Curriculum Committee Report Submitted by: Michelle Gluck

December 2020 curriculum@mccpta.org

**Meetings/Calls/Events**

11/12 MCCPTA BOD Meeting

11/17 MCPS Fall Instructional Recovery Team Meeting

11/18 MSDE GT Advisory Committee meeting

11/19 Superintendent’s Budget Advisory Committee

11/19 MCCPTA Delegates’ Assembly

12/2 Curriculum Committee meeting with OCIP/OSSI

12/2 MCPS Fall Instructional Recovery Team Meeting with Dr. Wilson

12/3 BOE Public Meeting

**Upcoming**

12/11 GCC meeting with Brenda Lewis re Small Group Instruction

12/15 BOE Public Meeting

1/6/21 Curriculum Committee meeting with OCIP/OSSI

**Key Activities/Concerns**

1. **Curriculum concerns arising out of online learning**
2. Continuing concerns about unrealistic expectations for secondary student course load.

Both before and after Fairfax County Public Schools released a report showing widespread struggle and failure among many student groups in MP1, Rodney and I had asked for similar data from MCPS. We still haven’t received it directly but MCPS did provide a summary report to the BOE on December 3 showing, as expected, significantly increased numbers of D and E grades among secondary students, especially among FARMS, ESOL, and SpEd students.

MCPS’s response, so far, has been to propose reducing the number of graded assignments per class while still purporting to teach the same quantity of curriculum material, per the requirements of MSDE (for all classes) and expectations of the College Board and IBO (for AP/IB classes). When the Instructional Recovery team met with Associate Superintendent Niki Hazel (head of OCIP) to hear these initial proposals and provide feedback, I likened the request to being asked for feedback on rearranging the deck chairs on the titanic by a captain and crew who’d been alerted to the iceberg back in July but decided that the ship could withstand the impact. There was a lot of conversation about the need to “hold students harmless” and keep HS students “on track for graduation” but since the only proposed solutions involved reducing rigor – teaching less material and/or grading it more gently – I came away with the feeling that MCPS is more focused on holding MCPS harmless by awarding grades/diplomas only loosely tied to actual student learning/preparation for the rest of life, so that students could exit the system on time as graduates, than on investing the additional resources needed to help students recover from the pandemic by giving them extended/additional learning opportunities.

The team was then summoned to another meeting with TLS Chief Janet Wilson. Dr. Wilson sympathized with parent concerns but opined that the severe budget cuts resulting from enrollment drops would preclude any possibility of offering enough classes over the summer to allow students to drop classes now and make them up by next year. I suggested that MCPS should be considering that some high school students may need an extra semester or year to complete diploma requirements. Given that we are in a worldwide health crisis affecting the entire world, the need for extra time is not likely to reflect badly on students who need it and need not be seen as “harming” them.

1. Concerns about inconsistent and variable small group instruction in ES.

GCC Chair Audra Dove has compiled anecdotal data indicating that some elementary schools are providing daily small group instruction in Math and English; some are providing only intermittent small group instruction; and some are not providing any at all, instead suggesting that the new curriculum materials meet all students’ needs in whole class instruction. (!!!!!!) As students at all levels in elementary school need and are expected to receive small group instruction in the online regime, Audra and I will be meeting with Brenda Lewis this week to discuss MCPS expectations for small group instruction and how those expectations are being communicated and overseen.

1. **Curriculum concerns in the hybrid planning**

While MCPS’s framework for in-person instruction makes it unlikely that we will see in-person instruction any time soon, parents have expressed concern and confusion about how the proposed framework will alter delivery of instruction for either set of students (those who remain all virtual and those who elect the hybrid instruction model.) In the absence of information about the concrete consequences of each choice for teacher assignment, scheduling, etc. it is likely that the “survey” data collected by MCPS is not going to match up well to actual student choices if/when the option of hybrid instruction becomes a reality.