievement gap, while 51% thought it would be somewhat important, 16% not very important, and 1% not at all important. Less than one percent gave no answer. Minority and white teachers differed sharply on this question: Just 27% of white teachers felt that comparison data would be very important, while 62% of black teachers, 53% of Hispanic teachers, and 62% of Asian teachers did. Overall, though, comparison data ranked twentieth of 25 factors, second from last.

Less reliance on standardized test scores. Fifty-percent of teachers surveyed felt that less reliance on standardized test scores would be very important in closing the student achievement gap, while 32% said less reliance would be somewhat important, 18% not that important, and 1% not at all important. Less reliance on standardized tests ranked thirteenth of 25 factors.

Multi-age and cross-grade groupings. Twenty-seven percent of teachers said that multi-age and cross-grade groupings would be very important in closing the achievement gap, while 35% said such groupings would be somewhat important, 25% not that important, and 12% not at all important. Another one percent gave no answer. Overall, multi-age and cross-grade groupings ranked last among the 25 factors listed in this section of the survey.

Expanded support for the Reading Initiative Program through Grade 3. Sixty-nine percent of teachers surveyed believed that more support for the Reading Initiative Program would be very important in closing the achievement gap, while 23% said it would be somewhat important, and 7% felt it would not be that important. One percent gave no answer. Support for this program was especially strong

among black teachers (85%) and men (83%), and it ranked high overall – fifth among 25 factors.

Higher standards for students. Sixty-eight percent of teachers surveyed said that higher standards for students would be very important in closing the achievement gap, while 22% said they would be somewhat important, 9% not that important, and 1% not at all important. Less than one percent gave no answer. Higher standards for students ranked sixth of 25 factors overall.

Increased access to technology. Forty-seven percent of Montgomery teachers said that increased access to technology would be a very important factor in closing the achievement gap, while 43% said it would be somewhat important, 9% not that important, and 1% not at all important. Overall, increased access to technology ranked fifteenth among 25 factors.

More time for teachers to work together. Sixty-five percent of teachers said that more time to work with colleagues would be very important in closing the achievement gap, with 28% saying it would be somewhat important, and 6% not that important. More time for teachers to work together ranked eighth among 25 factors in closing the student achievement gap.

More opportunities to expand instructional strategies to deal with diverse students. Sixty-three percent of teachers surveyed agreed that, to close the achievement gap, it would be very important to have more opportunities to expand instructional strategies to deal with diverse students. Thirty percent thought it would be somewhat important, 7% not that important, and a scant 1% not at all important. Less than one percent gave no answer. More opportunities to expand instructional strategies to deal with diverse students ranked in a three-way tie for ninth among 25 factors.

Evaluation system that weeds out under-performing teachers. Forty-nine percent of those surveyed felt it was very important to have an evaluation system that weeds out under-performing teachers in order to help close the achievement gap. Forty-one percent felt it would be somewhat important, 9% not that important, and 1% not at all important. Another 1% gave no answer. An evaluation system ranked fourteenth among 25 factors.

More support dealing with disruptive students. A strong 85% of teachers surveyed felt that more support in dealing with disruptive students would be very important when working to close the achievement gap, while 15% said it would be somewhat important, and less than 1% not that important. Eighty-five percent tied more support in dealing with disruptive students with reduced class sizes for the number one ranking.

Greater autonomy for schools in how they meet standards. Thirty-nine percent of teachers felt that it was very important that greater autonomy be given to schools in determining how they meet assigned standards. Forty percent thought that greater autonomy would be somewhat important, 11% not that important, and 9% not at all important. Another 1% gave no answer. Greater autonomy in reaching standards ranked eighteenth among 25 factors in closing achievement gap.

Greater teacher input into decisions that affect the classroom. Sixty-seven percent of teachers said it was very important that they be given greater input into decisions that affect the classroom if the achievement gap is to be closed. Twenty-seven percent felt this was somewhat important, while 6%

said it was not that important. Greater teacher input ranked seventh among 25 factors.

Greater emphasis on student competency in reading. Seventy-five percent of teachers surveyed believed that a greater emphasis on student competency in reading is very important in closing the achievement gap, boosted by an 87% “very important” ranking among elementary teachers. Twenty-four percent said a greater emphasis would be somewhat important, while less than 1% each felt it was not that important, not at all important, or gave no answer. A greater emphasis on reading proficiency ranked third among 25 factors in this section of the survey.

Greater emphasis on student competency in algebra. Forty-one percent of teachers said that a greater emphasis on competency in algebra was very important in closing the achievement gap, with 50% believing it somewhat important, 8% not that important, and 1% not at all important. Another 1% gave no answer. Math just doesn’t get respect that reading does – except among Asian teachers, among whom 69% thought that a greater emphasis on competency in algebra was essential to close the gap. Competency in algebra ranked seventeenth among 25 factors.

More effective problem solving interventions. Sixty-two percent of teachers surveyed place great emphasis on more effective problem solving interventions, believing they are very important if the achievement gap is to be closed. Thirty percent say more effective interventions are somewhat important, 7% not that important, and less than one percent not at all important. One percent offered no answer. Elementary (73%) and minority teachers (82% black, 82% Hispanic, 85% Asian) felt this was a particularly important matter. Overall, more effective problem solving interventions ranked in a three-way tie for ninth place among 25 factors.

Analysis

In a nutshell, it all comes down to time. More time for teachers to spend with their students (smaller classes). More time on task (fewer interruptions, better behavior management, greater emphasis on reading proficiency). More time to plan, prepare, and interact with peers. And more time and attention from the most important adults in a student’s life – their own parents. Teachers are starved for time and won’t be more effective without more of it.

In addition, teachers recognize that poverty and its symptoms are overarching issues that need to be addressed in a comprehensive way, the earlier in a student’s school career, the better. Early childhood interventions, including for social and health services, are supported by high percentages of teachers across the board.

Bricks and mortar and technology appear less important in *improving* teacher performance in Montgomery County because most facilities are up to par and well-equipped already, compared with schools in poorer jurisdictions.

The Superintendent has taken on a difficult task. He will have the support of the teachers in the system, but only if he involves them in decisions that impact the classroom and give them the time they need to be the best they can be.

