

Vice President of Educational Issues Officer Monthly Report May 2017

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Meetings (since installation April 25, 2016):

April 26 GTA/MCCPTA College Admissions Seminar

May 1 Curriculum meeting with MCPS

May 1 Executive Committee meeting with Dr. Smith

Upcoming meetings:

May 8 Special Education Awards Ceremony, Rockville High School

May 12 Meeting with MCPS Director of Secondary Curriculum & Districtwide Programs

June 2 Curriculum Meeting with MCPS

Here is what I'm paying attention to in my "first week on the job" as VP of Educational Issues. Some new, some not so new...

College Admissions Seminar

The annual College Admissions Seminar with consultant Shirley Levin was very well attended. Thanks to Michelle Gluck, GTAMC, and Lang, Kim, and Iris of the Gifted Child Committee for putting together this very informative meeting on how college admissions directors make decisions. Material links are below for those interested. If you think this is just a "GT" resource, think again! All college bound students (and parents) would benefit from perusing these resources! I'm attaching here.

- [10 Strengths Colleges Look For in HS Students.docx](#)
- [College Admissions Links - no logos.docx](#)
- [College Visit Tips.docx](#)
- [Honors Colleges Information.docx](#)
- [SAT-and-ACT-Score-Concordances-2016.pdf](#)
- [Tips for Demonstrating Interest.docx](#)

House Bill 461/Senate Bill 452 (Education – Accountability Program – Assessments)

This bill (expected to be signed by the Governor by May 30, 2017 – and because of the support from both House and Senate, it is unlikely to be vetoed), will limit the state/county mandated assessments of students to under 2.2%.

What does that mean?

It means, starting immediately MCPS will be working to figure out how MCPS will stay under 2.2% (or roughly 21-23 hours of assessment) in a year for a student. This 2.2% **ONLY** is applied to the assessments **where the state or county requires the assessment and the data is collected centrally** (e.g., PARCC, MAP, Inview, MISA, HSA, RQAs, etc.). This **does not** include a limit on the assessments a teacher or individual schools may deem appropriate to ensure mastery of concept/content. This also **does not** include assessments that students opt to take (e.g., SAT/ACT, IB or AP exams).

For elementary students, staying below the 2.2% for state/county required assessments doesn't seem to be too great a challenge. We may see some slight adjustments with frequency of items collected centrally, but at this point, the curriculum office hasn't identified any real "game changers" that would greatly impact how we currently are doing business.

For middle and high school, we will likely see some more substantive changes. MCPS will have to factor in the amount of time devoted to PARCC assessments, current science MISA/HSAs (and what the science test was expected to look like as part of Next Generation Science Standards), and balance that with the newly rolled out Required Quarterly Assessments (RQAs) that were introduced this year as a replacement for semester final exams.

If signed, this is new legislation that will take effect July 1, 2017, so will be in effect for next school year. Buckle up... it might be a little bumpy as this gets moving through a school system as large as ours. We are confident MCCPTA will be asked to provide parent volunteers to react/respond to possible implementation strategies. If you have a strong interest in participating, please send me a note at vpedissues@mccpta.com.

Elementary School Report Cards

Before you say "that definitely isn't new" – well, for something not new, it sure seems new to a lot of parents! **COMING SOON** -- we are expecting **HUGE** changes to the elementary school report cards. Don't know about it? You aren't alone! Some of the most PTA-involved parents I know didn't realize it either.

Many parents have been lamenting for years that "P" doesn't really mean anything to parents and "ES" isn't applied the same from one school to another. MCPS has been working this year on redeveloping the report card to give meaningful data to parents/guardians. Have they succeeded? You tell us? In a recent communication from Dr. Smith to the Board of Education, we learned **GRADES AND RUBRICS WILL BE COMMUNICATED TO SCHOOLS AND PARENTS IN JUNE!!** Watch for that and if/when you receive, let's have a county-wide conversation! Does this new assessment tool work for all our students? Discuss!

2. **Elementary Report Cards:** What is the timeline for the revised report card? How will the revised report cards increase the transparency of student achievement and ability? What grades will be used and what are the rubrics for earning each grade?

Response

- The Department of Elementary Curriculum and Districtwide Programs currently is meeting with all teacher, administrator, and parent stakeholder groups to obtain feedback on a revised report card at the elementary level.
- The report card will continue to provide information to parents/guardians about their child's proficiency with the standards taught in each content area. However, in Grades 2–5, the current ES, P, I, N grading system will be replaced with a system more familiar to parents/guardians and will allow for clearer articulation to middle school.
- A focus group of kindergarten teachers also is providing feedback about the revisions to the kindergarten report card.
- We are considering more frequent reporting and including more parent/guardian friendly terms.
- Once all stakeholder groups and executive leadership have had the opportunity to provide feedback, the grades and rubrics for earning each grade will be communicated to schools and parents in June.

Memo to Members of the Board of Education from Dr. Jack Smith, re: Magruder Cluster Follow-Up Questions, March 22, 2017.

Elimination of On-Level Math in Middle School (Math 7 and Math 8)

A year ago, Michelle Gluck, VP of Ed issues in the 2015-16 school year, raised the issue that about 25% of the MCPS middle schools were eliminating on-level Math 7 courses for the 2016-17 school year. If you've been at a MCCPTA BOD meeting or at a Delegates Assembly this year, you may have heard several of us highlighting this issue (repeatedly).

To be honest, when I first heard that beginning in 7th grade, all MCPS students would be above grade level in math (which is what happens when we eliminate Math 7), my immediate response was "isn't that a good thing?" After all, if all our kids can perform above grade level math, that is AWESOME, right? We must be catching up to the rest of the world! (YAY, U!S!A!)

QUICK BACKGROUND – in C2.0 Math curriculum, students progress through the math curriculum (k-8) so students will have all the background necessary to be ready for Algebra 1 in 9th grade. MCPS, however, has created two "compacting" (sometimes referred to as acceleration) opportunities, which I want to stress, is unique to MCPS:

- 1) In 4th and 5th grade, students that demonstrate specific aptitude and ability can participate in "Compacted Math" that will cover 3 years of math instruction (Math 4, Math 5, and Math 6) in a 2 year timeframe.
- 2) In 7th grade (or 6th grade, if the student participated in "Compacted Math"), the student can participate in "Investigations in Math" (IM) that covers roughly 2 years of math instruction (Math 7 and most of Math 8) in a 1 year timeframe.

Participating in ONE of these, the student finishes Algebra I by end of 8th grade!
Participating in BOTH compacted classes means finishing Geometry before entering high school.

But, is it realistic ALL students are able to perform above grade level and can grasp all the necessary concepts in an accelerated (or compacted) curriculum? In some MCPS middle schools, students that aren't quite "getting it" are taking a "double period" of math. Is having students give up an elective to take a double period of accelerated math a good choice? Maybe. For some kids, that extra bit of support (for a quarter or two) may be just what they need.

But, what happens to the kid that doesn't want to give up the instrument they love or the foreign language where they excel? I have heard a number of administrators express "parents and students always have a choice" but, if there is no on-level math, is there really a choice for those parents/students? Do they **KNOW** they have a choice?

For the 2016-17 school year, MCPS has confirmed 11 middle schools did NOT offer Math 7 (giving students only the compacted/accelerated model of IM for rising all 7th graders that had not already completed the course). **Three of those 11 middle schools ALSO did not offer Math 8 at all** – moving all students to complete Algebra I by the end of 8th grade.

Looking to next year, as of May 1, instead of 3 schools eliminating Math 8, we now have 9 schools that currently have ZERO students enrolled in Math 8 (an indicator that all 8th graders will be in Algebra I or higher courses).

- 1) Baker
- 2) Clemente
- 3) Farquhar
- 4) Gaithersburg
- 5) Hallie Wells
- 6) Neelsville
- 7) Ridgeview
- 8) Shady Grove
- 9) White Oak

This is a school-by-school decision, not one made at Central Office. What is it about these 9 schools that ALL their students are able to work above grade level and not one 8th grader is needing on-level math in any of these middle schools? I admit, I don't get it.

But, it has my attention! Does it have yours?

I want us to be asking, how is this acceleration working out? Are the kids that took double period Algebra I in middle school (or struggled in a single period to get a C) – how did those kids do in Algebra II a couple of years later? And what about after that? Is this mass acceleration working out for ALL these students?

If not, is there something we can do better? Discuss.

Summer School for Middle Schools

In the next few weeks, this may need some attention! In the operating budget, funding specifically for Middle School summer school was cut significantly. While the middle schools are expected to provide summer school, funding the options was being pushed to the middle schools to figure out for themselves how to fund! There was some feedback and some funds were

found to help, but even with the additional funding, the this is a pretty big departure from past years.

For some schools, they are asking the PTAs to help support the effort (sponsoring students that may need financial support). Others are joining with nearby schools to create viable options for the entire cluster. Still in other parts of the county, parents report their school announced they can't afford to provide any summer school options and as of writing this report, they do not plan to offer anything.

I've sent a message to the President's Listserv to see what other PTA Presidents may have heard. Surprisingly (or maybe not so surprisingly), some middle schools don't realize there is a change this year from the past years. I'll be checking in with Central Office on this particular issue and hope to have more to share by the Delegates Assembly.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I'm excited to be your MCCPTA VP of Education Issues. Truly! I joined the MCCPTA Board last year and thus, my journey into MCPS-wide academic issues only started last summer. I know enough to know I have a lot to learn!!! I've been given an incredible gift being able to sit at the feet of many parents that have been "education giants" in the advocacy of our children over the years so I hope to pay it forward/pay it back by creating conversations that increase the transparency and opportunities for our students.

I've learned a lot in the last year and my aim is that a year from now, many many more parents will be digging in, asking questions, and collectively, we make all things about MCPS better than it was yesterday!

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(and mom of 4 children in 4 different MCPS schools)