

1999 SURVEY OF SENIORS

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SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Each year since 1983, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) seniors eligible for graduation have been surveyed prior to graduation. In 1999, of 7,742 eligible seniors, 6,896 (89%) completed the survey.

The graduating class of 1999 continued to have high expectations and career goals, and positive opinions about their school experiences, some of which were related to their grade point averages and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores.

Nine out of 10 MCPS seniors reported that their public education adequately prepared them for their future. MCPS seniors also had high educational and career aspirations. Eighty-six percent of MCPS seniors planned to attend college, far surpassing seniors nationally who planned to attend college (60%). MCPS seniors reported acceptance rates to colleges and universities generally higher than those of seniors nationwide. Eighty-nine percent of the seniors expected to receive bachelor's degrees or higher.

Parents were, by far, named as most influential in helping seniors decide their future plans, followed by school counselors, other students, and teachers. Teachers were more frequently named as an influence on future plans by Hispanic seniors than other seniors, whereas career information coordinators were more frequently named by Hispanic and African American seniors than by other seniors.

Aspects of seniors' education that continue to be rated highly are instruction (English, social science), course offerings (variety and flexibility in selection), and opportunities for social activities (friends, sports).

Poor study habits interfered most with MCPS with seniors' education. The next two most frequently cited interferences pertained to the following: (1) the personal life of the student (job outside of school, family obligation, watching television, videos, etc., money worries, and frequent illness); and (2) the curriculum instruction (poor class instruction, teachers don't encourage the student) and school climate (the student does not feel part of the school).

Seniors who reported poor study habits and difficulty in their coursework had lower grade point averages. Among seniors who had taken the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), those who

reported having after-school jobs and money worries had lower grade point averages and SAT scores.

Very few seniors named worrying about safety at school (5%) and no places to study (3%) as interferences with their education. In addition, very few seniors said that not fitting-in with a peer group and not getting along with others were barriers to their education. Few seniors reported that parents not caring about the student's schoolwork was an interference with their education.

In addition to responding to questions in the above areas, seniors also listed postsecondary schools they applied to, whether they were accepted/rejected, and whether they received financial aid. Survey answers were linked to other student information, such as the gender, race/ethnic identification, and SAT scores and were reported to each high school. These reports are enormously useful to guidance counselors and parents as they advise students on their postsecondary school plans.

DETAILED FINDINGS

What Was the Purpose of the Survey?

Since 1983, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has gathered seniors' perceptions of their educational experiences and information regarding their postsecondary education plans. Survey results provide MCPS with indicators of the quality of education from the student's perspective. Graduating seniors report their perceptions of MCPS related to preparing them for future plans, strengths of and interferences with their education, and their educational aspirations indicated by plans for college, expected educational degree, and career field. Results are used by school counselors to advise sophomores and juniors regarding their postsecondary school plans. Parents also use results to help their children make plans for their postsecondary and career opportunities.

Who Was Surveyed?

Of 7,742 eligible seniors in 1999, 6,896 (89%) completed the survey (see Table 1). The completion rate was similar to completion rates of previous years (see Table 1).

What Was Asked?

The senior survey consisted of the following two parts: (1) seniors answered questions regarding how well they felt MCPS prepared them for their future educational and career goals; and (2) seniors listed postsecondary schools they applied to, whether they were accepted/rejected, and whether they received financial aid. Survey answers were linked to other student information, such as the student's gender, race/ethnic identification, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores.

How Well Did MCPS Prepare Graduating Seniors?

Most seniors reported satisfaction with their education in MCPS. Nine out of 10 seniors reported that MCPS adequately or more than adequately prepared them for their future. Specifically, about one-half (51%) of the seniors said MCPS either prepared them "exceptionally well" or "more than adequately" for their future (see Table 2). An additional 42% of the seniors said MCPS adequately prepared them. Very few seniors (7%) said that MCPS prepared them less than adequately or poorly. These percentages were nearly identical to those observed in 1998.

How Well Did MCPS Prepare Seniors from Various Race/Ethnic Groups? Both last year and this year, Asian American (59%) seniors were most likely to say MCPS prepared them "exceptionally well" and "more than adequately" for their future. Across the two survey years,

more white seniors in 1999 than in 1998 (5% increase¹) felt satisfied that MCPS had prepared them “exceptionally well” and “more than adequately” for their future. In contrast, fewer African American seniors in 1999 than in 1998 felt that MCPS had “more than adequately” prepared them for their future (3% decrease). The percentage of Hispanic seniors who reported that MCPS prepared them “exceptionally well” and “more than adequately” for their future remained the same across the two surveys (50% to 49% respectively).

How Well Did MCPS Prepare Men and Women Graduates? Females (53%) were more likely than males (50%) to say MCPS prepared them well for their future. Across the two survey years, both males and females reported increased satisfaction with MCPS in preparing them well for their future (3% increase).

What Do Seniors Report as Positive Experiences of Their MCPS Education?

The 1999 survey grouped school experiences into three categories: Academic Experiences, Educational Support Experiences, and Extra-curricular Experiences.

Top educational experiences rated by seniors were as follows: being with their friends, English instruction, and opportunities to attend sports events. These were also top experiences in the 1998 survey.

School experiences rated by the smallest percentage of seniors as “excellent or good” were as follows: career education instruction (17%) (a new item added in the 1999 survey); grading procedures (23%); and opportunities to participate in musicals, plays, etc. (29%). With the exception of career instruction, which was not asked previously, similar results were observed in the previous survey year.

Of the items grouped in the Academic Experiences category, the largest percentage of seniors in 1999 rated English instruction (54%), math instruction (47%), and science instruction (45%) as “excellent or good.”

In the Educational Support Experiences category, the largest percentage of seniors in 1999 rated variety of courses offered (45%), guidance and counseling (43%), and flexibility of course selection (41%) as “excellent or good.”

In the Extra-curricular Experiences category, the largest percentage of seniors in 1999 rated being with their friends (67%), opportunity to attend sports events (54%), and opportunity to participate in school clubs (49%) as “excellent or good” (see Table 3).

Do Positive Experiences Relate to Grade Point Averages and SAT Scores? Seniors’ ratings of experiences of their MCPS education as “excellent” or “good” were related to grade point averages and, for students who took the SAT, SAT scores. Seniors who named science and

¹ Any changes in percentages from one survey year to the next survey year discussed throughout the report are statistically significant ($p < .01$, two-tailed). As the sample size for each year is large, a concern regarding changes in percentages is the practical significance of differences in percentages.

social studies instruction, and opportunities to participate in school clubs as being as “excellent” or “good” had higher grade point averages and higher SAT scores. Ratings of math instruction and opportunity to participate in musicals, plays, etc. as “excellent” or “good” were associated with students having higher grade point averages.

Do Positive Educational Experiences Differ by Seniors’ Racial/Ethnic Identity?

Percentages of seniors from various race/ethnic groups who rated English instruction and being with their friends as positive educational experiences were similar (see Table 3). Between 51% and 55% of seniors in each race/ethnic group rated English instruction and being with their friends as “excellent or good.” Few students from each race/ethnic group rated technology instruction as “excellent or good” (between 22% and 26%).

Despite these similarities, there were some differences in ratings of school experiences among seniors in various race/ethnic groups. For example, Asian American seniors were more likely than other seniors to say that math instruction (57%), science instruction (56%), and textbooks and instructional materials (33%) were “excellent or good.” Similarly in 1998, more Asian American seniors than other seniors rated these areas as the best aspects of their education.

More African American seniors (23%) and Hispanic seniors (22%) than other seniors rated career education instruction as “excellent or good.” More Hispanic seniors (10% more) than other seniors rated foreign language instruction as “excellent or good.”

Both in 1999 and in 1998, more white seniors than other seniors rated the following as “excellent or good”: social science instruction (50%), flexibility of course selection (46%), being with their friends (73%), opportunity to attend sports events (60%), opportunity to participate in sports (53%), and opportunity to participate in musicals, plays, etc. (35%).

Do Positive Experiences Relate to Grade Point Averages for Seniors from Various Racial/Ethnic Groups? There was interest in exploring relations of student MCPS educational experiences to academic performance. To do this, seniors’ responses to positive MCPS educational experiences, educational interferences, and influences on future plans were related to seniors’ grade point averages and SAT scores. Such relations might suggest possible areas for school interventions to improve student academic performance.

There were race/ethnic variations in the relation of what seniors rated as “excellent” or “good” experiences in their MCPS education and grade point averages. For example, higher grade point averages were found among Asian Americans who named science instruction as an “excellent” or “good” experience than among other seniors who named science instruction as “excellent” or “good.” Of all seniors who named English as an “excellent” or “good” experience, African Americans and whites were more likely to have higher grade point averages. Higher grade point averages were found among African Americans and whites who named English instruction as “excellent” or “good” than among other seniors who named English as a positive experience. Having named career education instruction as “excellent” or “good” was associated with lower grade point averages, in particular, among Asian Americans and whites. Higher grade point averages were found among Hispanic seniors who named flexibility in course

selection and variety of courses offered as “excellent” or “good” experiences in their MCPS education than among other seniors. Finally, compared to other seniors, higher grade point averages were observed among white seniors who named fairness in grading procedure and the quality of textbooks and materials than among other seniors.

Do Positive Experiences Relate to SAT Scores of Seniors from Various Racial/Ethnic Groups? Of all seniors who had taken the SAT and had named math instruction as “excellent” or “good,” white seniors had higher SAT scores. Similarly, seniors who had taken the SAT and had cited foreign language as an “excellent” or “good” experience of their MCPS education was associated with higher SAT scores among African Americans and whites than among other seniors. Additionally, African Americans who named flexibility to select courses as a positive experience of their education had higher SAT scores. Higher SAT scores were observed among African Americans and whites who cited textbooks and instructional materials as positive experiences of their MCPS education. Higher SAT scores were observed among Asian Americans and whites who named grading procedures as a positive experience of their MCPS education.

Naming friends and opportunities to participate in musicals and plays as being “excellent” or “good” experiences in their MCPS education were associated with higher SAT scores among African Americans, Hispanics, and whites but not among Asian Americans. Finally, naming opportunities to attend and opportunities to participate in sports activities were more likely to be associated with higher SAT scores among African Americans and Hispanics than among whites and Asian Americans.

Do Graduating Men and Women Differ in Positive Experiences? Males and females similarly rated math instruction, science instruction, social science instruction, guidance and counseling (new item added in 1999), and opportunity to participate in sports as “excellent or

Females were more likely than males to rate the following as “excellent” or “good” educational experiences: English instruction (62% versus 47%); foreign language instruction (31% versus 22%); career education instruction (20% versus 14%); variety of courses offered (49% versus 40%); being with friends (70% versus 65%), opportunities to attend sports events (57% versus 50%); and opportunities to participate in school clubs (57% versus 41%).

Males were more likely than females to rate technology instruction (29% versus 18%) as “excellent or good.” With the exception of career education instruction which was not asked in 1998, these results were much the same in the previous survey year.

What Do Seniors Perceive As Interferences to Their Education?

Seniors were asked to rate several areas that they perceived as interfering with their education. By far, most seniors cited poor study habits as a major factor affecting their education, with 41% agreeing (see Table 5). This finding was also true for 1998 seniors. The

next two most frequently cited interferences pertained to: (1) the personal life of the student; and (2) the curriculum instruction and school climate.

Personal life interferences included: the student's job outside of school (28% agreed), family obligations (24% agreed), watching television, videos, etc. (22% agreed), money worries (15% agreed), and frequent illness (11% agreed).

Curriculum instruction and school climate interferences included: poor class instruction (23% agreed), teachers don't encourage the student (15% agreed), and the student does not feel part of the school (9% agreed).

The rank order of perceived interferences were similar in both survey years. However, some interferences were named by slightly more seniors in 1999 than in 1998. These included: family obligations (3% increase), watching TV, video, etc. (3% increase), and worrying about safety at school (3% increase). There was also a slight decrease in not feeling part of the school (3% decrease) in 1999.

Do Perceived Educational Interferences Relate to Grade Point Averages and SAT Scores? Perceived interferences showed statistically significant relations to both grade point averages and SAT scores. Among seniors who had taken the SAT, those who reported having after-school jobs and money worries had lower grade point averages and SAT scores. Seniors having lower grade point averages reported poor study habits and difficulty in their coursework.

Do Perceived Educational Interferences Differ by Seniors' Racial/Ethnic Identity? The rank order of perceived interferences was generally the same across the race/ethnic groups. In addition, the responses of the race/ethnic groups were generally more similar (on about one-half of the items) than different. Any changes in percentages within each race/ethnic group across the two survey years are noted below.

White seniors appeared to be most critical of the quality of classroom instruction, with 27% reporting poor classroom instruction as a major interference with their education. This compared with 20% Asian Americans, 18% African Americans, and 15% Hispanics. Fewer Hispanic seniors in 1999 than in 1998 cited poor class instruction as an interference with their education (3% decrease).

Outside jobs interfered most with the education of Hispanics (34%), followed by whites (28%), African Americans (27%), and Asian Americans (23%). Hispanic (28%) seniors more often named family obligations as an interference with their education than did other seniors.

Hispanics (10%), along with Asian Americans (8%), were also more likely to say that difficulty in speaking English was an interference than were African Americans (2%) and whites (1%). More Hispanic seniors (3% increase) in 1999 than in 1998 reported that difficulty with English was an interference, reversing a previous two-year downward trend in which fewer Hispanic seniors had named this as an interference.

African Americans were more likely than other race/ethnic groups to say that poor study habits interfered with their education (45% compared to 33% Asian American, 40% Hispanic, and 42% white). Percentages reflect a small increase among African American seniors (3% increase) and white seniors (2% increase) who named poor study habits as an interference with their education from 1998 to 1999.

Other shifts in seniors' perceived interferences with their education occurred between last year's survey and the present survey. These include:

- Overall, more seniors across all race/ethnic groups in 1999 than in 1998 reported watching TV as an interference, with Asian American and African American seniors most likely to report this as an educational interference (26% and 23%, respectively).
- Worries about personal safety at school increased among all race/ethnic groups from 1998 to 1999, with the greatest increase among African American seniors (5% increase).
- Fewer seniors across race/ethnic groups in 1999 than in 1998 reported that not feeling part of their school was an interference with their education, with largest decreases among Asian American seniors (3% decrease) and white seniors (3% decrease).

Do Perceived Educational Interferences Relate to Grade Point Averages and SAT Scores? Relations of educational interferences to both grade point averages and SAT scores varied slightly across the race/ethnic groups. Among Asian Americans and whites who took the SAT, after-school jobs and money worries were associated with lower grade point averages and lower SAT scores than among seniors of the other race/ethnic groups who took the SAT. Lower grade point averages and SAT scores (for students who took the SAT) were found among Hispanics who reported courses being too difficult than other seniors who named course difficulty as an interference. Additionally, Hispanics who named peer pressure as an educational interference had lower SAT scores than did other seniors who reported peer pressure. Difficulty speaking English was associated with lower grade point averages among Asian Americans and African Americans than among the other seniors who reported this interference. Family obligations, poor study habits, and safety concerns at school were associated with lower grade point averages and lower SAT scores among white seniors than others who took the SAT. Asian Americans' grade point averages were, however, also lower for those who reported poor study habits and safety concerns.

Do Perceived Educational Interferences Differ between Graduating Men and Women? Males and females were very similar in perceived interferences, with a few noted exceptions. More females than males named frequent illness (15% vs. 7%, respectively) as an interference. On the other hand, males were more likely than females to name poor study habits (44% vs. 37%, respectively) and watching television and playing video games (27% vs. 17%, respectively). These gender differences were evident in the previous survey.

Absence of Interferences Indicate Positive School and Home Environments. Overall, seniors' responses regarding interferences with their educational experiences conveyed a positive

school climate and a supportive home environment for learning. Specifically, very few seniors named no places to study (3%) and courses are too difficult (4%) as interferences with their education. In addition, very few seniors said that not fitting-in with a peer group (4%) and not getting along with others (3%) got in the way of their education. Seniors also felt that their parents were supportive of their education. Few seniors (2%) reported that their parents not caring was an interference with their education. These percentages were much the same in the previous survey years of 1997 and 1998.

What Are the Future Plans of Seniors?

Over three-quarters of the seniors (86%) said that they planned to attend 2-year or 4-year colleges or universities in fall 1999 (see Table 6). This represented a 2% increase from 1998. Two-thirds of the seniors (67%) planned to attend 4-year colleges in fall 1999. This, too, represented a slight increase from 1998 (2% increase). About one-fifth (20%) of the seniors planned to attend 2-year colleges, similar to 1998 seniors.

Few seniors (8% in total) planned to enter employment either related or unrelated to their high school trade/technical training, attend trade, business or technical school, or enter military service. This percentage was slightly less than reported in 1998. About 5% of the 1999 seniors were undecided about their future plans. This percentage was nearly the same in the previous survey year (see Table 6).

Do the Future Plans of Graduates Differ by Racial/Ethnic Identity? Asian American seniors continued to be the most likely to attend 4-year or 2-year colleges or universities (94% agreed). In terms of 4-year college or university attendance, both Asian American and white seniors were more likely than other seniors to say that they would attend (respectively, 76% and 72%). This was also true for previous survey years. There was a slight increase among African American and white seniors (3% and 2% increases respectively) who planned to attend 4-year colleges and universities. African American and Hispanic graduates were more likely to plan to attend 2-year colleges, trade, business, or technical schools, and enter the military than other seniors. These results were similar to those observed in 1998. Among all race/ethnic groups, there were slight increases of graduates who said they were undecided about their future plans (1 to 2% increases).

Do the Future Plans of Graduating Men and Women Differ? The postsecondary school plans reported by male and female seniors were similar in the current survey and past survey. One noteworthy change was that male students in 1999 compared to 1998 were more likely to say they planned to attend 4-year and 2-year colleges and universities (83% verses 79%) (see lower one-half of Table 6).

How Do the Future Plans of MCPS Seniors Compare to Those of Seniors Nationwide? In 1999, MCPS seniors were far more likely than seniors nationwide to say they planned to attend postsecondary schools (see Table 7). Specifically, MCPS seniors were far more likely to plan to attend either 4-year or 2-year colleges and universities. Differences in race/ethnic group percentages between MCPS and nationwide seniors regarding plans to attend

2-year and 4-year colleges ranged from 3% to 26%. These gaps show that many more MCPS seniors than seniors nationwide planned to attend college after high school graduation.

The largest gaps regarding plans to attend 4-year colleges between MCPS seniors and those nationwide were for whites (+26%), Asian Americans (+18%), and African Americans (+12%). The largest gaps regarding plans to attend 2-year colleges were for African Americans (+14%) and Hispanics (+13%). From 1998 to 1999, the gap between African American MCPS and seniors nationwide who planned to attend 4-year colleges increased (from 10% to 13%), indicating that there are even more African American seniors in MCPS compared to those nationally who planned to attend 4-year colleges.

Percentages of MCPS seniors in various race/ethnic groups who were undecided about their postsecondary school plans were similar to their counterparts nationwide. Similar results were observed in 1998, after a decrease from 1997 to 1998 in the percentages of African American and Hispanic MCPS seniors who were undecided about their postsecondary plans.

Who Influences Seniors' Postsecondary Education or Career Plans?

Several questions were asked about individuals who most influenced MCPS seniors' college and/or career plans. Parents most influenced seniors' college or career plans, with 73% of the seniors naming their parents as influences on their future plans (see Table 8). In contrast, only about one-fourth of the seniors named other students (27%), school counselors (24%), and teachers (20%). The rank order of these influences were much the same in the previous survey year.

Do Influences on Future Education or Career Plans Relate to SAT Scores? Of seniors who took the SAT, those who named parents and other students as influential on their future plans also attained higher grade point averages and SAT scores. In contrast, seniors who named "no one" as influential on their future plans had lower grade point averages and SAT scores.

Do Influences on Future Education or Career Plans Differ by Seniors' Racial/Ethnic Identity? The relative importance of individuals who influenced seniors' future plans (i.e., rank order or column percentages) was much the same for seniors in the various race/ethnic groups. All race/ethnic groups reported that parents were the most influential in helping them with their future plans. With the exceptions noted below, school counselors, other students, teachers, and "no one" followed in order of importance.

When percentages were compared across the race/ethnic groups, a few differences emerged. Asian American and white seniors reported being most influenced by parents (respectively, 70% and 78%) and by other students (respectively, 35% and 29%). Similar results were evident in the previous survey. Asian American seniors did, however, report the largest increase in being influenced by other students (2% increase). Percentages of Hispanic and African American seniors who named parents as influences on their future plans were very much the same in 1998 and in 1999.

Among seniors in all race/ethnic groups except white, fewer seniors in 1999 than in 1998 said that school counselors influenced their postsecondary plans. In previous survey years, African American seniors were more likely to say they were influenced by school counselors than other seniors. However, fewer African American seniors in 1999 than in 1998 said that they were influenced by school counselors (4% decrease). Similarly, fewer Asian American seniors said they were influenced by school counselors in making their postsecondary career plans (3% decrease).

Hispanic seniors (23%) were the most likely to name teachers as influencing their postsecondary plans.

Career information coordinators were more frequently mentioned as an influence by Hispanics, African American, and white seniors in 1999 than 1998. However, fewer Asian American seniors (3% decrease) in 1999 than in 1998 named career information coordinators as an influence on their postsecondary plans.

White seniors (7%) were more likely to be influenced by outside, private career counselors than were other seniors. This was also evident in the two previous survey years.

There were fewer seniors in 1999 than in 1998 who named no one as influencing their postsecondary plans. This was evident for seniors in all race/ethnic groups.

Across the race/ethnic groups, there were slight differences in the relation of various influences on future plans to both grade point averages and SAT scores for seniors from various racial/ethnic groups. Across all racial/ethnic groups, students who named either parents or fellow students as influences on future plans had higher grade point averages and SAT scores (among seniors who took the SAT).

Do Influences on Future Education or Career Plans Relate to SAT Scores and Grade Point Averages? Of all seniors who had taken the SAT, white seniors who named teachers and school counselors as influences had higher SAT scores. Additionally, Asian American seniors who named school counselors had higher SAT scores than other seniors who named this influence. Hispanic and white seniors who named private career counselors had higher SAT scores than other seniors who named this influence. Naming no influences on future career plans was associated with lower SAT scores among Asian Americans and whites than the other racial/ethnic groups.

Relying on parents and private career counselors to provide advice for future plans was associated with higher grade point averages among white seniors than among other seniors. African American seniors who named career information coordinators on future career plans had higher grade point averages compared to other seniors who named these influences on future plans. Naming no one as career influence was associated with lower grade point averages among all seniors, especially among white seniors.

What Are Seniors' Postsecondary School Plans?

The total number of colleges and universities to which 1999 seniors applied was similar to 1998 graduates (see Table 9). As in previous survey years, seniors in 1999 typically applied to 2-to-3 schools, and the percentage of seniors who applied to at least one postsecondary school has remained about the same, 78%.

Colleges/Universities Applied To Most Frequently. Table 10 shows colleges and universities most frequently applied to by seniors. The most frequently applied to schools in 1999 were nearly the same as those applied to in 1998. For both 1998 and 1999, the first 6 schools on the list were as follows: University of Maryland - College Park, Montgomery College, University of Maryland - Baltimore County, Towson University, Pennsylvania State University, and Frostburg State University.

New to the top colleges and universities applied to included the following: American University, Indiana University at Bloomington, and Carnegie-Mellon University. Harvard University, Columbia University, Brown University, and Northwestern University ranked among the top 40 most popular colleges and universities to which seniors applied.

Table 10 lists the number of seniors applying to specific colleges and universities; acceptance rates of MCPS seniors (based on self-report) and acceptance rates of all freshmen applying to specific colleges (based on data in The College Handbook). For the top colleges applied to, MCPS applicants' acceptance rates were generally higher than the national rates of freshmen applying. Universities that moved up on the list from 1998 to 1999 included the following: Johns Hopkins University, University of Virginia, and New York University. Universities that moved down on the list included the following: James Madison University, Boston University, University of Delaware, Georgetown University, St. Mary's College, Washington University, and Duke University.

Table 10 also reports the percentage of MCPS seniors who applied to a particular college/university and received financial aid from that college/university. The percentages of MCPS seniors who reported being accepted and having received financial aid from colleges and universities ranged from 28% to 64%. Finally, Table 10 reports acceptance rates of MCPS seniors compared to seniors nationally, average SAT scores as well as financial aid for those students who were accepted, and grade point averages.

What are Seniors' Educational and Career Expectations?

In 1999, the educational expectations of seniors were high (see Table 11). Ninety-one percent of the seniors expected to receive bachelor's degrees or higher, up slightly from 1998 seniors. Twenty-eight percent of the seniors expected to achieve doctorate, medical, or law degrees, 43% to receive master's degrees, and 21% to receive bachelor's degrees. Five percent of the seniors planned to attain an associate's or trade school degrees.

Do Educational and Career Expectations Differ by Seniors' Racial/Ethnic Identity?

The race/ethnic groups showed differences in seniors' educational expectations (see Table 12). Asian American (38%) seniors were most likely to aspire to obtain Ph.D., medical or law degrees, followed by African Americans (29%) and whites (25%). This was very similar to results in the previous survey. There were, however, slight increases in percentages of African Americans (3% increase), Asian Americans (3% increase) and whites (2% increase) in 1999 who said they aspired to earn a Ph.D., medical, or law degrees. These results reverse a downward trend for these race/ethnic groups noted in 1998. Noteworthy, though, is fewer Hispanic seniors (3% fewer) in 1999 than in 1998 said that they would earn Ph.D., medical or law degrees.

White seniors were the most likely to say that they would attain a master's degree (45% agreed). This percentage was similar to that in the previous survey year. Percentages of African American, Asian American, and Hispanic seniors who aspired to attain master's degrees were also similar to what 1998 graduates from those race/ethnic groups reported.

There were few differences among race/ethnic groups between 1998 and 1999 in the percentage expecting to receive a bachelor's degree, with the exception of slightly fewer (2%) Asian Americans in 1999 than in 1998 who said they expected to achieve a bachelor's degree.

African American and Hispanic seniors were more likely to expect to receive associate's degrees and high school diplomas than were Asian Americans and whites. These results were similar to the previous survey year. More Hispanics (3% increase) in 1999 than in 1998 expected to receive high school diplomas.

What Are Seniors' Careers/Job Expectations?

Seniors were asked what kind of work they expected to be doing in the future (see the lower half of Table 12). The 1999 survey used several additional career categories for this question than previous surveys; for example, health careers and computer technology were added. MCPS seniors reported that they would most likely work in the scientific/medical field (17%) followed by business/management (14%), and arts/media/communication (13%). Few seniors planned to work in office operations/service industry (2%) and the military (2%).

Table 12 reports responses to education and career expectations for seniors in the various race/ethnic groups. The rank order (column percentages) was much the same for the race/ethnic groups. Row percentages among the race/ethnic groups showed differences in about one-half of the career areas, and all these differences (noted below) were similar to those observed in previous survey years. Asian American seniors were more likely to expect to be doing work in the scientific/medical field, when compared to the other race/ethnic groups (26% vs. 16% or less for other groups). African American, Hispanic, and white seniors were more likely than others to say that they would enter social services professions such as social worker, counselor, or the clergy and fields in education, such as teacher or professor. More Hispanic seniors said they would enter military careers (5%) than did seniors from other race/ethnic groups. African American (6%) and Hispanic (10%) seniors were more likely to say they would have careers in skilled crafts than were whites or Asian Americans.

Seniors in 1999 were similar to 1998 graduates in being undecided about their future plans (15%). However, fewer Asian American seniors in 1999 reported (2% decrease) being undecided about their future.

How Many Seniors' Work for Pay?

A little less than one-third of the seniors said that they typically did not work at all for pay. About equal percentages worked "8 to 16 hours per week" and "17 to 24 hours per week" (23% and 22%, respectively). Fewer students (13%) said they worked "more than 24 hours per

Do Graduating Men and Women Differ in Working for Pay? Male and female seniors were very similar in the number of hours per week they worked for pay. Males were, however, slightly more likely to work more hours per week (more than 24 hours) than females (15% versus 11% respectively).

Does Working for Pay Differ by Racial/Ethnic Group? Percentages of working seniors varied across the various race/ethnic groups. Hispanic and African American seniors were the most likely to be working the most hours per week. A greater percentage of Hispanic seniors (20%) than others reported working "more than 24 hours per week." A greater percentage of African American seniors (30%) than others reported working between "17 and 24 hours per week." Asian American seniors (42%) were the least likely to be working for pay. About one-third of the African American and white seniors did not work for pay (29% for both groups). About one-quarter (24%) of the Hispanic seniors did not work for pay.

Does Working for Pay Relate to Grade Point Averages and SAT Scores? Seniors who worked more hours had lower grade point averages and SAT scores. For example, grade point average declined about 0.2 for 8 to 16 hours worked in a week, another 0.2 for 17 to 24 hours worked in a week, and another 0.1 for more than 24 hours worked in a week. SAT scores declined about 100 points when working 8 to 16 hours per week, another 60 points when working 17 to 24 hours per week, and another 25 points when working more than 24 hours per week. These declines in grade point average and SAT scores were greater for Asian Americans and whites than for African Americans and Hispanics.

TABLE 1
Completion Rates for Senior Surveys

<u>Survey Year</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>
N Responded	6,469	6,827	6,896
Percent Who Completed	89.6%	89.3%	89.1%

Note. Percentages are based on all seniors enrolled in the survey year.

TABLE 2
Seniors' Perceptions of the Quality of MCPS Education

<u>Survey Item</u>	<u>Race/Ethnic Groups</u>					
	All Seniors		African	Asian	Hispanic	White
	% in 1998	% in 1999	American %	American %	%	%
How well has MCPS prepared you for your future?						
Exceptionally well	14.3	14.8	15.2	16.8	16.6	13.7
More than adequately	33.8	36.3	28.9	42.3	32.3	37.7
Adequately	44.1	42.0	47.4	37.0	46.2	40.8
Less than adequately	6.0	5.5	6.5	3.1	3.8	6.2
Very poorly	1.7	1.4	2.1	0.8	1.1	1.5
Column N	6786	6771	1227	1102	745	3680

<u>Survey Item</u>	All Seniors % in 1999	<u>Gender</u>	
		Males %	Females %
How well has MCPS prepared you for your future?			
Exceptionally well	14.8	13.6	16.0
More than adequately	36.3	36.1	36.5
Adequately	42.0	41.4	42.5
Less than adequately	5.5	6.8	4.2
Very poorly	1.4	2.1	0.8
Column N	6771	3389	3382

Note. Column percentages may not equal 100.0% due to rounding error.

TABLE 3**Seniors' Perceptions of the Best Aspects of the MCPS Education**

<u>Survey Item</u>	All Seniors % in 1999	Race/Ethnic Groups			
		African	Asian	Hispanic	White
		Amer.	Amer.		
		%	%	%	%
What experiences in your MCPS education would you rate excellent or good?^a					
<u>Academic Experiences</u>					
English instruction	54.4	55.5	51.9	50.6	55.6
Math instruction	46.7	43.0	56.7	46.5	44.9
Science insturction	44.5	35.2	55.5	36.8	45.9
Social Science instruction	43.0	30.9	43.5	29.7	49.7
Foreign Language instruction	26.3	25.3	27.1	37.4	24.1
Technology instruction	23.5	26.3	24.8	25.7	21.8
Career education instruction	17.1	23.4	14.9	22.0	14.6
<u>Educational Support Experiences</u>					
Variety of courses offered	44.5	36.3	47.0	37.7	47.7
Guidance and counseling	43.2	43.0	43.8	42.1	43.3
Flexibility of course selection	41.3	37.6	37.3	33.2	45.5
Textbooks and instructional materials	28.7	23.9	32.6	27.7	29.4
Grading procedures	23.0	18.3	22.0	20.4	25.4
<u>Extra-curricular Experiences</u>					
Being with friends	67.4	54.7	66.7	60.4	73.4
Opportunity to attend sports events	53.7	46.2	47.5	43.6	60.0
Opportunity to participate in school clubs	48.9	40.5	55.0	39.6	51.8
Opportunity to participate in sports	47.5	42.5	39.7	41.5	52.8
Opportunity to participate in musicals, plays, etc.	29.3	20.9	27.4	19.2	34.8
Column N	6896	1257	1118	755	3749

^a Note. Question was reworded in the 1999 survey.

Each senior could answer “yes” or “no” to each survey item. Therefore, column percentages do not equal 100.0.

TABLE 4**Seniors' Perceptions of the Best Aspects of the MCPS Education**

<u>Survey Item</u>	All	Gender	
	Seniors	Males	Females
	%	%	%
	in 1999		
	(rank order)		
What experiences in your MCPS education would you rate excellent or good?^a			
<u>Academic Experiences</u>			
English instruction	54.4	47.3	61.5
Math instruction	46.7	48.4	45.0
Science instruction	44.5	45.3	43.7
Social Science instruction	43.0	42.6	43.5
Foreign Language instruction	26.3	21.6	31.0
Technology instruction	23.5	28.9	18.2
Career education instruction	17.1	14.1	20.1
<u>Educational Support Experiences</u>			
Variety of courses offered	44.5	40.3	48.6
Guidance and counseling	43.2	42.6	43.8
Flexibility of course selection	41.3	39.4	43.3
Textbooks and instructional materials	28.7	25.8	31.7
Grading procedures	23.0	20.6	25.5
<u>Extra-curricular Experiences</u>			
Being with friends	67.4	64.6	70.3
Opportunity to attend sports events	53.7	50.2	57.1
Opportunity to participate in school clubs	48.9	41.2	56.6
Opportunity to participate in sports	47.5	48.1	46.9
Opportunity to participate in musicals, plays, etc.	29.3	24.9	33.8
Column N	6896	3451	3445

Note. Each senior could answer “yes” or “no” to each survey item. Therefore, column percentages do not equal 100.0.

^a Question was reworded in the 1999 survey.

TABLE 5
Seniors' Perceptions Regarding Interferences with MCPS Education

<u>Survey Item^a</u>	All Seniors ^b		Race/Ethnic Groups			
	% in 1998	% in 1999	African Amer. %	Asian Amer. %	Hispanic %	White %
Poor study habits	39.1	40.6	44.9	33.4	39.6	41.7
Job outside of school	28.7	27.8	26.8	22.8	34.2	28.4
Family obligations	21.2	24.4	24.5	25.1	27.8	23.4
Poor class instruction	23.3	22.8	18.1	20.0	15.4	26.7
Watching TV, videos, etc.	19.2	22.0	22.9	26.4	18.9	21.0
Money worries	15.6	15.0	19.6	13.3	17.5	13.5
Teachers don't encourage	14.8	14.9	14.2	14.1	13.4	15.7
No interferences ^c	13.8	13.6	11.9	16.5	10.3	13.9
Sick frequently	11.0	11.0	10.2	9.5	13.0	11.3
Other ^c	11.0	9.9	7.6	7.3	9.0	11.5
Don't feel part of school	11.3	8.6	9.1	8.0	6.6	9.1
School doesn't offer courses	9.1	8.3	6.7	8.0	6.1	9.3
Peer pressure	5.5	6.3	6.8	8.8	6.0	5.5
Worry about my safety at school	2.8	5.3	6.4	4.7	5.2	5.1
Courses are too difficult	4.1	4.4	6.1	5.0	6.1	3.4
Don't fit into any peer group	4.1	3.6	3.0	3.6	3.3	3.8
Difficulty speaking English	3.0	3.4	1.5	7.7	9.9	1.4
No place to study	3.6	3.4	4.7	3.4	4.8	2.7
Don't get along with others	2.8	2.8	3.7	2.2	2.5	2.8
Parents don't care	1.9	1.8	1.6	2.2	2.4	1.6
Column N	6827	6896	1257	1118	755	3749

^a Survey items arranged from highest to lowest percentage.

^b Each senior could answer "yes" or "no" to each survey item. Therefore, column percentages do not equal 100.0.

TABLE 6
Seniors' Plans for Their Future

Survey Item	All Seniors		Race/Ethnic Groups			
			African	Asian	Hispanic	White
	% 1998	% 1999	Amer. %	Amer. %	%	%
What will you do next year?						
Both 4-year or 2-year	83.9	86.3	81.0	93.5	74.9	88.1
Attend 4-year college	64.9	66.7	56.4	75.6	43.4	72.0
Attend 2-year college	19.0	19.6	24.6	17.9	31.5	16.1
Attend trade, business, technical school	2.0	1.8	3.0	0.7	3.7	1.4
Enter employment unrelated to high school trade/business/technical courses	2.8	2.5	1.5	0.5	4.0	3.2
Enter employment related to high school trade/business/technical courses	1.0	1.2	1.7	0.5	2.1	1.0
Enter military service	2.7	2.8	5.8	1.5	5.8	1.6
Undecided	4.5	5.4	6.9	3.3	9.5	4.7
Column N	6827	6684	1183	1097	724	3664

Survey Item	All Seniors % in 1999	Gender	
		Males	Females
		%	%
What will you do next year?			
Both 4-year or 2-year	86.3	82.9	89.8
Attend 4-year college	66.7	63.5	70.0
Attend 2-year college	19.6	19.4	19.8
Attend trade, business, technical school	1.8	2.2	1.5
Enter employment unrelated to high school trade/business/technical courses	2.5	2.7	2.3
Enter employment related to high school trade/business/technical courses	1.2	1.4	0.9
Enter military service	2.8	4.3	1.3
Undecided	5.4	6.5	4.3
Column N	6684	3348	3336

Note. Column percentages may not equal 100.0% due to rounding error.

TABLE 7
Seniors' Plans for Their Future

<u>Survey Item</u>	Race/Ethnic Groups							
	African American		Asian American		Hispanic		White	
	%		%		%		%	
	MCPS	Nat.	MCPS	Nat.	MCPS	Nat.	MCPS	Nat.
What will you do next year?								
Attend 4-year college	56.4	43.9	75.6	57.7	43.4	37.1	72.0	46.4
Attend 2-year college	24.6	11.3	17.9	13.0	31.5	18.8	16.1	13.0
Attend trade, business, technical school	3.0	15.9	0.7	8.4	3.7	14.8	1.4	14.5
Enter employment unrelated to high school								
trade/business/technical courses	1.5	----	0.5	----	4.0	----	3.2	----
Enter employment related to high school								
trade/business/technical courses	1.7	----	0.5	----	2.1	----	1.0	----
Enter military service	5.8	----	1.5	----	5.8	----	1.6	----
Not attend postsecondary school	----	24.4	----	16.4	----	21.2	----	21.8
Undecided	6.9	4.6	3.3	4.6	9.5	8.0	4.7	4.4
Column N	1183		1097		724		3664	

Note. National ("Nat.") data were taken from the 1992 survey of high school seniors nationally, reported in

A Profile of the American High School Senior in 1992, published by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC. Dashes indicate that the data were either not available in the national or MCPS surveys.

TABLE 8

People Who Influenced Seniors' College or Career Plans

<u>Survey Item</u>	All Seniors ^a		Race/Ethnic Groups			
	%	%	African	Asian	Hispanic	White
	in 1998	in 1999	American	American	%	%
			%	%		
Parents	71.9	72.7	66.2	70.3	62.1	77.7
Other students	25.9	26.7	17.5	35.2	19.5	28.7
School counselor	25.4	24.1	25.1	23.3	20.8	24.6
Teachers	21.3	20.1	17.8	18.5	22.9	20.8
Career information coordinator	14.4	14.8	19.3	14.6	16.8	13.0
Private career counselor	5.3	5.3	3.3	2.6	3.2	7.2
Work supervisor	3.0	2.5	2.1	1.8	2.8	2.7
School administrators	2.2	2.0	2.5	1.6	2.0	1.8
Tutors	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.0	0.8	1.1
No one ^b	17.2	15.1	15.7	15.3	21.5	13.6
Other	13.2	12.3	12.3	13.9	10.5	12.1
Column N	6827	6896	1257	1118	755	3749

^a Each senior could answer “yes” or “no” to each survey item. Therefore, column percentages do not equal 100.0.

^b Survey question added in 1997.

TABLE 9
Number of Postsecondary School Applications

<u>Survey Year</u>	<u>1997</u>	1998	<u>1999</u>
No. of applications	13,500	14,813	14,621
Mean	2.8	2.7	2.7
Median	2.0	2.0	2.0
No. of students who applied to at least one postsecondary school	4,820	5,400	5,347
% of total graduating class who applied to at least one postsecondary school	75%	79%	78%

TABLE 10
Universities/Colleges Applied to Most Frequently:
Number Applying, Acceptance Rates, Financial Aid, Average Total SAT Scores, and GPA

1999 Rank Order (based on no. applying) University/College	1998 Rank Order (based on no. applying) University/College	1999							GPA^d
		No. Applying	% Applicants Accepted^a		% Financial Aid^b	Average Total SAT	Wght	Unwght	
			MCPS	Nationally					
1. Univ. of Maryland - College Park	1	1808	76%	61%	55%	1264	3.9	3.4	
2. Montgomery College - all campuses	2	1223	Open admissions		31%	941	2.8	2.8	
3. Univ. of Maryland - Baltimore Co.	3	552	81%	61%	53%	1164	3.6	3.3	
4. Towson University	4	422	73%	69%	44%	1079	3.4	3.2	
5. Pennsylvania State University	5	278	92%	49%	30%	1208	3.8	3.4	
6. Frostburg State University	6	213	86%	85%	43%	1025	3.1	3.0	
7. Salisbury State University	8	211	73%	54%	38%	1138	3.6	3.3	
8. Virginia Polytechnical Univ.	9	182	90%	81%	28%	1209	3.9	3.4	
9. University of Delaware	7	164	84%	69%	46%	1180	3.8	3.4	
10. University of Pennsylvania	17	158	33%	30%	44%	1360	4.3	3.6	
11. University of Michigan	12	156	78%	68%	26%	1330	4.2	3.6	
12. Boston University	11	155	76%	53%	41%	1232	3.9	3.4	
13. George Washington Univ.	13	154	75%	58%	55%	1219	4.0	3.5	
14. University of Virginia	14	154	37%	33%	25%	1374	4.4	3.7	
15. Johns Hopkins University	22	150	45%	40%	59%	1411	4.4	3.7	
16. James Madison University	10	146	63%	63%	34%	1230	4.0	3.5	
17. Georgetown University	15	144	35%	23%	47%	1312	4.2	3.6	
18. Cornell University	20	131	48%	33%	40%	1401	4.4	3.7	
19. New York University	21	125	54%	44%	63%	1336	4.1	3.5	
20. Duke University	18	120	40%	31%	29%	1448	4.5	3.8	
21. American University	-- ^e	116	82%	79%	55%	1154	3.8	3.4	
22. Indiana Univ. at Bloomington	-- ^e	115	90%	Not available	64%	1169	3.6	3.3	
23. Washington University	19	113	56%	51%	33%	1404	4.4	3.7	
24. St. Mary's College	16	108	74%	58%	55%	1270	3.9	3.4	
25. Univ. of N. Carolina, Chapel Hill	24	106	22%	37%	39%	1333	4.4	3.7	
26. Carnegie-Mellon University	-- ^e	104	80%	47%	46%	1401	4.3	3.6	

^aMCPS acceptance rates are based on self-reported acceptance. Acceptance rates for all freshmen applicants are taken from The College Handbook 1998, 35th edition, 1997. ^bPercentage of applicants *accepted* who said that they received financial aid.

^cAverage (mean) highest total SAT for MCPS students who applied and *were accepted to the college*. SAT scores before April, 1995, were converted to "re-centered" scores to yield re-normed aggregate SAT scores. ^dUnweighted and weighted GPA for MCPS students who applied and *were accepted to the college*.

^eDashes indicate not among the most frequently applied to universities/colleges in 1998.

TABLE 11
Seniors' Educational and Career Expectations

<u>Survey Year</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>
What is the highest degree you expect to achieve?				
PhD/MD/ (JD—added in 1999)	31.9	29.1	25.9	27.8
Master's	38.4	41.8	42.4	42.5
Bachelor's	18.8	19.5	21.1	20.9
Associate's/Trade	7.0	6.0	5.8	5.3
High school	3.9	3.5	3.0	3.4
Column N	5864	6311	6827	6706
What kind of work do you expect to be doing in the future?				
Health careers ^e	--- ^c	--- ^c	--- ^c	6.2
Scientific/medical	26.2	25.6	24.3	16.9
Business/management	15.5	13.2	14.2	13.5
Arts/media/computer technology	17.2	17.2	20.5	--- ^c
Arts/media/communication ^e	--- ^c	--- ^c	--- ^c	12.8
Computer technology ^e	--- ^c	--- ^c	--- ^c	10.1
Social services	7.7	5.8	5.6	5.7
Education	7.0	7.8	7.1	6.9
Skilled crafts	5.6	4.4	5.3	4.7
Military	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.3
Legal/attorney	4.8	4.2	4.5	4.4
Service industry ^b	0.6	1.4	1.1	1.5
Other ^c	13.2	--- ^c	--- ^c	--- ^c
Undecided ^d	--- ^c	18.4	15.3	15.0
Column N	5631	6469	6522	6481

Note. Column percentages may not equal 100.0% due to rounding error.

^a Occupational categories were taken from career and vocational guidance inventories.

^b Item renamed in 1997.

^c --- indicates item not asked in that survey year.

^d New item in 1997.

^e New item in 1999.

TABLE 12
Seniors' Educational and Career Expectations By Race/Ethnic Group

<u>Survey Item</u>	All Seniors % in 1999	Race/Ethnic Groups			
		African Amer.	Asian Amer.	Hispanic	White
		%	%	%	%
What is the highest degree you expect to achieve?					
PhD/MD/JD	27.8	29.1	38.4	23.0	25.2
Master's	42.5	37.6	41.9	37.9	45.2
Bachelor's	20.9	22.7	14.6	21.6	22.1
Associate's/Trade	5.3	7.0	3.0	10.2	4.5
High school	3.4	3.6	2.0	7.3	3.0
Column N	6706	1201	1099	726	3663
What kind of work do you expect to be doing in the future?					
Scientific/medical ^c	16.9	15.0	25.9	11.9	15.7
Health careers	6.2	9.3	8.1	6.6	4.6
Business/management	13.5	14.1	15.3	17.2	12.1
Arts/media/communication ^c	12.8	12.0	7.4	8.7	15.4
Computer technology ^c	10.1	12.3	18.1	9.3	7.1
Education	6.9	4.8	2.7	6.4	9.0
Social services	5.7	5.3	2.3	5.4	6.9
Skilled crafts	4.7	6.0	3.5	9.6	3.8
Military	2.3	2.9	0.8	4.7	2.1
Legal/attorney	4.4	4.9	2.9	4.3	4.6
Service industry ^a	1.5	2.2	0.8	1.7	1.4
Undecided ^b	15.0	11.1	12.1	14.2	17.4
Column N	6481	1124	1069	699	3573

Note. Column percentages may not equal 100.0% due to rounding error.

^a Item renamed in 1997.

^b New item in 1997.

^c New item in 1999.

TABLE 13**Frequency of Seniors' Working For Pay**

<u>Survey Item</u>	All Seniors % in 1999	Race/Ethnic Group			
		African American %	Asian American %	Hispanic %	White %
In a typical week, how many hours do you work for pay?^a					
Don't work for pay	30.6	28.5	42.2	24.4	29.0
Less than 8 hours per week	11.7	5.7	11.3	8.7	14.4
8 to 16 hours per week	23.2	22.2	25.6	20.3	23.4
17 to 24 hours per week	21.8	29.5	14.3	26.8	20.5
More than 24 hours per week	12.7	14.0	6.6	19.8	12.7
Column N	6807	1219	1100	747	3724

Note. Column percentages may not equal 100.0% due to rounding error.

^a New question added in 1999.