To: MCCPTA Board of Directors

From: Gail Ravnitzky Silberglied, Chair, Virtual Learning Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Date: March 9, 2021

**RE: Virtual Learning Committee Report #3**

The Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Virtual Learning was created in August, 2020 to advocate for all MCPS students operating in the virtual learning environment.

**RECENT ACTIVITIES**

* **Meetings**—Recent Committee meetings took place via Zoom on Feb 11, Feb 16, Feb 25, March 4.  Our regular meeting schedule is weekly on Thursdays at 5pm.
* **Outdoor Space**—The science is clear that the use of outdoor space is critical in preventing the spread of COVID, and our committee feels that MCPS can do more to encourage and support the use of outdoor space for, at a minimum, lunch, PE, music, and staff lounges.  Committee member Joanna Snyder, who spoke at the Delegates Meeting on February 23, is leading this effort.  We have prepared [this fact sheet](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1P2jzmosWXzzol7AnXx8wiVXLe5tdCsqz7WfDXH93YKg/edit) to help in our advocacy on this issue, and we have met with Sean McGee (MCPS OTLS), Seth Adams (MCPS Facilities), Sharon Danks (Green Schoolyards America), Laura Collard (MAEOE), Laurie Jenkins (MCPS Outdoor Learning).

**→Significant Development:** At the most recent meeting, we secured support from Seth Adams to create a pilot project with 10 schools (MCPS would help identify) to significantly increase the use of outdoor space for the most at-risk activities during the school day.

* **MCPS Communications**--Many families are extremely frustrated by the lack of clarity, consistency, and transparency coming from MCPS communications.  Following the February MCCPTA Board meeting, where I briefly described this effort, I circulated a draft letter and received very helpful feedback from many Board members.  The Virtual Learning Committee then met and voted to approve the letter and, pending approval from Cynthia, send the letter.  [This letter](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jYgVXoMl28IsVV2bPC3Cz0UyAMnAr39EeB1lU3CoYNM/edit?usp=sharing) was sent on February 16.  It recommends the following: that MCPS appoint a dedicated Associate Superintendent to lead a COVID Crisis Response Team; that MCPS compile a detailed Reopening FAQ; and that MCPS use simpler, more accessible language in its communications.

**NEW IDEAS**

* **Survey of Parents**--Our Committee feels that it would be useful to gather parent perspectives on how virtual learning is going, what challenges they are facing, and how it can be improved.  We would use the data collected to inform and support our advocacy on behalf of virtual learners.

**→Board Request:** We would like to get feedback from the MCCPTA Board on this idea, including questions that other committees would want us to ask, and how we can ensure we get responses that reflect the diversity of MCPS families.  We would work with a professional to help us frame questions that would reveal the most useful data, and use best practices for survey integrity.  We are also interested in knowing if the data collected by MCPS in the Fall Parent Survey was released to the public, and if aggregated grades for the 2nd quarter have been released, as this data could inform survey questions.

* **Parent Support**--The committee is considering ways to help educate parents about some of the issues that we all face, and a subgroup has been brainstorming some of the potential topics (vaccinations, mental health, MCPS technology platforms, COVID fatigue, monitoring grades, sports recruitment, and navigating special education remotely) and potential formats for such a series.  This may be turned over to the Family Engagement Committee for its consideration for ENGAGE! events (or to the MCPS Parent Academy?), or could be something separate.

Please reach out with any questions, suggestions, or feedback at VirtualLearning@mccpta.org.