

MCCPTA Committee Work Plan

Committee: Special Education Committee
Chair: Julie Reiley (through December 31, 2019*)
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Vice-Chair: Rachel Tate
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Vision

Approximately 11.7% of MCPS students receive special education services via an Individualized Education Program (IEP) - thus, it's imperative we advocate for – and with - MCPS families and students with special needs. Our special needs population is very diverse, and our students have unique and diverse needs, from physical disabilities to learning differences to emotional needs to any combination thereof. Our special needs students and families are also very diverse in the same ways that our general education students and their families are.

Likewise, children and youth in MCPS receive a myriad of special education services and accommodations, in a variety of settings, *e.g.*, some students receive services in the general education classroom with support from special education staff and/or general education teachers; some receive small group instruction; and some receive services in self-contained classes. Some students are diploma bound, some are in special programs, working toward their certificate. Some will attend college, others will need not. Some students need to be educated on life skills.

We support them *all*.

Just a few examples of how our committee has made a real impact in the past:

- ◆ Helped resolve special education transportation issues for individual students – reducing unacceptable ride times for young children
- ◆ Assisted families at IEP meetings
- ◆ Educated school officials about the campaign to eradicate use of the “R” word
- ◆ Honored students, parents, staff, and programs that contribute to the success and acceptance of students with special needs in MCPS

* While I intend to step down from my position on December 31, 2019, I can stay on through January 31, 2020, if necessary.



- ◆ Testified before local and state elected officials on special education issues and legislation
- ◆ Shared information on issues facing students with special needs
- ◆ Helped resolve IEP compliance issues
- ◆ Helped resolve special education staffing concerns

Goals

1. A smooth transition to my successor by recruiting an additional parent to fulfill the chair or vice-chair position; making sure useful documents and resources (e.g., templates for award letters and committee recruitment materials), are handed over to the next chair.
2. A special education chair at every school's PTA or PTSA in MCPS.
3. Forming a committee responsible for hosting the 32nd MCCPTA Special Education Committee Awards Ceremony, including soliciting, processing, and issuing the awards.
4. Meet with MCPS to better understand its restraint and seclusion policy and recent reporting on restraint and seclusion in MCPS.
5. Advocate for an MCPS policy that requires a parent present anytime any student (or at least any special education student) is questioned by law enforcement. This goal arises from the questioning of a child with an IEP by police, with the involvement of the principal, but without the parent's knowledge, this past June.
6. Advocate for access to technology including cell phones for students with special needs and their accommodations, especially in light of a recent ban by Fairfax County Public Schools.
7. Continue our mission to support families and advocates for fairness and consistency across the school district for appropriate special education services. *This is a critical function of the chair and vice-chair- we communicate directly with parents and staff about IEP (and related staffing) issues at individual schools.*

Action Steps



1. Recruit an additional volunteer for the committee who will eventually fill the chair/ vice-chair vacancy created when I leave.
2. Send out recruiting emails to MCCPTA lists and ask delegates and presidents to forward them to their communities to recruit volunteers to be the special needs chair on the local PTA or PTSA.
3. Recruit volunteers for the award ceremony committee; the committee needs at least three people: one, the committee chair, to solicit nominations, process nominations, and send the letters to recipients; a committee member responsible for the individualized framed certificates; and a committee member responsible for the printed programs, the reception, and organizing volunteers for set-up and clean-up (e.g., Rockville HS Student Ambassadors).
4. Work with Gillian on restraint and seclusion, including meeting with Kevin Lowndes.
5. Create an interested small group of parents and create a plan to advocate for a policy that requires a parent's consent before (and allows them to be present when) law enforcement questions students. I raised this issue last spring but need to move forward - perhaps a couple of us could meet with Josh Civin, the general counsel, to discuss the current policy on police questioning students.
6. Advocate for access to technology, including cell phones, for students with special needs by writing to the school board and encouraging other parents to do the same, and let the board know that a cell phone ban would negatively impact special needs students who need the technology for accommodations. Keep parents informed; work with the safe tech committee.
7. Be accessible to parents; have quarterly meetings with Kevin Lowndes, Assoc. Super for Special Education.

Meeting Schedule

We hold three meetings per year.



The chair and vice-chair are working on a fall date for a meeting. Currently we think we will hold a meeting aimed at explaining the role of the local special needs chair, offering support to them, and discussing possible goals for local chairs, e.g., sharing information, creating special needs lists and their local school, hosting seminars or assemblies, etc. It is likely we would hold the first meeting later in the fall, after we've recruited more chairs.

The vice-chair is choosing subjects and arranging dates for the winter and spring meetings.

Expenses

\$1,000 for the annual awards ceremony.

In the past the awards ceremony was largely accomplished by donations. This year, there were requests for reimbursement for beverages, cake, and light food at the pre-ceremony reception. However, the printing of the multipage programs, the list of winners, the awards and the frames were all donated, as were some decorations. We can't count on such significant aspects of the ceremony being donated in the future, so we need to increase the budget.

