

MCCPTA Committee Reports – June 2015

Gifted Child - Kim Testa

Health and Safety - Stefania Clerici

Membership - Tracie Potts

Special Education - Jeanne Taylor

Gifted Child Committee Report

April 2016

Chair: Kim Testa kgtesta@aol.com

Vice Chair: Lang Lin pta.langlin@gmail.com

EVENTS:

4/6 Lang participated in the MCPS “Choice Study Community Dialogue” in Gaithersburg HS

The meeting was organized by MCPS. The two speakers were Mr. Troy E. Boddy, Director of MCPS OSSI Equity Initiatives Unit and Ms. Lori-Christina Webb, Executive Director to MCPS Chief Academic Officer. After signing in, parents would either choose by themselves or be assigned to one of ~15-20 round tables with other parents and an MCPS facilitator.

The length of the meeting was about 1.5 hours. Majority of time had been allocated to 3 rounds of discussions. At the end of each round of discussions, tables would be picked by MCPS speakers and people from chosen tables would stand up to share their opinions.

The participation of the events (4/6 and 4/18) was between 80 and 100. While many topics were touched, the center of the discussions was two new policy recommendations from the Metis’ report, i.e. Recommendation 3a and 4a.

Recommendation 3a: Implement modifications to the selection process used for academically competitive programs in MCPS, comprising elementary centers for highly gifted students and secondary magnet programs, to focus these programs on selecting equitably from among those applicants that demonstrate a capacity to thrive in the program, that include use of non-cognitive criteria, group-specific norms that benchmark student performance against school peers with comparable backgrounds, and/or a process that offers automatic admissions to the programs for students in the top 5-10% of sending elementary or middle schools in the district.

Recommendation 4a: Consider revisions to Policy JEE, Student Transfers, to clarify that the sibling link for immersion and other choice programs is not automatic; while siblings of applicants should be able to attend the same school where the special academic program is located provided that there are available seats, those siblings should be required to participate in the application process, such as the lottery for immersion programs to earn a seat in the program.

4/7 Kim attended MCCPTA Board of Directors Meeting.

4/13 Kim and Lang participated in the “The College Admissions Game: The Rules Have Changed Again”, an event hosted by MCCPTA Gifted Child Committee and Gifted & Talented Association of Montgomery County.

4/18 Lang participated in the MCPS "Choice Study Community Dialogue" in John F. Kennedy HS

4/18 Kim attended MCPS Curriculum Meeting.

4/20 Kim and Lang participated in the MCPS AEI Feedback Council meeting. The following "Metis Choice Study key questions" were asked and discussed during the meeting.

Key Question 1: *Montgomery County Public Schools values equity and is committed to creating the conditions for every student to thrive. What do you think an equitable school system looks like?*

- A system that looks at every child's individual needs and how to meet their individual child within the classroom/curriculum
- A system where every child is learning something new each day in all subject areas
- A school system which pursues what is best for students by established a solid foundation for progress to develop a solid personality in a child
- Every student has an equal opportunity to consider/attempt/try for an opportunity that covers a spectrum of interest and options.
 - Not necessarily the same thing as a system where the demographics are represented of every demographic student.
- Every school has the same expectations for every student (guidance counselor, principal, teacher...)
- Equitable systems are culturally sensitive to the student population and understand their learning needs stemming from their cultural environment by understanding who they are (countries, barriers)
- Troubling that we are starting with this question (key question one) as the METIS reports highlights only the equity core value of MCPS – not looked at in the report through the cultural sensitivity level; Recommendations focused on fixing the demographic disparity not the needs of the gifted programs vs. immersion vs. MSMC
- Programs have limited capacity – have to limit how many students are pulled from a feeder, access?
- Offers multiple pathways and options – both academic and interest based option; we currently offer one or the other but not both
 - Multiple pathways for a student with a different interest or academic needs that one but not two grade levels above
 - Multiple pathways to engage multiple intelligences
- All teachers who are equitably trained to understand different types of kids

Key Question 2: *For what reason should students be able to choose a school other than their home school?*

- Hard for children to move at a younger age – should they need to move?
- Availability to access for more people
- Lack of a peer group in the their local school
- Allowed to transfer to another school if their home school is not meeting their academic needs
- If MCPS looks into open access – shifting students all the time could lead to a disproportionate peer groups
 - How do you manage this equitably? [COSA process is currently inconsistent in approval]

- Siblings should be considered in changing schools to be in the same school (not necessarily to the program) to meet family needs
- Siblings should not be considered unless it is an actual hardship – an extra program should not further crowd out other students;
 - Same school level of need
 - Show hardship – being in different schools is a choice, not a hardship
- If a child wants to switch a school for a special program if schools are set up that way
- Sibling access provides more parent involvement in the school – but not necessarily the program
- Immersion is a choice and you do not have to test to be involved – makes more sense as it is a choice

Key Question 3: *Do you have any additional comments, concerns or questions regarding the Study of Choice and Special Academic Programs?*

- Conversation being driven by getting all groups to look like the White and Asian – we are not look metaphysically at the actual problem
 - CPHG 3% of seats – more apply than this in all demographic areas (20%+)
- METIS report does not address what is available in the local schools and its impact on instructional program or student achievement
- Look at a way to expand programs
- METIS did not do enough research into the effect of the program
 - Schools focus on admission is only one point in the child's life – a lot before and behind it in this process
 - Students need to be able to engage in the work load and all the pressure within the program (responding to the demands which could be different) – are they ready academically? Psychologically? Environmentally?
 - What are we doing for the other 97%?
 - What are we doing for the 3%? - things need to be done carefully
- Questioning look at it as a result of the old curriculum (challenged/ scaffolding more present with the old curriculum/VSC); C2.0 has more of a need not met for kids who need more rigor to apply to these programs; Shift of teacher perspective in meeting their needs with C2.0 – impact of classroom grouping practices/ wider ranges
- What is being done to help make things better for highly able students in the local schools?
 - Parents see gifted and highly able as the same but they are not – communication problem?
 - Decrease the worry about getting into the special programs
- Surprised – absence of data of the effectiveness of the programs (no tracking of student performance)
 - Immersion – fluent levels
 - Getting into the magnet of their choice
 - Tracking performance in the middle school
 - WP performance but did not get into the
- Noticeable that there is a high level of elementary programs (seats) but a small number of middle school (seats) – drop is significant.
- Expanding the programs
- Offer targeted summer school for enrichment for kids who do not get into the programs

they applied for

- Little extra for the students who applied who are wait pool or no in the middle school/ feel like DROPPED kids (especially if they were in the magnet before);
 - Classes for this peer group
 - Extension of science or social studies or anything ...programming in the local middle school
 - Avoid learning bad habits
 - Support at home to make sure they are prepared for high school - connecting back with their elementary cohort

Comment Card:

As a parent respecting the noble cause of closing achievement gap, I have been torn by the Metis' report [1] after reading into it deeply. Please allow me first start from a positive point.

There are more than 30% MCPS students labeled as GT students, which indicates that they are potentially in need of acceleration and enrichment. Among them, due to limited seat numbers, only a small fraction will be admitted into various special programs. It is really encouraging to see that the strong demand is recognized and the capacity expansion is recommended in the report. However, the overall research/study of the Metis' report has not built a concrete case to support its recommendations in order to promote equity.

One of the biggest problems embedded in the Metis' report is that the report emphasizes solely on the number of seats, which is determined only at a specific point in a student's life, without addressing much about items happening either before or after the event. Consequently, there are significant uncertainties for MCPS to implement curriculum and policy according to those policy recommendations.

For any MCPS student, being admitted into any academically selective program is truly remarkable. However, taking the offer is nothing short of a serious commitment from whoever is involved including students, their families, and schools. The work load will be substantial and the expectations will be sky-high. Based on my knowledge, none of rigorous selection processes is a mechanism for simply labeling students. Instead, processes are used to guarantee to a degree that admitted students will be successful under substantial load and sky-high expectations.

Personally, I would be genuinely worried for those who acquire seats in academically selective programs without necessary academic capabilities as promoted in Metis' recommendations. What would happen if they are not ready for the paramount challenges? After adopting the new admission policies, would it be required for adopting race / social factor based grading mechanism for homework and tests? In addition, would it be nice to arrange the work load based on race / social factors? There is no provision on grading / work load in Metis' recommendation at all. Thus, there will be big holes for MCPS to fill.

At a strategic level, if race / social factor based grading and work load is a viable path in academically selective programs, there shall be absolutely no foreseeable barrier to have race / social factor based grading / work load in the less challenging general curriculum 2.0 framework. In another word, Metis' recommendations implicitly prescribe the success of a full scale race / social factor based curriculum within MCPS even though there is no explicit statement in the report.

If Metis' recommendations on race / social factor based admission are sounding, I would be more than

happy to suggest our schools to reform curriculum 2.0 around race / social factor based concepts. This is in that most of students regardless of their race / social background will be affected by the general curriculum 2.0 instead of academic selective programs. If race / social factor based curriculum 2.0 is helpful, most of MCPS students will benefit immediately.

Overall, it would be nice to see thorough studies on the feasibility of Metis' policy recommendations and their implications before committing either a yes or a no.

[1] Metis Associates, "Montgomery County Public Schools: Study of Choice and Special Academic Programs", 8 March 2016

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

5/2- GTA Advocacy Parent Meeting will be held at the Carver Auditorium on Monday, May 2, 7-9 pm The goal of this meeting is make sure that MCPS and the BOE hears the full spectrum of parent and stakeholder ideas and opinions, not just those being "facilitated" at the community dialogue meetings.

5/5--MCPS will hold its final "Choice Study Community Dialogue" on May 5, 7-8:30, at Walter Johnson High School. Cannot participate? No problem. Parents and stakeholders can also give written feedback on the MCPS Choice Study website

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/choice/report.aspx>.

The Metis Associates Phase I and II Choice Study report has been posted on the MCPS website and was presented to the Board of Education. People can find Mr. Bowers' summary statement about the report, the Executive Summary of the report, and the entire report, here:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/choice/report.aspx>

Nearly 20% of MCPS students participate in one type or another of Choice programs

6/8 -- MCCPTA Gifted Child Committee will host "Twice Exceptional" Program at Blake HS during the MCCPTA Training. Speakers will be Marisa Stemple MCPS GT/LD Instructional Specialist, Accelerated and Enriched Instruction and Meredith Casper, MCPS Director of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction.

Participants will receive information about characteristics, identification, instruction, and supports for gifted students with disabilities, otherwise known as 'twice exceptional students'. Highlights from the Twice Exceptional Students: A Staff Guidebook (2015) will be featured. Emphasis will be on local school supports but information about discrete services will be shared.

ADVOCACY:

Math 7/8 11 middle schools will not be offering Math 7 (and possibly Math 8) at all next year, in favor of putting all students in the compacted IM class followed by Algebra I without regard to assessment data from Math 6. We are hearing several parent concerns if these courses will not be offered to those students who are not ready for the compacted IM math class.

Compacted 4/5 math will continue to be offered in home elementary schools and highly gifted centers next year, but "not in the middle schools".

Compacted 5/6 math will be offered in home elementary schools, highly gifted centers and middle schools next year.

The identification system will no longer be run out of Carver/AEI but will be "opened up" for local school decisions.

Delivery method will be up to the principal.

Delivery by way of Differentiated Instruction in an On-Grade-level classroom will be allowed and, presumably, will not be discouraged. There is one example of that going on right now, at College Gardens ES.

Kindergarten through third grade is being reevaluated to see if it is too slow, whether there are better ways to identify and prepare more diverse group of students for compacted 4/5/6 math.

Advanced English:

An update meeting was held between OCIP (Office of Curriculum & Instructional Programs) and OSSI (Office of School Support & Improvement) to learn more about the current state of Advanced English as it relates to the MCPS system expectations. A collaborative meeting has been scheduled to review school strengths and needs and work together toward next step. Parent identified schools with differentiation skills needs will be shared with OSSI.

Middle schools were asked to complete an action template which responds to the school's action steps in the following areas: communication, school structures, professional learning and instructional delivery. From here, there are supposed to be ongoing conversations, support, and monitoring from the directors in their ongoing work with principals and schools.

AEI and OCIP will be working with OSSI to hear about their findings and see where support is needed.

MCCPTA Health and Safety Committee Report**May 5th, 2016**MCPS Wellness Committee

This committee has to objective to review the implementation of the Montgomery County Board of Education Policy (JPG). Recommendations for appropriate changes are expected from the committee.

The next and last meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 16th.

Lindsey Parsons, who is a member of our School Nutrition subcommittee, has been invited to participate as Director of Real Food for Kids Montgomery.

The committee will review the compiled commendations, recommendations and questions from the previous meeting on Food and Nutrition and on Nutrition Education.

MCCPTA has introduced the Resolution approved by the Assembly and has asked its content to be included in the recommendations.

Health School Council

As chair of the Health and Safety Committee, I represent MCCPTA in the Montgomery Health School Council, which is formed by MCPS staff (Nutrition, Safety, Curriculum) and by Montgomery County personnel (Health) as well as by experts and community members. The Council meets bimonthly and it has an informational objective.

Next meeting is scheduled for May 9th.

Health and Safety Subcommittees:

1) Alcohol and Drugs Abuse Prevention – chaired by Katherine Wood
Drug Take Back Day took place on April 30 countywide.
Speak Up, Save A Life sessions held in several HS.

2) Portables Safety – chaired by Greg Fioravanti
No activity to report.

3) School Nutrition – chaired by Lisa Mandell

On May 16th Lisa and I will meet Ms. Caplon to visit the new facilities where DNSF prepares the meals. It will be our first meeting after the approval of the resolution. We have asked Ms. Caplon to prioritize the recommendations, in order of feasibility and cost.

4) Safe Technology - chaired by Laura Simon.

A panel presentation and a Q&As session will take place on Monday 12th, starting at 7pm, in the Carver Auditorium.

The panelists are a mix of MCCPTA parents and experts, with different views on the impact of electronic devices. The subcommittee is presenting the results of the work done this year, in terms of advocacy and information gathering.

Mr. Collette has been invited to participate but he declined.

Safe Technology has the objective to start a debate about aspects related to the use of electronic devices in the classroom that have raised concern among some parents and have not received a satisfactory answer from MCPS.

MCPS had been very proactive teaching "Cybercivility" and I am currently viewing the curriculum that has been prepared together with Common Sense Media and that will be taught as part of the core curriculum starting next school year.

Replying to a comment on the Board listserve, I want to emphasize that this is different from the idea of a "ban" on the electronic devices. And the Common Sense Media program is exactly addressing the idea of "limiting".

However, there are aspects that we are asking MCPS to address as well: from data privacy to health (exposure to radiations, eye strain).

As chair of the Health and safety committee, I have been active trying to establish a working relationship with MCPS and verifying the information provided by Safe Technology with other sources.

I met Mr. Zuckerman, Mr. Collette and Ms. Davison on April 15th, to address our concern on "fine prints", i.e. the safety instructions stated by the manufacturer for the devices used in the classrooms (including Chromebooks and cellphones when allowed or required by the teachers). Mr. Zuckerman agreed to take a look at the instructions and to start working at the beginning of next year to find a way to disseminate the information among staff and students.

Regarding the concern about the radiofrequency exposure from WiFi routers in the classroom, Mr. Zuckerman stated that MCPS has no knowledge in this field and that they rely on the guidelines provided by the federal agencies.

I contacted the FCC and had a conversation with Martin Doczkat, from the Office of Engineering and Technology.

He referred me to the correspondence between the FCC and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

LAUSD has taken steps to reduce the exposure to students and has adopted a threshold 10,000 lower than the current FCC standard. The FCC agreed in 2013 to open a formal "Notice of Inquiry into whether recent research, standard setting activities and usage patterns of RF emitters of all types warrant a reexamination of the FCC's exposure limits".

I am attaching the recommendation submitted by LAUSD to the FCC, for your review.

The FCC states that, since it is not a health and safety agency itself, it must defer to other organizations and agencies. The exposure limits to radiofrequency have been established by the National Council on Radiation Protection (NCRP) and by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

I had several conversations/email exchanges with Professor Jerrod Bushberg, Vicepresident of the NCRP and professor at the Davis School of Medicine, University of California.

He does not think the FCC will change their limits soon and he believes that the studies that show biological damage from radiations have not been consistently repeated, so far.

He explained to me that the radiofrequency waves emitted by a router are much lower than the ones emitted by a cell phones because the distance from the source lower exponentially the power density of the radiations. When a concentrated groups of wireless devices is used (such as clusters of children using their tablets or laptops to stream or download a video in the classroom) "it is difficult to say precisely how strong are the radiations emitted; however, the majority of the exposure would come from the device that the child is holding"

And "increasing the distance from the device to the child will significantly reduce exposure compared to having the device immediately adjacent to the head or body", so the recommendations of the WHO/IARC regarding cell phones apply to wireless devices as well.

I was hoping to have a speaker from the FCC or the NCRP at our event, but it has not been possible to organize. If there is interest, I will keep in touch with both agencies.

Finally, two requests to the Board:

1. Safe Technology would like to distribute a survey among the delegates to know which aspects of the use of technology in the classroom are of their interest. As MCPS is considering a Bring Your Own Device policy, it would be important to know the parents' position on this, as well.

2. The Health and Safety Committee has identified several documentaries that would like to share with the families. The films subject range from nutrition to parenting in the age of technology, and we believe they would be a good way to raise awareness and to have a debate. We would like to organize a series of screenings in each cluster, starting Fall 2016.

Could it be a fundraising activity for the hosting school?

Thank you very much for your attention!

Submitted by Stefania Clerici, Health and Safety Committee chair
stefania.clerici.duch@gmail.com
202-322-7366

MCCPTA Membership Report May 2016

The Big Picture

- **48,409 members** (as of May 25 MDPTA report)
- 2,525 (5%) less than last year's total
- 393 *new* memberships reported in May! (Spring membership counts!)

Ups and Downs

Current paid memberships compared to last year's total, among 192 PTAs:

- 80 increased
- 109 decreased
- 3 remained the same
- 11 PTAs reported *no* membership so far this year

Gameplan

- **Feature membership leaders!** Strongest growth, largest, highest engagement and success stories (via listserv, once final numbers are in)
- **Arrange outreach to support PTAs with 50%+ decreases** (50%+) –Cluster Coordinators, Membership Committee and/or pair with nearby “mentor PTAs” with positive growth
- **Create membership listserv **NEED BOARD APPROVAL TONIGHT!!!****
- **Don't miss the June 8 Spring Training Membership Workshop** planned
 - *Interactive, thought-provoking, fun activities to jump-start your PTA!*
 - 8:15-9:15 (session 2) at Blake HS

Fall Campaign (progress)

- 4 committee members confirmed!
 - Want to join? Email me at traciepotts1@verizon.net
- Contacted AVPs and membership award-winning PTAs to recruit
- Graphic artist working on logo that each PTA can customize
- **Target date to present countywide campaign materials to locals: August 1**
 - Preferably mid-July before summer packets to go out. But working around vacations, Aug. 1 seems more likely

Remember: **you are a PTA Membership Ambassador**. Let's work together to make our Council bigger... and better!

Cheerfully submitted,
Tracie Potts, Membership Chair

MCCPTA Special Education Committee Report May-June 2016

To: Exec Committee

From: Jeanne Taylor, ftrjmt@aol.com

Held 28th Annual Special Education Recognition Ceremony - over 200 people were in attendance.

Recognized over 60 students, parents, educators and programs.

Participated as a vendor at the 3rd Annual MCPS Special Education Summit.

Will participate in MCCPTA Spring Training on Wed, June 8, 2016.

Will continue to participate in MCPS Accountability Project team (Special Education Audit.)

Will update Yahoo files this summer.

Jeanne Taylor,
MCCPTA Special Education Committee Chair