



MCCPTA Mission

To Make Every Child's Potential a Reality by Engaging and Empowering Families and Communities to Advocate for All Children.

Hacer Una Realidad El Potencial De Cada Niño Al Comprometer y Apoderar Las Familias y Comunidades Para Que Intercedan Por Todos Los Niños.

MCCPTA has adopted the following Advocacy Priorities for the 2023-2024 School Year:

ACCESS TO EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES:

- Give all students equitable opportunities for challenging programming, whether core academic, elective, Career Technology Education (CTE) and other career paths, or out-of-school time¹activities, ensuring that equitable programming is available countywide. Fund stipends and transportation for elementary students' out-of-school time activities. Make more IB and AP course options available for students to choose from, especially if a particular school is designated to serve as a specialty school for such programs.
- Provide equitable resources so that all students, at all schools and regardless of gender or other differences, have access to sports. Resources include safe playing fields, equipment, practice time, away-game transportation, and staffing.
- Provide adequate support for special education, gifted education, and programs that support Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLs)² in every school.

¹ Out of School Time (OST) is a supervised program that young people regularly attend when school is not in session. Source: CDC Healthy Schools, [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/ost.htm#:~:text=Out%20of%20School%20Time%20\(OST,school%20is%20not%20in%20session,9/29/2023](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/ost.htm#:~:text=Out%20of%20School%20Time%20(OST,school%20is%20not%20in%20session,9/29/2023).

² MCPS currently uses the term EML for an individual and English Language Development (ELD) for a program or for services. In MCPS, these terms replace those still used by other organizations (e.g., English Language Learner (ELL), English Learner (EL), and Limited English Proficient (LEP) for individuals and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for programs.

- Provide additional resources to all students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS), no matter which school they attend. Implement coordinated campaigns to narrow the gap between FARMS eligibility and enrollment for receipt of FARMS benefits.
- Increase support of and funding for music programs, particularly for middle and high school students who were precluded by the pandemic from full participation in their earlier years and for EMLs.

CAPITAL FUNDS AND FACILITIES:

- Increase capital improvements funding to reduce overcrowding, to properly maintain existing infrastructure to extend the useful life of our schools, and to ensure Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance in every building.
- Before making recommendations for Major Capital Projects in the capital budget, engage students, staff, families, and area communities as part of gathering Key Facility Indicator³ (KFI) data so that those data transparently reflect the full school experience.
- Equitably identify and prioritize projects for remediation of issues related to accessibility, health, and safety (including security, condition, and utilization of buildings). Provide funding to keep aging schools in an acceptable, safe condition that meets standards (e.g., ADA and applicable EPA regulations and recommendations), temperatures, air quality, and other safety issues.
- Reduce disparities in utilization of school facilities across the county. Use existing facilities more efficiently and innovatively and brainstorm a wider range of options together with MCCPTA and school communities.
- Ensure adequate state and county capital funding to cover roadway and other infrastructure improvements around schools to provide safe routes for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit riders. Install bike racks at all schools.
- Examine enrollment projection forecast methods and compare forecasts to actual enrollment annually to ensure accuracy. Set a threshold of acceptable deviation of actual enrollment from forecasts that, when met, will initiate a reexamination and correction to forecasting methods.
- Communicate the need for and results of any boundary study directly to parents using multiple communication methods; include an independent assessment of facility utilization, transit safety, and safe routes to school in each study.

³ KFIs assess major infrastructure elements in a variety of categories. KFIs are components of a facility that taken together provide an overall description of an individual school's facility condition. <https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/performance/>, 9/28/2023.

- With equity and inclusion of all voices, meet the goals of the MCPS Sustainability Policy [Policy ECA] and of the 2017 Climate Action Resolution to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035 and to increase and maintain MCPS participation in the MD Green Schools Program. Commit to climate resilient land management, reducing paved surfaces, and replacing impervious parking areas with pervious paving.

OPERATING FUNDS:

- Ensure ample county funds to decrease class sizes and increase resources aimed at overcoming learning loss, the achievement/opportunity gap, and lifting underperforming students.
- Apply best practices and innovative strategies in human resources including increasing diversity and offering flexible schedules. Develop and fund a robust plan for teacher recruitment and retention to combat countywide teaching staff attrition and replenish the available substitute pool. Focus particularly on recruiting and retaining Special Education educators in light of the significant adverse effects of the current severe shortage.
- Provide equitable funding for graduations, trips, and other school activities, in part by making the Independent Activities Funds more equitable; the needs are not equal across schools.
- Ensure adequate funds to purchase books and materials to facilitate non-digital learning.

COMMUNICATION:

- Maintain a strong MCCPTA-MCPS partnership with meaningful, two-way communication both to ensure that families are informed of major policy, funding, procedural, curriculum, and programmatic changes proposed or implemented in schools, and of school climate and security issues. Ensure that families' views and concerns are actively sought and factored into those proposals and changes.
- Raise minimum requirements, support, and measures of accountability around the School Improvement Plan (SIP) process to facilitate school-based data transparency, community engagement, and participation and collaboration in the development and ongoing evaluation of school improvement at every school.
- To ensure community feedback, implement outreach in multiple languages regarding (1) new programs and policies and their goals and metrics for success, when implementing any new program or policy, (2) curriculum standards for each core course to ensure that students have equitable learning experiences, and (3) criteria and procedures for course and program

placement, communicated with sufficient clarity that students can determine whether they have qualified for a course or program and how to apply for programs or appeal their placements. Use traditional and non-traditional approaches, including partnering with community-based organizations, to target these communications. Communications should reach current as well as future students and families, as well as area communities. Expand translation and interpretation services for family-school engagement. Provide timely, clear, and transparent publication and communication of data in an accessible, downloadable format.

- Ensure that all communications, presentations, and conversations are clear, concise, and accessible, and enhance understanding and engagement. Eliminate or reduce use of acronyms and jargon (“edu-speak”).
- Improve parent access to student information, such as ensuring functionality of the Synergy platform via the app.
- Implement transparent processes including, but not limited to, open and accessible data practices and release of line-item specification on budget allocations.

CURRICULUM:

- Provide and publish, online and in print, curriculum and enrichment guides for all courses.
- Include and support enrichment, acceleration, differentiated instruction, and challenges for all students, as appropriate, including students receiving special education (Individual Education Programs and 504 plans), ELD, and/or gifted education services.
- Provide professional development for all staff implementing new curriculum and technology.
- Shape the curriculum for all grades to include diverse content and culturally relevant teaching strategies that reflect the MCPS student body along all dimensions of diversity. Acknowledge and address the fear and exclusion students experience when they do not feel “seen” or represented in the curriculum. Develop programs to prevent hate and bias and to promote inclusion, understanding, and respect for differences.
- Follow evidence-based best practices for use of digital content in the classroom and review how time spent on screens relates to outcomes.
- Include more hands-on and experiential learning, lab experiments, and use of manipulatives, and less use of electronics-based instruction.
- Work to maximize student success by matching skills and specialties of long-term substitutes with the subject matter they are required to teach.

- Retain tutoring services and free summer school for students with a demonstrated need and make the resource better known to students, families, and staff.
- Provide comprehensive support and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of elementary and secondary one- and two-way language immersion programs, including: provision of curricula/materials in the target languages that are reasonably equivalent to MCPS's English-language curricula/materials; effectiveness of instructional approaches; student achievement among all demographic groups (including EMLs) in the target languages and English; appropriate, evidence-based identification and provision of special education and formal enrichment/acceleration opportunities for students in these programs; and equitable eligibility/placement for immersion students vis-a-vis their non-immersion peers in any criteria-based programs (e.g., magnet programs).
- Provide Central Office support so that schools engage in a continuous cycle of improvement of instruction. Direct MCPS's Office of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction and Office of Curriculum to provide more robust training to reading specialists (and, in certain situations, directly to teachers). Ensure reading specialists are given time to provide this professional learning to teachers and, more broadly, ensure that professional development provided to teachers is not a "one-off" event, but part of a continuous pathway of development of the teacher.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING:

- Examine every action through the lens of DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging).
- Improve experiences for families who are new to MCPS with welcoming environments in all schools and provide students and families with the information, services, and encouragement they need for the students to be successful.
- Improve the family-school partnership by facilitating intentionally inclusive family and community outreach that empowers all students and families to participate in easily accessible communication methods that include continuous feedback and improvement opportunities.
- Implement proactive, measurable actions based on reports from the Anti-Racist System Audit, the countywide boundary analysis, and the evaluation of the ELD model, and the respective community discussions of the findings, ensuring accountability for evaluation of each recommendation and timely implementation, where appropriate.

- Ensure greater transparency surrounding Restorative Justice practices, including situations when Restorative Justice is appropriate versus when it is not appropriate. Provide students, parents, and staff with information regarding their rights under the Restorative Justice process, including policies surrounding the ability to opt out of Restorative Justice circles and appeal for other methods of discipline where indicated. Engage these groups to establish transparent metrics to identify strengths and weaknesses, to perform a comprehensive review of current practices, and to develop a program of continuous review and improvement.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS:

- Expand all students' access to and awareness of mental and physical health and wellness resources, including prevention and intervention for suicidal ideation, and support to students with mental health and substance use disorders.
- Train all staff to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health and/or substance use challenges, in how to refer students for help, to use trauma-informed practices, and in effective classroom management for adjusted maturity levels post-pandemic.
- Seek to identify, understand, and address root causes of concerning behaviors. Provide the resources, professional development, and consistent guidance and accountability to all school staff to prevent, identify, and address student behavioral health needs including consistent development and implementation of appropriate accommodations, instruction, and/or educational settings to support students with disabilities.
- Improve school communities' access to existing services by increasing exposure and ease of access to wellness resources, by adding wellness and crisis resources to the banner at the top of every school website with a school-specific list of services and how to access them, and by implementing a "counselor of the day/duty" program.
- Increase crisis prevention and de-escalation training and use community partnerships for behavioral health intervention, diversion, and treatment to avoid crises that are traumatic for individual(s), peers, and staff. Eliminate isolating punishments that often exacerbate impacted students' conditions and risk further harms or death.
- Use non-stigmatizing language and images in all substance use and mental health curriculum, communications, forms, and policies.
- Meet student-requested substance use prevention goals, including updated curriculum with more depth, realistic and factual information about the reasons for and risks of specific

substances (versus blanket statements), and frequent inclusion of stories shared by individuals with lived experience. Access and utilize recent settlement funds to address vaping and other substance use, including prevention, treatment, and recovery resources.

- Explore the establishment of a post-hospitalization re-entry program for students.
- Monitor and publicly post air, water, and athletic field quality at all schools.
- Establish Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) policies that include science-based thresholds and clear mitigation procedures pertaining to all schools, including occupied schools under active construction.
- Establish and communicate clear written policies and procedures to ensure safer school construction in occupied schools, including exploring alternate sites/holding schools to minimize student and staff exposure during construction.
- Equitably update schools, as necessary, to provide comfortable facilities with clean air and water, and safe outdoor infrastructure, prioritize Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) projects and other quality of life and safety projects. Maintain filter replacement schedules to maximize effectiveness.
- Advocate for universal, higher quality, culturally appropriate, locally sourced school meals with options for vegetarians and students with other dietary needs.
- Ensure sensitivity to students who are fasting when scheduling tests and other high-value assignments.
- Allow for age-appropriate movement in the classroom to avoid long periods of sitting. Encourage the use of outdoor recess when there is no significant condition or weather event that precludes the safe use of outdoor spaces.
- Publish guidance for schools to ensure that all students, especially elementary school students, have access to snacks and snack time during the school day to eliminate long periods without food due to early or late lunches.
- Educate parents, students, and MCPS staff on best practices for technology use to reduce the effects of screen overuse such as eye strain, sleep disruption, screen addiction, attention deficit, and reduced learning outcomes.
- Raise awareness about strategies to promote online safety, and about the potential threats to both physical safety and mental well-being from the misuse of social media platforms.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND SECURITY:

- Better inform all students, families, and staff about how to report incidents of hate/bias, bullying, harassment, etc., and how to escalate their concerns if not properly addressed. Hold MCPS accountable for applying MCPS's policies in a consistent and timely manner.
- Maintain safe conditions and positive school environments to protect all persons from bullying, discrimination, harassment, and assault.
- Expeditiously improve security in all school buildings by providing secure vestibules at all remaining schools, by expanding video surveillance in and around all facilities including elementary schools, and by ensuring adequate MCPS security staff and updated and functioning security and audio/visual equipment at all schools. Regularly audit schools and procedures to ensure all schools are safe from intruders. Ensure all classroom doors can be locked from the inside by permanent and temporary staff (i.e., substitutes).
- Ensure that public use of facilities when students are present is closely monitored to ensure student safety.
- Inform students, families, and staff of the purposes, training requirements, and oversight of security staff and armed law enforcement personnel utilized in and around school facilities and events. Expand family engagement in all schools with creative programs such as "Dads on Duty".
- Provide safe, reliable, equitable, and timely passage to and from schools and school-related activities, including arrival and dismissal configurations and procedures, sidewalks, crossing guards, and protected bus stops. Fund and undertake a study for multi-source student transportation consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U. S. Surgeon General, and National PTA guidelines on bell times.
- Address, track, reduce, and transparently report to the MCPS community incidents of bias, discrimination, bullying, hate, sexual and other harassment, and abuse of and assault on students within schools, on school buses, and during school activities. Develop, share, and implement policies and procedures to ensure timely communication with students, staff, and guardians of these incidents.
- Develop, share, and implement policies and procedures to ensure timely communication with students, staff, and families during emergency situations and avoid breakdowns in communication during crises. Provide advance notice of emergency drills and support for

- 234 students and staff as needed during and following drills, which can be anxiety-producing or even
235 traumatizing.
- 236 ● Advocate for education on policies and laws that increase safety and reduce students' and
237 school communities' access and proximity to firearms, so as to reduce violence including self-
238 harm. Annually distribute information on Maryland laws regarding firearm safe storage
239 requirements via MCPS communication channels as previously approved by the Board of
240 Education.
 - 241 ● Provide "upstander" intervention training/education to all staff and students. Provide age-
242 appropriate, evidence-based lessons at all schools and grade levels for violence prevention,
243 online and in-person bullying and harassment, childhood obesity, suicide, and substance use
244 prevention.
 - 245 ● Address distractions caused by cell phones and Chromebooks in the classroom by enforcing
246 MCPS's regulation on use of cell phones.
 - 247 ● Ensure that MCPS-approved apps have appropriate privacy policies in place to protect student
248 data.
 - 249 ● Involve parents and guardians in decisions on where to place new portable classrooms.