**January 2020 update from the MCCPTA school climate and safety committee**

Dear all:

This is an attempt to summarize some of what we have been working on lately.

* **UPDATES ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY** – The January 28th MCCPTA Delegates Assembly included a focus on school safety and security. Rob Wilcox, an MCPS parent and policy advisor with Everytown for Gun Safety presented [current research](https://everytownresearch.org/reports/keeping-schools-safe-plan-stop-mass-shootings-end-gun-violence-american-schools/) on keeping school safe. Ed Clarke, MCPS Chief of Safety, described some of the efforts underway and in response to the [Maryland Safe to Learn Act](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/legislation/details/sb1265?ys=2018rs) (2018), including the rollout of [lockdown with options drills](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/security-new/MCPS-Emergency-Preparedness.pdf) and [behavioral threat assessment teams](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/changes.aspx).

**Please help share this information with your school communities**:

* + [The Safe Schools Maryland Tip Line](https://www.safeschoolsmd.org/about-mcss/contact-mcss/Tipline_Media/) is an anonymous reporting system used to report threats to the safety and well-being of students. Students, parents, faculty, staff, and members of the community may use this anonymous, app- and web-based reporting system to share concerns regarding mental health crises, bullying, school and community violence, drug activity, abuse, harassment, or any other issue affecting student wellbeing or school safety. Please make sure that you and your student download the app [here](https://www.safeschoolsmd.org/about-mcss/contact-mcss/Tipline_Media/) and save the tip-line number (1-833-MD-B-SAFE / 1-833-632-7233).
	+ The MCPS School Safety and Security Plan is available [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/security/Security-Report/0900.18_SchoolSafetySecurity_KEYPRIORITIES_web.pdf).

Questions raised at the Delegates Assembly (we will follow up with MCPS for responses):

* + What are best practices/policies for securing the entrances to schools during times of the day when doors are not liked (i.e. before school begins)? What are the guidelines to ensure appropriate staffing during these transition periods and recess, when many children are outside the school building, particularly at the ES level.
	+ Some PTAs have expressed an interest in buying additional security cameras with PTA funds. Is this permitted by MCPS?
	+ Does MCPS work with the County to advocate for sidewalks, especially in areas proximate to schools where children are frequently walking?
	+ There seems to be confusion among drivers regarding school bus stops on roads that have median dividers. What can be done to increase awareness/safety for bus stops?
	+ Early bell times require many children to head to school in the dark, which puts them at risk. Is MCPS or the BOE considering moving bell times?

**\*Please note: Ed Clarke, MCPS Chief of Safety, would welcome a running list of school-specific safety/security concerns. Please send these to** **climateandsafety@mccpta.org** **so that we can keep a compiled list to share with him.**

* **RESOLUTION ON GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SCHOOL SAFETY** – In December, MCCPTA and the [Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association](https://www.mcrsga.com/) (MCR-SGA) passed twin [resolutions on gun violence prevention and school safety](http://nebula.wsimg.com/7bbabeec0306f31197170fbe0da44487?AccessKeyId=AB71C8A62DC88BF7171E&disposition=0&alloworigin=1). The resolutions are informed by research and seek to close the gap between what we know and what we do to prevent gun violence in our schools and communities. Similar resolutions have been passed by school boards in a number of districts, including in Los Angeles. The resolutions have been given to the Board of Education and MCPS central office staff. No action has been taken yet. The BOE’s policy committee should be considering the resolutions this month. If you would like to reach out to them to encourage them to take these resolutions up as a matter of priority, please contact them individually. Contact information is available [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe/members/). Meanwhile, the MoCo chapter of [Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America](https://momsdemandaction.org/) raised the resolution with state legislators during their recent advocacy day.
* **SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL –** Our community has been shaken by a number of pedestrian accidents and fatalities, including students en route to and from school. [On Sunday, February 9th at 2:00 pm at Wheaton High School, the Montgomery County Council will host a pedestrian, bicycle and traffic safety town hall](https://tinyurl.com/PedSafetyRelease) to hear directly from residents about the safety issues they are encountering on roadways and sidewalks and in crosswalks located in Montgomery County. Residents are encouraged to attend the meeting to talk with Councilmembers about areas of concern in the community and to learn more about the County’s ongoing efforts to meet the goals of [Vision Zero](https://tinyurl.com/MoCoVisionZero).
* **COMMUNITY POLICING AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS (SRO)** – In October, the County Council introduced [Bill 33-19, Police - Community Policing](https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccllims/DownloadFilePage?FileName=2631_1_9748_Bill_33-19_Introduction_20191015.pdf&fbclid=IwAR2uJrrMWiyDPI27HR6FD4PJveYSDduXejx-FjvILQsb8Y_AYop8A1G_0aM), which aims to formalize community policing guidelines, including School Resource Officers. A public hearing took place on January 21st. See [this update](https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/government/activists-push-back-against-community-policing-bill/) about pushback from the community. The current memorandum of understanding between MCPS and MCPS is available [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/security-new/Executed%20SRO%20MOU.PDF).
* **PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO INCIDENCES OF HATE, BIAS, AND DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS** – MCPS recently received a grant from the [Maryland Center for School Safety](https://www.safeschoolsmd.org/) to address hate, bias, and discrimination in school communities. Maryland state reports on hate and bias incidents are accessible [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/safetyglance/). Each report includes data as it relates to our county and schools. See [this blog](https://news.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/staff-bulletin/all-in-we-must-speak-out-against-hate-bias-and-discrimination/) by Superintendent Jack Smith. Deputy Superintendent Monifa McKnight speaks about these efforts in [this video](https://youtu.be/As0DW4nKI8A)(starting at minute 16:17).
* **CHILD PROTECTION STAKEHOLDERS GROUP** – MCCPTA encouraged MCPS to establish a cross-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder group to address child protection concerns within the school system, including child abuse and neglect. MCCPTA has been active in this [working group](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/childabuseandneglect/CAN%20Stakeholder%20Charge%20Statement.pdf) since it was established in January 2019. Originally focused on preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect, the focus is expanding to include other issues related to student welfare, including preventing discrimination, bias, and hate.
* **TASKFORCE ON NEWLY ARRIVED AND UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS** – Since 2014, and especially this past summer, there has been an uptick in the numbers of newly arrived students from Central America in our schools. In 2017, MCCPTA passed a resolution recognizing the rights of and protections for newly arrived and undocumented students. We are working with MCPS to establish a taskforce to ensure that the school system is responding with urgency and [best practices](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/beyond-teaching-english-supporting-high-school-completion-immigrant-and-refugee-students) in serving students with interrupted formal schooling, trauma, and other unique instructional and noninstructional needs. PTAs can play an important role in helping newly arrived students feel welcome and safe in our school communities. [Consider ways to help](http://blog.nassp.org/2019/08/21/12-ways-school-leaders-can-support-immigrant-families/?fbclid=IwAR1j4SPbdET1ycv6ryzphCUZvwQabOmY4duWweuS-0Guk8YIZIzwOYpjEfc) your schools with this important work.
* **ATHLETIC CULTURE** – Some concerns have been raised about specific sports teams where “traditions” border on hazing. While specific cases are being addressed, are there other concerns we need to be aware of? Please let us know or reach out directly to the Director of Systewide Athletics, Dr. Jeff Sullivan (Jeffrey\_K\_Sullivan@mcpsmd.org). In the meantime, an [external review of supervision of athletics and extracurricular activities](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/publicinfo/external-review.aspx) was released in October. Current student-athlete safety training is [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/athletics/health/MCPS_Athlete_SafetyPPT.pdf). Additional resources are available [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/athletics/). MCPS is working to finalize a partnership with the [National Center for Spectator Sports Safety & Security](https://ncs4.usm.edu/home) (NCS4). Athletic directors have received additional training from the [Student Welfare and Compliance Unit](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/compliance/) regarding Tile IX, reporting, and bullying, hazing, and harassment and the MCPS Athletics Unit has been working with the Equity Initiatives Unit on equity issues in athletics. [This video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZhZNxTDj1Q&feature=youtu.be) highlights some of these efforts.
* **FACEBOOK** – We have set up a moderated Facebook page to exchange information related to school climate and safety. You can find it by searching MCCPTA school climate and safety or going to [this link](https://www.facebook.com/groups/630013914466313/).

**Our next monthly call on school climate and safety will be Friday, February 21st from 12:00-1:00.**

I hope you can make it. If not, please feel to reach out at any time by email.