

MCCPTA Health and Safety Committee Report

February 24th, 2017

I am glad to announce that we have a **new subcommittee**, that has the objective of improving **Physical Activity** in our school.

The new subcommittee is led by Ms. Susan Loftus, and MCPS educator at Burning Tree ES, and is especially welcome since MCPS is reviewing the "Wellness: Physical and Nutritional Health" Regulation (see MCPS Wellness Committee, below).

On a less happy note, the **Alcohol and Drugs Abuse Prevention** subcommittee needs someone to take charge for next years. Ms. Katherine Wood, who has single handedly led the subcommittee for several years, has a senior child that will graduate in May, so she is leaving MCPS.

If you are interested, please let us know and contact Katherine to ensure she will pass you the wealth of information and contacts she has.

Katherine Wood - woodyoule@gmail.com

The **School Nutrition subcommittee**, chaired by Ms. Lisa Mandell, has been working with Ms. Marla Caplon, Director of Food and Nutrition Services to implement the recommendations of the Resolution approved by the DA last year. She agreed to send a letter to principals encouraging them to share their specific a la carte lists with parents. If any parents received a list from their school principals, it would be helpful if they could share that news with the committee. Also, for schools with salad bars, she is asking to parents to share with their assigned food service supervisors feedback about what works and what doesn't in order to improve operations and sales.

The **Safe Technology subcommittee**, chaired by Laura Simon, is sharing some interesting pieces of information.

This week has been publicly released a report approved in December 2016 by the Maryland Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC). The title of the report is "Wifi Radiation in Schools in Maryland" and it is available on the Maryland Health and Mental Hygiene website.

I am attaching the report and this is the link to see it in context:

<http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/OEHFP/EH/Pages/WiFiCEHPAC.aspx>

Most of the recommendations are very practical and applicable at home as well, so I hope you will take time to read them.

A point that affects the work of our CIP committee, is on page 8:

"If a new classroom is to be built, or electrical work is to be carried out in an existing classroom, network cables can be added at the same time, providing wired network access with minimal extra cost and time."

The CEHPAC will discuss at its next meeting, on March 1st, the presence of cell towers on school grounds. If this is a subject you are concerned with, let me know and I will share the information.

Other issues:

Without specific subcommittees devoted to these concerns, I have been in touch with MCPS addressing them:

Water quality

Ms. Therese Gibson brought to my attention that water at Lee MS could contain lead. The person in MCPS responsible for the water quality is Mr. Brian Mullikin, Environmental Team Leader. He explained to me that all drinking water fixtures in MCPS schools have been tested for lead and, if necessary, replaced during the period 2004-2008. In addition, WSSC has replaced *“all known lead service lines in the water distribution system. [WSSC now] adds a corrosion inhibitor (orthophosphate) to the water supply which creates a coating on pipes that prevents the pipes from leaching lead.”*

Despite this, Therese told me that they recently replaced an old water fountain at Lee MS.

I am following up with MCPS to understand if any testing is periodically performed to check the drinking water quality. I understand that WSSC takes samples from the water fountains inside the schools, but I could not understand how often and how schools are chosen.

Please, contact me if you are concerned with the quality of water at your school and/or if you are interested in pursuing this issue.

Seat belts on motorcoaches

MCPS is soon to release the terms of reference to contract charter motorcoaches for field trips.

Since November 2016, all new coaches are to have three-point seatbelts installed on their rigs, as mandated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

Considering the cost of installing them, old buses are not required to adapt. Adding seatbelts to existing seats is not a solution: not only new seats must be installed, but structural changes to the bus are necessary to support the added strain that seat belts include the event of a crash. As a consequence, most existing charter companies have both old and new buses.

I found out that in most cases the charter company does not disclose if the motor coach will have seatbelts until the very day of the field trip, likely reserving the new buses to a more demanding customer!

We are asking MCPS to approve charter companies that have fleets with only new buses or that can guarantee they will provide the schools with new buses.

Moreover, we ask MCPS to issue instructions to the schools so that seat belts are required as a condition when making the reservation.

The federal law is in place because it is proven that seat belts save lives. The law comes about 20 years after a similar law was approved in Europe. In both case, a long interval has been given to the charter companies to adapt their fleet, because of the cost involved. Our students are not the ones to be made to pay for this delay.

MCPS Wellness Committee

The committee is reviewing the MCPS Regulation on Wellness: Physical and Nutritional Health (JPG-RA), that implements the 2006 Montgomery County Board of Education Policy (JPG).

Next meeting is on March 16th and will be centered Physical Activity. The new Physical Education subcommittee is to provide me with inputs and ideas to bring and share with MCPS WEllness Committee.

The draft of the Regulation will be available for public review and comments. I will share the link as soon as available.

Health School Council

As chair of the Health and Safety Committee, I represent MCCPTA in the Montgomery Health School Council, which is formed by MCPS staff (Nutrition, Safety, Curriculum) and by Montgomery County personnel (Health) as well as by experts and community members. The Council meets bimonthly and it has an informational objective.

Katherine Wood, the chair of Drug Abuse Prevention subcommittee, is part of the Council since last year, as a community member.

Next meeting will be on March 6th.

Submitted by Stefania Clerici, Health and Safety Committee chair

stefania.clerici.duch@gmail.com

202-322-7366