

Question	Answer
Blair Magnet has been very successful and nationally recognized, why the county opened a new Magnet Program and cut Blair's program of more not equal to better. Please explain the rationale.	Since the inception of the Montgomery Blair High School Magnet program, the county population has risen by over 40,000 students. The magnet program at Blair had become increasingly difficult to gain entry to due to the increased number of applications, resulting in an increase of qualified applicants in the wait pool. Over the past five years, additional magnet programs were established in the northern portion of the county to provide opportunities to additional students with no reduction of services to existing programs. During the current fiscal times, all programs are facing a reduction in staffing.
Please explain the status of the Poolesville Magnet (whose creation has already diluted the value of a Blair Magnet degree) and whether Poolesville will now be open county-wide to all students.	The Poolesville Magnet Program will enter its third year this fall and has not diluted the value of the learning opportunities available to Blair students. Teachers from Blair have had the opportunity to share their expertise with teachers new to the program at Poolesville. The Poolesville program remains available to students from the Gaithersburg, Northwest, Poolesville, Damascus, Clarksburg, Quince Orchard, Magruder, Watkins Mill, and Seneca Valley High School feeder areas only.
Have you considered a fee (similar to the school wide activity fee) to help support the special features of this program.	No fee has been considered at this time.
1) How can you compare teacher's periods that teach the magnet and others obviously, magnet teachers need additional prep time for intense classes such as Blair? 2) Is this cut because of "No Child Left Behind"?	All teachers deserve more time to prepare so they can deliver the highest level of instruction possible, but we are working within limited budget funds. This cut is economic and not related to NCLB.
My son is in the after school math club and competes in math contests in the county. Will this activity be continually funded?	Funding for contests and Math League is separate from these staffing issues. We are planning to continue participation.
1) I heard that next year the Magnet Program will accept 50 female students and 50 male students, Is that true? 2) Are you going to have quota for each ethnicity group?	Each year we evaluate students individually. As with any class, the current group of incoming freshman has a unique profile. This incoming class has more female students than the one before it. That is because these young women were equal in talent to their male counterparts. We do not have quotas for gender or ethnic groups. Ethnicity is not considered during our screening process.
Had you look at cutting back from 8 periods to 7? Had you looked at cutting costs associated with field trips?	Having an eight period day allows our students to take a variety of classes that meet both program requirements and elective interests. Reducing the number of classes a student takes per semester would severely impact our students. Most of the cost for field trips comes from family contribution.
How are juniors going to get their recommendations if teachers are leaving the program?	Each year there is a possibility that a teacher can leave. Students have many teachers throughout their high school experience who are available to write recommendations.
Student question - What can we do to help?	Students can continue to advocate to the Board of Education and the County Council to restore staffing levels.
In looking at the ?? For budget cuts, it looks like no consideration has been given to the quality of the magnet program. It seems leaders will not have sufficient time to prepare and teach the higher level of the Blair	While additional planning time will be reduced, teachers will have their normal planning period, professional days, sixteen hours of unscheduled professional time that is focused on students, and paid days in the summer to work on planning and preparation.
Mr. Heidler said there were 400 applicants this year. How many were admitted? If the usual number (100), does this mean that standards were lowered? If fewer than usual were admitted, what does this mean for the long-term viability of the Blair Magnet	Our program is designed for 100 students per grade level and we will continue to offer acceptances to maintain this number. The number of applicants this year represents a ten percent increase over last year and the standard for acceptance has not been compromised.

Program?	
What were the roles of stakeholder in this change: - Parents - Teachers - Students - Alumni	Stakeholder input is sought as a part of the budget process beginning in October of every year and continuing through final board adoption of an operating budget in June. For more information on participation visit: http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/budget/process.shtm Final budget decisions included representatives from the three employee associations and the Montgomery County Council of PTA's.
I would like to request more pro-active communication from the Magnet Coordinator and improved responsiveness to parent and student concerns How would you propose to improve communications?	We will be increasing the number of parents on the Advisory Board for next year. Additionally, we are creating a parent resource page for our website.

Course Cuts

How soon can we find out <u>exactly</u> which electives will <u>not</u> be offered next year?	Electives are offered based on student interest. If enough students sign up for an elective, it can be offered.
Since only 2 teacher positions are being eliminated and some courses are being eliminated, is the course load remaining about the same?	Some teachers already teach 5 courses in a semester so their course load is not changing. Teachers who currently teach 4 courses in a semester will likely see their course load increase.
How many sections will there be of each science (9th and 10th) class? What will those class sizes be? Will Functions be offered?	We have maintained the traditional instructional block in 9th grade and 10th grade and will offer four sections of each science course taken in grades nine and ten. Those class sizes should be approximately the same size as they have been in the past. Functions will be offered next year.
If a student wants a class that is cut, can they study that as independent study with a small group of other students "under" a teacher?	We will not be offering independent study as supervision is an issue.
You have stated that scheduling impact changes should be minimal. Already this school year, my child could not take 4 classes due to limited offerings. How will you ensure maintenance of the diversity of electives and how will guidance better advise about 4 year scheduling plans?	We will continue to offer a diverse set of electives this coming year. Only three electives were postponed this year - due to lack of student interest. Since most of our 9th and 10th grade years are programmed, we discuss elective possibilities in the middle of 10th grade. We will look to alternate elective course offerings so that during a student's four years at Blair, a larger number of electives will be available over time.
Any reduction in number and level of math and science courses from previous year's Magnet Program in math and computer science?	Some elective courses may not be offered due to lack of interest and some sections of the same course may be combined. The same rigorous levels of courses as in years past will be provided.
What impact will this have on remaining staff - increase in classed? 4 to 5 for everyone? Do cuts apply to CAP also?	Most teachers will have 5 courses each semester. The CAP program receives funding and staffing through different means.
How many students will be in sections of PreCal/Cal/Comp Science as opposed to this year?	We will see a slight increase in the math course enrollment over last year of about five students per class, but expect our Pre-Calculus courses to have fewer than 25 students and our Calculus courses to have fewer than 30 on average. Computer Science will see no change. The county guideline for these courses is a maximum of 32 students.

Will Functions still be offered? Will the accelerated Computer Science track still be offered?	Both Functions and the accelerated computer science track will be offered.
Two/Three electives are being eliminated this year. Will more electives be axed in the next couple of years?	Electives are offered based on student interest. If student interest drops in a particular elective that is currently offered, it may be cut in the future.
Will there still be 4 sections of the core blocked classes in 9th grade and the core classes in 10 the grade?	There will still be four sections of the core 9 th and 10 th grade courses blocked together.

Non-Magnet teachers

How are non-magnet teachers equipped/trained to handle magnet courses?	As with past years, staff members new to magnet classes are selected due to their strong qualifications and expertise in particular subject areas. These staff members are supported internally through collaborative work with other magnet teachers, the availability of course outlines developed by our current staff, and through outside professional development.
Will any magnet classes be taught by non-magnet staff? What about Mr. Heidler's statement on 3/20 concerning dropping distinction between magnet/non-magnet?	By definition, a magnet teacher is a teacher who teaches a magnet class. As with any year, there will be teachers teaching magnet courses for the first time next year.
Are magnet teachers teaching non-magnet courses? Are non-magnet teachers teaching magnet courses? How will the scheduling be done?	Teachers in all magnet programs county wide are often assigned a combination of magnet and non-magnet courses in a given year. These decisions are based on school and program need as well as the certification of staff members.
Will Blair magnet teachers <u>only</u> teach magnet classes or will they teach some non-magnet classes in order to keep them at Blair?	See above.
Teacher Question: What courses will magnet teachers teach to non-magnet students? Will non-magnet teachers be teaching magnet courses to magnet students? Is special Ed staffing (positions) also being cut?	See above. Special education staffing has been cut as well.
Which magnet classes are going to be taught by non-magnet teachers and why? Will magnet teachers be teaching non-magnet classes?	See above.

Magnet Quality Maintained

In this "systematic" look, how can we be sure the magnet quality will be maintained?	Over the past two years we have developed a Program Framework to set expectations and goals for the program. We have worked to identify and maintain the most critical core elements of the program.
Will the qualifications of these new staffing positions be up to par?	Everyone teaching magnet courses next year is highly qualified.
Some of the teachers leaving are teaching unique courses in the county. What are you doing to ensure the quality of those courses?	Teachers of unique courses are routinely asked to document their coursework so that teacher changes do not have a large negative impact on the quality of the program.

<p>You're cutting staff and replacing them with new ones, yet removing the planning periods so critical to the staff developing their curricula? Professional development can't prepare a teacher for a totally unique class, certainly not one of the difficult level of magnet courses. How can these new staff possibly be ready to teach these courses?</p>	<p>Each of the courses being taught by teachers with the proper expertise.</p>
<p>Mr. Creel spoke of a 10-year plan. What approach are you taking for ?? Plan (mentoring. Grooming) for development to replace senior teachers who might be retiring in the next 3-5 years?</p>	<p>We have always mentored teachers new to our program and will continue to schedule them in such a way to provide time for peer collaboration.</p>
<p>If the faculty and administration of the magnet believe the cuts will adversely affect the quality of the program - should we risk making the magnet unattractive to prospective students and ?? A consequence rendering Blair a ?? minority school? Course grading system current: honors, AP, Magnet = 5.0 But some magnet courses are much harder, should it be more fair to assign course #s according to the difficulty level, such as some magnet courses can be 5.5 or 6.0</p>	<p>We intend to continue the high quality of the program and attract students to the program. The grading policy is a county policy. The benefit of attending a magnet program is not in achieving a higher grade point average but in the quality of coursework preparing students for future studies.</p>
<p>While it may be staff "positions" that are being cut, it is staff <u>numbers</u> that affect the actual level of education in the Magnet. How many staff will be newly hired to the Magnet? Will only more leave and on what basis <u>beyond</u> the requirements for normal teachers will the new hires be made?</p>	<p>As we have had in the past, if there is a need for new teachers to the program, we will seek highly qualified professionals who are dedicated to student success and real intellectual challenge.</p>

Class Planning

<p>I have a concern: over time the ability of the staff to offer the wide variety of classes of not given the planning time needed. Will the decision to cut the planning time be revisited if this comes to pass? If not why not?</p>	<p>Each year, the level of staffing provided to magnet programs is evaluated. Our school will continue to advocate for the time needed by teachers to adequately develop and implement our program. How much we are allocated will be a decision made by the school system after weighing programmatic needs against financial resources available each year.</p>
<p>Do we know, as of now, how many of the magnet teachers are planning to leave the program?</p>	<p>At this time one teacher has been placed on the involuntary transfer list, one has notified us for a year's leave and two have notified us of their retirement. The total staffing number remains fluid as retirements may offset involuntary transfers.</p>
<p>Are the staff members who are retiring or going on leave going to be replaced? Or will</p>	<p>With the increase in course load per teacher, some of the teachers leaving will not need to be replaced. However, there may be subject areas in which teachers will be replaced by staff new to the magnet program.</p>

there be a reduction of four overall magnet teachers?	
Who are the specific teachers? The details are very important: - 2 retirees - 1 long term leave - 1 "surplused"	Personnel issues are not publicly posted unless requested by the teacher. Teachers planning on retirement or planned leave share this information at their own discretion.
What about the teachers who are leaving for other reasons? We have heard 2 teachers leaving for other schools in addition to cuts - will these be replaced?	It is hard to predict any other staff impact at this time. The school system transfer season does not begin until later this year, so current information is speculative. There is usually some teacher movement each year.
Of the current <u>Magnet Teachers</u> - specific people, not "positions" - how many will <u>not</u> be returning next year?	See above.

Classes

I heard that there's going to be a lot of large classes in the magnet program. Is the county aware of how the loss of small group classes will affect the students?	Class sizes will remain within county guidelines and every effort will be made to maintain the smaller classes when possible.
What analysis has been done by MCPS to determine the impact of the "cuts" on the performance of the program? Who did this analysis? Some <u>details</u> please.	One of the purposes of the initial allocation of staffing was to provide time for teachers to develop the unique curriculum of the program. MCPS recognizes that the curriculum is constantly changing and that this is not the only additional responsibility for teachers in the magnet programs. For that reason MCPS will still allocate additional staffing for these programs. Given the budget cuts, reducing the additional release time was determined to have the least impact on students and the program.
Has there been any actual analysis of what Magnet teachers have done with the extra time that's been available on the past.	Each year, magnet coordinators are asked to outline the work staff does during the additional time allocated to the program. This documentation is shared with offices overseeing the magnet programs and those involved in preparing annual budgets.
If there is a budget shortfall, was it considered county-wide tax increase covering needs of education? I believe majority of Montgomery County residents will support the tax increase directed toward education. Can you please e-mail to magnet students/parents all changes in the list of courses available for selection for coming year? Will math physics class be offered in coming year?	The school system does not control the revenue system for the county. Students will be made aware of scheduling changes as they are affected by the removal of any elective offering.
What is secondary program? Would you please repeat?	Secondary application-based magnet programs include three middle school programs (Clemente, Eastern, Takoma Park) and three high school programs (Blair, Richard Montgomery, Poolesville).

Staffing

How many staffing positions are lost from the magnet?	3.5 positions were cut from our previous allocation for the magnet program.
What other special programs are suffering a comparable number of staff losses?	The budget called for a reduction in staffing to all levels of special programs. All of the application based secondary magnet programs received less staffing than in previous years. The three high school programs lost approximately 1/3 of their additional staffing (not base staffing) and the middle school programs lost approximately 1/2 of their additional staffing.

Since projected enrollment for the magnet does not change, how can a staffing cut be justified?	The base staffing is developed from a formula where student enrollment is the operative variable. The base staffing is not being reduced. The additional staffing, which is not based on enrollment is being reduced.
How come the county is cutting budget for education instead of looking at other areas where much more money goes to?	Budget challenges are being faced by most county offices. The proposed county budget would eliminate about 200 county government jobs (see www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=4378).
Is the cut only targeted to special programs (I.e. G.T.) and magnet program, or it's also to all school systems?	A portion of the cuts are proposed for special programs. Other areas of MCPS are facing a reduction in services as well. Details about the reductions can be found in the MCPS budget documents available at http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/budget .
The assumption that equity means teachers in all programs should have the same number of courses is flawed. For example, what about the fact that the teaching day in the magnet ends at 3 pm?	Teachers will continue to receive a small stipend for this additional time.

Staff Moral

Are staff members aware of the cuts and the type of cuts? How do you plan to maintain high quality staff? It's important to provide guidance to students, specially 9 -11. How can you provide good guidance with reductions?	Staff members are aware of the cuts. The elements of our core program are being maintained and staff will continue to get additional paid time to plan during the summer. The cuts will not affect our counseling staff.
I thought the original magnet teachers were hired directly for the magnet. How will you keep "expert" teachers if there is no job security for them?	MCPS considers teachers to be assigned to a particular school, not necessarily a specific program. The current teachers were selected because their expertise matches the courses they teach. The administration of Blair has realized that maintaining consistency of staff is important to the success of the program, particularly because of the strong staff currently teaching magnet courses. We will work to retain as much of our teaching staff as possible for years to come.
What is the impact of this on faculty morale? I hear many of them are dissatisfied and likely to leave - is this true?	Any change of this type is difficult. It is natural that reducing the time needed for teachers to produce a quality program is not perceived by staff as a positive change. However, much of our staff realizes the importance of teaching the students attending the Blair magnet program and remains dedicated to this work.
How are you addressing the moral of our highly talented teachers? Do you for see any difficulty attracting the quality teachers we need?	We are working with individual teachers to create schedules that are manageable given the additional course load. Each year it is a challenge to locate and attract the type of teacher that is successful with our students. We will continue to work hard during the hiring season to ensure any vacancies are filled with qualified staff. MCPS has also requested that negotiated pay raises be funded.

Budget

What is the degree of reduction of the magnet program compared to system wide reductions and other special programs? Does this school system have any plan of reducing the magnet student body size?	Since the budget season is still in process and the county council has not made a decision to fully fund the proposed MCPS budget, it is hard to compare the cuts to our programs against cuts to other programs when additional reductions still may be made across the school system. The county has worked to provide additional opportunities for students, opening new magnet programs over the past five years. There are no plans to reduce the opportunities for students to attend an application based magnet program.
Out of 51 million shortage how much cut for the special program? How does MCPS measure the performance of the school vs. budget?	The cuts to magnet staffing were made before the budget was submitted to the county council. How the 51 million dollar shortage will affect the school system has yet to be resolved. The school system does consider the performance of schools and the needs of a school's student body when determining the budget.
During the last PTSA meeting, Mr. Williams mentioned that there will be 12 staff members surplus. So magnet program will 3 -5 staff	Staffing for special programs is a separate allocation to schools above the normal staffing allocation. These budget reductions called specifically for a reduction of staffing for the special programs. Blair also received less staffing in other areas due to reductions in other program services and as a result of enrollment changes.

members, why for a 1/8 population did the program receive 1/3 of the staff cut? Isn't that a high hit in the magnet program?	
What is the actual \$ (%) amount of the cut in the Blair magnet program?	The cut is estimated at about \$300,000 for the 3.5 teaching positions based on the average cost of a full time teacher.
Are there additional funds that can be tapped into to help support some of these programs? ie transportation	Any cut related to the magnet program will impact the program. Transportation is a basic service provided to MCPS students. Cutting such a service, as with establishing fees for attendance, would have a greater impact on students who come from families with fewer financial resources.
Is this \$ cut countywide or only in special magnet programs? If only in special programs - why and why not a certain % cut across the board?	Cuts are made to specific departments and divisions rather than an across the board reduction. An outline of these reductions can be found at http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/budget/ .
How did the planning committee come to a figure of 50% reduction in budget for each special program?	The planning committee weighed the amount of financial resources that are available against what was considered a reasonable amount of staffing needed to maintain the quality of the program when considering the cuts. At the time (before the depth of the current shortfall was know) the committee also desired to make cuts that would not cause teachers to become unemployed.
What central office is doing in helping this. - What level of cut it has? DC starts from its central office should Montgomery County take that route too?	MCPS has one of the lowest central office costs in Maryland (2.1%) and far lower than the District of Columbia, however reductions have been made to central office staffing and services. An outline of these reductions can be found at http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/budget/ .
Are Magnet programs getting same percentage cut as non-magnet?	At this time there are 10.3 cuts planned for secondary magnet programs, 11.75 for special education, and 7.7 for ESOL. If the current funding gap is not filled there will be many more cuts.
Why was staffing alone considered as the only means of dealing with the budget cut? What else was considered?	MCPS budget reductions include staffing and other costs. For special programs, staffing was considered as it is one of the more costly aspects of the program. While any reduction in funding will impact the program, reducing staffing eliminates a much larger cost without similar impact on the program cutting other areas, such as transportation or instructional materials, would have.
Could you please give more specifics of the cut. We haven't heard anything more than what we learned from the newspaper or radio. Amount of money reduced? Number of special staffing positions cut? Were teachers involved in these discussions?	The budget put forth by MCPS called for a reduction in 10.3 staffing positions used to support secondary application based magnet programs. No other areas of funding for the magnet program have been affected at this time. Teachers were represented in the budget discussion by the teachers' union.
Could you detail which programs at central administration are getting increased funding?	There were initiatives proposed in the Superintendent's budget for additional funding including support of middle school reform, parent outreach advocates, and assistant principals and counselors at elementary schools. These initiatives can be found in the budget documents available at http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/budget/ .
Are the proposed changes to the magnet program going to be permanent or are they expected to be temporary, until the budget situation stabilizes?	We will evaluate the effects of the staffing cuts and make recommendations for appropriate staffing each year. However, we expect these changes will be in place for more than just one year. The limited financial resources available for the system budget is expected to continue for several years to come.
What is budget for 88 special programs? What % of budget is staff expense? What % salary increase for staff?	Budget documentation can be found at http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/budget/ . Staffing continues to make up a large portion of the school system's operating budget. The negotiated agreement between the school system and the employee unions called for a 5% increase for FY08 and FY09.