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The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

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2019-20 MCCPTA ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA) is comprised of 195 local PT(S)As advocating for more than 200,000 students, parents, family members, teachers, staff and administrators of Montgomery County Public Schools. MCCPTA’s priority is to ensure a world-class education in the sciences, mathematics, humanities, civics, and arts for every student, and ensure that every student feels safe, welcome, and valued for being exactly who they are.

● ACCESS TO EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES

MCPS should:

- 1) Review the courses, programs, facilities, placement of highly qualified teachers, and individual school instructional budgets to identify and reduce disparities.
- 2) Create clear and transparent processes to identify students for accelerated courses.
- 3) Implement a plan to address inequities in access to opportunities and expand options, especially in historically disadvantaged groups, to be completed by the end of this fiscal year, allowing for a 60 day period of public comment before final approval. Schools with the highest rates of poverty should be a priority.
- 4) Explore creative solutions, including partnerships with outside organizations, distance learning, and transportation options, to expand access to programs.
- 5) Provide additional resources and more efficiently employ existing resources in underperforming cohorts that have been identified in each school’s Equity Accountability Model.
- 6) Achieve more equity in Independent Activity Funding for each school.
- 7) Share best practices to help address disparities in access to opportunities between schools.
- 8) Provide more consistent, appropriate support for students with special needs (and their families), to promote and enhance participation in general education academic, extracurricular, and social programs and activities.

● CAPITAL FUNDS AND FACILITIES

Legislators should:

- 1) Increase the State and County capital budgets to reduce overcrowding and maintain existing infrastructure.
- 2) Update the Subdivision Staging Policy to ensure school infrastructure matches ongoing development.
- 3) Improve surrounding school facility infrastructure to provide safe routes to schools.

(Capital Funds and Facilities continued)

4) Develop a comprehensive County real estate strategy to serve both immediate and long-term MCPS needs, prioritizing MCPS re-use of County-owned property.

MCPS should:

- 1) Engage students, staff, and school communities when gathering KFI (Key Facility Indicator) data so that it transparently reflects the school experience.
- 2) Obtain more input from the school community before making recommendations for Major Capital Projects in the capital budget.
- 3) When prioritizing construction projects, consider the socioeconomic makeup of the school population as one factor, while acknowledging the condition and overutilization of the building as the main factors.
- 4) Explore alternative calculations of student generation to better project student enrollment.
- 5) Use available facilities more efficiently by engaging with MCCPTA and school communities to consider all available options to reduce disparities in the utilization of school facilities across the county.
- 6) Develop long-term real estate requirements that seek to ensure provision of equitable facility service levels, coordinating with County agencies.

● **INSPECTOR GENERAL OVERSIGHT AND INDEPENDENT OMBUDSMAN**

Legislators should:

- 1) Assign an Inspector General who would have jurisdiction over MCPS.

MCPS should:

- 1) Install an Independent Ombudsman whose sole purpose is to serve as a family advocate for the school system.

● **COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY**

MCPS should:

- 1) Instead of relying mostly on electronic communication, partner with MCCPTA and community organizations to prioritize interpersonal outreach, especially to diverse families in communities with limited Internet access. Implement more door-knocking campaigns, parent and student focus groups, morning/weekend informational gatherings, targeted personal phone calls to families, and text alerts.
- 2) Use the above methods to better inform parents about academic options and districtwide efforts.
- 3) Encourage direct relationships between families and teachers/staff beyond limited Back to School Nights and parent-teacher conferences, clearly articulate this expectation to principals, and follow up to ensure compliance.

(Communication and Transparency continued)

- 4) Offer all materials in multiple languages and in accessible formats for people with disabilities, and expand the availability of interpreters to foster robust two-way engagement with all families.
- 5) When implementing a major program, curriculum, or when considering district-wide changes, provide a minimum of 60 days' notice to families, reserving 50% of all related meetings for parent and student feedback.
- 6) Provide Open Data in a downloadable format to make data more accessible to school communities.
- 7) Accelerate partnership with MCCPTA to develop an integrated strategic communications plan.

● CURRICULUM

MCPS should:

- 1) Implement curriculum that meets the needs of students by including enrichment and appropriate challenges for all children, including students who thrive in on-grade level studies, children with special needs, English language learners, and students who exhibit academic giftedness (and combinations of these).
- 2) Provide professional development for staff implementing existing and new curriculum, including special needs training, to ensure the best outcome for our students.
- 3) Provide curriculum that includes diverse content, culturally-relevant teaching strategies, approaches for different types of learners, and hands-on experiential learning.
- 4) Follow evidence-based best practices for determining appropriate courses to meet the needs of our students.
- 5) Re-evaluate and re-establish as necessary final exam policies that encourage college readiness.
- 6) Ensure students' use of screens/digital media results in positive outcomes by examining the use of digital content in the classroom.

● DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

MCPS should:

- 1) Hire excellent teachers and professional staff and seek to reflect the diversity of the MCPS student body in hiring decisions.
- 2) Develop a plan to address issues of equity and inclusion, recognizing the research showing that truly diverse schools enhance learning for all students.
- 3) Provide staff with implicit bias training and inclusion resources to help in curriculum planning and to address the needs of students in a culturally-competent manner.
- 4) Expand all gender-neutral bathrooms in newly developed schools and as part of renovations.

● HEALTH AND WELLNESS

MCPS should:

- 1) Expand available wellness resources to ensure that all MCPS students have access to appropriate physical and mental health services, including suicide prevention, consistent with the rollout of BeWell365.
- 2) Provide access to addiction services, vaping education, and cessation programs in all secondary schools.
- 3) Expand the pilot program for extended recess in elementary schools.
- 4) Partner with MCCPTA to implement and fund Local School Wellness Councils.
- 5) Implement training for trauma-informed practices among school staff, including the Handle With Care program.
- 6) Test air quality and use health-based standards to guide remediation.
- 7) Continue efforts to have no traceable lead in drinking water and encourage use of reusable water bottles by expanding access to water filling stations.
- 8) Ensure safety of children during outdoor activities by providing school fields and play areas that are properly installed, maintained, and tested for hardness, abrasiveness, and certain known harmful substances such as lead.
- 9) Improve nutrition, quality, and access to school-provided meals and snacks that support the health of our children.
- 10) Acknowledge the climate emergency and work with student leaders to identify and implement policies that will help address this emergency, such as those advocated by the National PTA and MoCo Students On Climate.
- 11) Expand social and emotional learning opportunities for students in younger grades.

● OPERATING FUNDS AND THE KIRWAN COMMISSION

Legislators should:

- 1) Fund the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission (Maryland State Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education) to meet the needs of Montgomery County's diverse population of learners by providing proven high-quality instruction, reducing class sizes in Montgomery County, hiring more teachers, increasing teacher salaries, and providing high-quality early childhood education.

MCPS should:

- 1) Use the Kirwan funds that were assigned to schools with high levels of poverty to fully implement the Commission's recommended Community Schools model, which is intended to close persistent achievement and opportunity gaps by serving the whole child.
- 2) Assign more paraeducators, especially in elementary school, as a cost-effective means of providing students with greater individualized attention.

● SCHOOL CLIMATE AND SAFETY

MCPS should:

- 1) Assess school climate and maintain safe conditions and positive school environments to protect all students and adults from bullying, discrimination, harassment, and assault.
- 2) Expeditiously improve security in all school buildings by providing secure vestibules, expanding video surveillance in and around all buildings and portables, and ensuring adequate security staff at all schools.
- 3) Ensure fidelity in the implementation of policies and protocols related to child protection and safety within all schools and on school buses.
- 4) Provide prompt and transparent reporting of incidents to appropriate authorities and the school community, including incidents within schools, on school buses, criminal activity near schools and criminal activity involving students.
- 5) Reduce disproportionality in discipline by promoting restorative practices.
- 6) Prevent, address and track incidences of bias, discrimination, hate, and sexual harassment.
- 7) Review all walking routes and bus stops to ensure safe routes to school and safe school zones, with the goal of moving bus stops away from high-speed traffic and eliminating overcrowded buses.