

## **Montgomery school system wins national award for data analysis, innovation**

Baldrige Award from U.S. Department of Commerce cites county schools for test scores progress

Montgomery County Public Schools has been named one of seven winners of a 2010 presidential award that recognizes innovation and leadership.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology, a U.S. Commerce Department agency headquartered in Gaithersburg, selected county schools as the winner of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in the field of education.

In announcing the winners Nov. 22, NIST, which also worked with the private sector in determining the Baldrige Award winners, highlighted the school system's statistical achievements. They included having 49 percent of all students score at least a 3 (out of 5) on an Advanced Placement exam, compared with 16 percent nationally; a system-wide SAT average score of 1653 that was higher than the national average; and having parental satisfaction with schools range from 79 to 86 percent, compared with the national average of 54 percent from 2005 to this year.

"The current levels and trends in MCPS budgetary and financial performance show that instructional services are a priority and reflect improvements in efficiency," a portion of NIST's report on the school system states. "In 2007, the district spent 61.3 percent of its budget on instructional categories, compared to a state average of 60.6 percent and a comparable county's average of 58 percent."

The school system also is judged on seven categories, including strategic planning and an analysis of data and information.

"The return on our community's investment was abundantly clear this year when the Class of 2010 earned more than \$234 million in college scholarships, with approximately 90 percent of students enrolling in higher education," Superintendent of Schools Jerry D. Weast said in a statement.

The school system was one of 83 applicants for the Baldrige Award. Three small businesses, two manufacturing firms and a health care provider also were named award winners.

NIST reviewed each winner for 1,000 hours, and award examiners also visited. The school system does not receive money for the Baldrige Award, but does participate in a conference organized by NIST in Washington, D.C., in April.

Bus fee hearing set for Dec. 6

The Board of Education already has voted to support state legislation allowing for bus fees, but it must wait for the public to have its say.

A public hearing on proposed legislation by Sen. Richard S. Madaleno Jr. (D-Dist. 18) of Kensington that would permit Montgomery County Public Schools to charge a fee for transportation to magnet, language-immersion and other special programs is scheduled for at 7 p.m. Monday at the Stella Werner Council office building, 100 Maryland Ave., Rockville.

The school board voted 7-1 in November to support the legislation, with only board member Laura V. Berthiaume (Dist. 2) opposed. She argued that it was against the state's constitution to permit such fees.

Madaleno has said the legislation, if passed, would not apply to students taking buses to and from their home schools every day. He said the legislation would pay for the transportation after the Board of Education earlier this year considered cutting it and saving \$4.9 million in the fiscal 2011 budget.

But the board backed off after an outcry from parents and students who said getting to the programs without free transportation would be a hardship.

Last school year, more than 85 percent of students in magnet and other special programs took transportation provided by the school system.