**MCCPTA Vice President for Educational Issues 2020-21 (January 13 Board of Directors report)**

By Rodney Peele

**Activities (since December 9)**

MCCPTA Board of Directors (December 9)

Richard Montgomery HS college application workshop for 11th graders (December 16)

MCCPTA curriculum committee (December 21)

MCCPTA Operating Budget forum (January 4)

MCPS OCIP meeting (January 6)

MCPS Board of Education (January 12)

Julius West MS PTSA (January 12)

MCPS Instructional Recovery (January 13)

**Updates:**

**Return to school MP3:**

* Board of Education decided yesterday to delay start of Phase 1 return to school until March 15, 2021 (symbolic association with Governor Hogan’s March 16, 2020 closure of schools for national health emergency). Whether the new start date will be possible will be considered by the BOE on February 23. Meanwhile, MCPS will push schools to do more outreach for struggling students and make greater use of Wednesday check ins.

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/publicinfo/community/school-year-2020-2021/community-update-20210112.html>

**Course Load:**

* MCPS agrees with MCCPTA advocacy that all secondary students (MS and HS) may request reduced course load in second semester, and take course over the summer or future semesters. This was a well kept secret that MCPS has been reluctant to promote despite the public health emergency. MCCPTA continues to advocate that this option be available for students in semester 1. For next semester, MCPS considering whether a course can be dropped as late as the end of MP3 (well after the usual 25-day window), but MCCPTA will continue to advocate for no-penalty withdrawal at any time.
* MCPS agrees with MCCPTA advocacy that secondary students may take up to two courses pass/fail (AKA credit/no credit) instead of a letter grade. This was another well kept secret. MCCPTA will continue to advocate that students be able to switch from letter grade to pass/fail during the semester (rather than in advance of semester) due to the pandemic, and that this be allowed/promoted retroactively for semester 1. A pass/fail grade is not counted in GPA.
* MCCPTA continues to request MCPS provide more information and consideration for 2021-22 course registration considering student learning loss in 2020-21, particularly for courses that are traditionally sequential (math and world languages, for example).
* MCCPTA continues to advocate for MCPS leadership to speak out about the necessity of this flexibility during a global pandemic, and for leaders to help fight stigma associated with reduced course loads or fewer letter grades, and to confirm that students making these choices will not face repercussions, other than possibly having to take the course at a later date.

**SAT/ACT/PSAT:**

* MCPS cancelled PSAT for 11th graders that had been scheduled for January 26. Students may opt to take SAT instead, for national merit scholarship consideration.
* If students are back in school buildings this April, then MCPS may offer an in-school SAT day for 11th graders (which could be used for merit scholarship competition in lieu of missing the PSAT this year) and an in-school PSAT day for 10th graders.
* IB Organization reduced IB test content a little, and is still pondering other adaptions:

<https://www.ibo.org/news/news-about-the-ib/covid-19-coronavirus-updates/>

* MCPS told Board of Education yesterday that George B. Thomas Sr. Learning Academy (Saturday School) would offer some sort of AP test preparation. AP teachers might also be compensated by MCPS to provide more tutoring and test prep outside of class hours. Details to come.
* College Board is planning two alternate AP test dates (late May and early June) to allow students more time to learn full course content. Final details next month:

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/exam-dates-and-fees>

* College Board will provide online AP testing, too, which they did for everyone last spring.

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap-20-21/ap-2020-2021>

* College Board posted new AP pacing guides to help teachers who have only covered 25% of material so far, envisioning students doing 30 minutes more, a night, per AP class, for months.

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap-20-21/ap-2020-2021/ap-course-pacing-guides>

**Grading and Reporting (MP2):**

* MCCPTA confirmed with MCPS that reduced homework load and relaxed grading deadlines apply to courses with external assessments, such as AP and IB. While students preparing for AP and IB tests may still have more assignments as part of the test preparation, they should have more time to complete them. Assignments turned in late may still be docked a letter grade.

**Middle School magnet course evaluation**

* MCPS posted a gentle comparison of student performance in middle school magnet programs and students who took magnet-level math or humanities courses in their home middle schools. While some data and comparison of outcomes is better than none, this report is a missed opportunity to compare the difference in student outcomes between home school courses and magnet school courses. Generally, students in the Takoma Park, Roberto Clemente, Eastern, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. middle school magnet programs continued to perform better on standardized testing in sixth grade than students who took the magnet expansion courses in their home middle schools, just as they had in fifth grade. <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/reports/2020/MS_Enriched%20Courses_Magnet%20Program_OSA_Brief_Nov2020FINAL.pdf>
* MCPS posted a gentle comparison of student performance in elementary school magnet programs and students who took the Enriched Literacy Curriculum (ELC) in their home elementary schools. While some data and comparison of outcomes is better than none, this report is a missed opportunity to compare the difference in student outcomes between home school courses and magnet school courses. Generally, students in the elementary Centers for Enriched Studies (CES) continued to perform better on standardized testing than students in the ELC in fourth grade as they had in third grade.

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/reports/2020/CES%20and%20ELC%20Examination%2010Jan2020.pdf>