



December 14, 2018

Dear Families,

By this time, you may have heard about the new Maryland State Department of Education rating system for public schools. In this new system, schools receive a rating of one through five stars based on a set of indicators including PARCC scores, student attendance rates, and provision of a well-rounded curriculum.

Just released last week, our school is rated with one star. **We disagree with this rating, and are writing to tell you why.** We openly acknowledge that PARCC and attendance are areas where we are still growing. However, we have reviewed the ratings and see that our school's true performance should merit us at least a two star rating in this new system.

- PARCC is not the only way to measure academic success, but it is the only measure used here. Our MSDE rating reflects what we already know – that our students' PARCC scores have been low, but are improving. We know we will see continued growth.
- We have been open with you about our need to increase school-wide attendance, and are rolling out new tools for attendance communication and support this year. We did not score well in attendance, and that was not a surprise. However, we know that we are already working together with school families to improve.
- **We scored only 0.3 out of a possible 15 points related to “well-rounded curriculum.” This is the part where we have not been fairly measured.** For this purpose, well-rounded curriculum looks at students who are proficient and/or enrolled in *fine arts, physical education, social studies, science, and health*. Our students access content in each of these areas in all grades, whether it is through a dedicated resource class (art, music, and PE for every student, every week) or homeroom teacher instruction / interdisciplinary projects (social studies, science and health). Until this year, our school has used an alternate report card that was approved by the school district. As a result, it seems that our graded classes did not look the same as those at some other schools, and the state did not see a true picture of our very well-rounded curriculum.

We have been told that there will be a way to appeal our rating, but we are still waiting for details. When that time comes, we will likely come back to request support from our school families. In the meantime, we wanted to explain how the star ratings were developed, and the ways in which we disagree with our school's rating. **We will also discuss this more at our Board meeting on this coming Monday, December 17 at 6:00pm and welcome you to attend.**

We see the great things happening here at school every day, and know that you do as well. Thank you for your support as we work to set the record straight with this new rating.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marisa Canino".

Marisa Canino
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Traci Mathena".

Traci Mathena
Principal