

## Curriculum Committee Report – First Semester 2017-2018 School Year

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The Curriculum Committee has been busy on many advocacy levels over the course of this first semester.

**Maximum Testing Time:** The State of Maryland recently passed a bill that limits the amount of mandatory testing time that school districts can require to 2.2% of total school hours. At the same time, the state still has requirements for all students to take certain exams including the PARCC tests, the MISA (a science exam) and a new Social Studies exam. This mandatory testing time limit bill passed unanimously at the state level, but the implications are significant. MCPS had been in the process of creating districtwide measures to assure that all students are receiving the same level of instruction regardless of geographic location in the county. Due to the new state testing limits, many of these measures have now become “optional” for schools to participate. Also, students in certain grades will have fewer measures of progress in math due to other required tests (such as the science exam.) Teachers are still able to create their own individual tests; the new law only applies to measures that the school district has created to collect data on consistency of instruction or to measure how well the curriculum is being implemented. This includes cumulative high school summative exams on either a quarterly or semesterly basis, which now are optional and up to the individual teacher to create and administer. During a summer area meeting, Senator Nancy King and Councilmember Craig Rice, who serve on the Kirwan Commission for the state of Maryland, made a presentation about the progress of the Commission. Senator King stated that she did not want the state of Maryland to dictate to school districts how they should build their new schools. She stated that school districts should have the independence to decide for themselves the best new school construction to fit their needs. The MCCPTA Curriculum Committee pointed out that the same principle should be applied to school districts regarding testing. School districts should have the independence to decide for themselves what level of testing is appropriate for their students, and that the 2.2% rule has many negative impacts that the Maryland legislature did not consider. Both Senator King and Councilmember Rice replied that they had not thought of the possible negative impacts that the testing limit law would have, and would share that feedback with the other members of the Kirwan Commission.

**Career Readiness External Review** – the Curriculum committee continues to work with MCPS to provide feedback on responding to and implementing some of the suggestions in the report including expanding access, creating clearer communication and beginning career planning earlier in a student’s school career.

**Focus on Reading/Writing at the Elementary Level:** The Office of Curriculum and instruction (OCIP) has been expanding the rigor and enrichment available in elementary schools through

several new programs and professional development. A specific “Enriched Literacy Curriculum” is being piloted in some area elementary schools this year with positive preliminary feedback, while all schools are being encouraged to implement Junior Great Books, William & Mary and Complex Texts during reading instruction, and to provide teachers with needed professional training in these programs. A new writing program called “Lucy Calkins” is also being piloted with very good reviews. Schools are being encouraged to implement a “balanced literacy” program that is instructed throughout the day.

Elementary Report Card: The Elementary Report Card has been revised and was issued for the first time at the end of first quarter. There will be an opportunity for parents to share feedback on Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm at Carver. Please register as a representative of your cluster at: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0d44a4a8292-elementary> While the new report card uses the familiar letter grades of A, B, C, etc. the grades are not percentage-based (i.e. 90%=A.) They are standards-based and are meant to describe a student’s level of knowledge at the grade-level standard. This has caused confusion for parents and students.

College & Career Readiness Night: The Curriculum Committee has worked with MCPS to design an information night for parents and students with the theme of “Starting Early to Plan for Success.” The informational program is aimed at students and parents of students in grades 6-12, and will be held at Gaithersburg High School on January 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. Snow date is January 17<sup>th</sup>. To RSVP and help provide feedback to MCPS/MCCPTA about which topics are of most interest to you, please go to:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/events/CCReadinessNight/>

There are many other advocacy issues that the Curriculum Committee continues to support. This is just a small list of current projects. Feel free to reach out to any member of the committee with concerns or questions.