



MONTGOMERY COUNTY ALLIANCE OF BLACK SCHOOL EDUCATORS

Every great organization has a story of humble beginnings, The Montgomery County Alliance of Black School Educators would like to share their brief history of how it came to be. It stands on the shoulders of several people who were passionate about making education a priority for all children, particularly Black students in Montgomery County Maryland. Between 1970 and 1971, the National Alliance of Black School Superintendents (NABSS) was formed by Dr. Charles D. Moody, Sr. in Chicago, IL while completing his dissertation on examining school systems led by Black superintendents.

In 1972, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Special Concern's Office of African-American Affairs, awarded NABSS a grant to conduct an in-depth research study of 40 school districts headed by African-American superintendents. Dr. Meharry Lewis was the principal investigator for the grant. The study resulted in the development of a set of educational objectives for school districts enrolling predominantly African-American students. On April 19, 1973, during the presidency of Ulysses Byas, NABSS voted to include administrators and other educational personnel in the organization and changed the organization's name to the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE).

In 1977 there was a community change organization called Citizens Advisory Group, which conducted research and collected data on the status of Black children in MCPS. The research was led by Jim Robinson, a community member of the NAACP. They released a pamphlet of concerns regarding Black children in MCPS. The pamphlet included data about Black students suspension rates, Black students not being placed in honors programs, the high number of students of color in special education and the high percentage of Black students having poor grades. The Black Relations Action Steps organization also released a detailed report of 32 critical issues impacting Black students in the MCPS. The Black Relations Actions Steps organization sought to provide specific ways to improve and maintain an atmosphere in which Black students felt respected, were able to achieve academic success, and benefited from all aspects of educational services.

A year later, in 1978, The Montgomery County Alliance of Black School Educators was established by Mable Smith, Principal at Watkins Mills Elementary School, as an affiliate of NABSE. Ms. Mable Smith also pioneered a state chapter in 1978, called the Maryland Association of Black School Educators. Many influential MCPS staff members served with MCABSE for many years. Dr. Judy Docca was the second president of MCABSE and she also served as a MCABSE treasurer for a number of years. Dr. Paul Vance, a former MCPS Superintendent, also served as a MCABSE treasurer for 14 years helping to guide fundraising and financing for networking events and quarterly

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sponsored professional development meetings/seminars for MCPS employees during that time period.

Over time, as membership changed and times evolved, active membership and activities went into a dormant period. However, Dr. Judy Docca, MCPS BOE member and Dr. Frieda Lacey, former MCPS superintendent, re-ignited the vision for MCABSE to start again with new membership initiatives to rekindle the great work of MCABSE. In 2002, they tasked new leaders of MCPS with development of ways to support our students in narrowing opportunity, access, and achievement gaps for Black and Brown students in MCPS. With mentorship from the founding MCABSE members, the new leadership narrowed their focus with an effort to raise scholarship money for our young MCPS scholars to attend college. This effort has remained consistent to the present date such that MCABSE has raised over \$90,000 in scholarship funding to support at least one high school senior from each high school since 2002. MCABSE's new leadership focused on providing \$1,000 grants to schools that had significant plans to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps in their schools. The George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy was one of the first recipients of a MCABSE grant. MCABSE's new leadership also focused on providing professional development and networking opportunities for MCPS Black school educators to create a space of support in navigating the systems and policies of MCPS. In May of 2015, MCABSE was recognized as a recipient of a Montgomery County Board of Education Distinguished Service Award for its work with MCPS students and staff.

In 2021, the passion and urgency for service that the founding members carried in the 70's is still strong today. The members of MCABSE under the leadership of its current executive team, with Lauren Holmes, serving as President, are committed to the mission of MCABSE, decreasing the disparity in the educational achievement gap among students of African descent.

As an affiliation with NABSE, the MCABSE has seven goals:

- Promoting, facilitating and improving the academic performance and achievement of all students, especially those of African descent.
- Establishing a coalition of Black educators, professionals and community stakeholders committed to and directly involved in the educational process.
- Creating a forum for scholarly discourse, the exchange of ideas, strategies and best practices to improve educational and professional growth opportunities for people of African descent.
- Assisting parents in improving the study habits and learning experiences of their children.

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- Identifying and developing Black professionals who aspire to leadership positions in education.
- Providing scholarships and other incentives to deserving students of African American/Black descent who seek higher education and advanced training opportunities.
- Influencing and informing public policy that specifically addresses the education of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) students.

To raise money for students over the years, we have held an annual talent show, partnered with local businesses, created scholarship teams, and thought creatively to build and keep our financial support strong. MCABSE has kept its focus on building an alliance of educators and stakeholders, developing our educators through professional development, providing scholarships to support our students in their educational endeavors and influencing public policy as it relates to MCPS and Black students.

www.mcabsemcps.org