**Sub-Committee on School Climate and Safety**

**November 2018**

**Bullying Prevention and Response**

[The Montgomery County Council Youth Town Hall](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ReU5TtfbsFM) took place on October 24th. Bullying was a recurring and prominent theme.

Parents are not clear about what kind of bullying prevention programs exist across the school system. Many schools have interesting and innovative programs underway, but there does not seem to be a way to measure/assess what is happening across the district. Last year, MCCPTA advocated for an inventory and assessment of programs. We were pleased to see this included under Recommendations 6.1 and 6.2 of the [strategic plan for school safety and security](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/security/Security-Report/0900.18_SchoolSafetySecurity_KEYPRIORITIES_web.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2q2mKnKxm8f92DTAvoEdaQW5mrDNhe1vRZzGncXzeB7JMLKMufsprywLw): (6.1) "Conduct a systemwide inventory of all school-sponsored prevention and early-intervention programs currently operated by individual high schools." (6.2) "From the inventory of all school-sponsored prevention and early-intervention programs currently operated in high schools, develop a plan to assess each programs’ efficacy and effectiveness (e.g., reduction in number of disciplinary incidents, overall school climate, overall student achievement)."

The Superintendent offered [this overview of bullying resources](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/boe/meetings/memorandum/181114%20Bullying%20Resources%20BD.pdf) to the Board of Education on November 14th.

To report bullying, harassment, or intimidation within MCPS, use [this form](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/forms/detail.aspx?formNumber=230-35&catID=1&subCatId=44).

For more information on state-level anti-bullying laws and regulations, see [this resource](https://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/maryland/index.html).

**Athletic Culture and Safety**

Following the [October 31 sexual assault in a Damascus High School locker room](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/extraordinarily-violent-and-cruel-prosecutor-describes-sex-assault-case-at-damascus-high-school/2018/11/26/a48dde98-f19d-11e8-aeea-b85fd44449f5_story.html?fbclid=IwAR1DuFfwZzeVpu5kTCFgxFN7lx8QI-AnWNI3eEaFeoF7-bJWpiPYr7cRaoA&utm_term=.f28f9b1d95db), parents have expressed significant concern regarding the culture/climate of MCPS athletic departments and sports teams. The following information and resources have been shared since the assault:

* [Superintendent’s message](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/publicinfo/community/school-year-2018-2019/Damascus.html) (November 3)
* [A video message to MCPS Students about Bullying, Harassment and Hazing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9j-1DGvKRc&feature=youtu.be) (November 5)
* [Letter to the MCPS sports community from Athletic Director Jeffrey Sullivan](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/athletics/sports/Letter%20to%20MCPS%20Sports%20Community.pdf) (November 7)
* [Letter from Damascus High School Principal Casey Crouse](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/DHS_Community_Letter_11-8-18.pdf) (November 8)
* [MCPS Athletics](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/athletics/): links to information and resources about hazing and promoting a safe and positive school sports culture

Of interest, [Coaching Boys Into Men](http://www.coachescorner.org/) (CBIM) is a free program within Montgomery County, made available through the Family Justice Center's [Choose Respect](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/chooserespect/) initiative. FJC has also begun piloting a similar program for female athletes, [Athletes as Leaders](https://www.athletesasleaders.org/). Coaching Boys Into Men is a national program that utilizes the unique and important role that coaches play in the lives of young men. It includes a comprehensive toolkit that assists coaches in planning important discussions with athletes about respect for themselves, each other, women and girls, and that violence does not equal strength. Currently, CBIM is being implemented at Blair, Magruder, Northwest, Richard Montgomery, Rockville, and Springbrook High Schools, and Parkland Middle School. MCCPTA is urging MCPS to take this program to scale, ensuring that it is implemented in *ALL* MCPS middle and high school athletic departments.

MCCPTA has also proposed scheduling a MCPS-MCCPTA community discussion on climate and culture within MCPS athletic departments and sports teams in the near future, once the Damascus investigation has closed.

**School Climate**

Recent state law requires that all public schools in Maryland survey students about school climate. Starting in the 2018-2019 school year, all teachers and students in grades 5-11 will take the [Maryland School Survey](http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DCAA/DataCollections/MarylandSchoolSurvey.aspx). The survey underwent a field test through Nov. 12.  It will be accessible to all students and teachers beginning in Spring 2019. The purpose of the survey is to gain valuable information about the quality and character of each school’s learning environment so that schools can promote a climate that supports student learning. The survey will ask students about topics such as student engagement, interactions with adults and with other students in the school, the school environment, bullying, and safety. The survey will not ask about a student’s personal experiences, and students will not be asked to provide any information that might violate his or her privacy. The survey is confidential and school personnel will not have access to the responses of specific students. The responses your child provides will be combined with the responses from other students in the school, and results will be reported for each school and district. School leaders will use results to learn about and improve the school community.

MCPS also conducts its own [survey about learning environment](http://sharedaccountability.mcpsmd.org/SurveyResults/content.php). Survey findings can be used to monitor continuous improvement efforts and inform school improvement goals.

School climate is also an important feature of the MCPS [strategic plan for school safety and security](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/security/Security-Report/0900.18_SchoolSafetySecurity_KEYPRIORITIES_web.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2q2mKnKxm8f92DTAvoEdaQW5mrDNhe1vRZzGncXzeB7JMLKMufsprywLw):

* KEY PRIORITY AREA #1 Data-driven accountability for school safety and positive school culture as a system priority across MCPS
  + RECOMMENDATION #1.1: Make school safety and school climate as high a priority as academic performance by including safety metrics in the accountability framework for the district, as well as all schools and departments, and ensuring that this metric is taken into account in evaluations of MCPS employees.
  + RECOMMENDATION #1.2: Develop a year-round communications campaign to promote school safety and positive school culture.
  + RECOMMENDATION #1.3: Support systemwide implementation of MCPS’s new online incident management system for the 2017–2018 school year.
  + RECOMMENDATION #1.4: Convene regular meetings of senior staff, focused on monitoring security data, coordinating responses to critical incidents, addressing issues that arise in the implementation of strategies related to security and school climate, and reviewing lessons learned to identify opportunities for continuous improvement.
  + RECOMMENDATION #1.5: Implement annual systemwide surveys of school climate for students and staff at every school and incorporate feedback into school safety and school climate planning. Use students in the design of the surveys and prevention/intervention programming.
    - Design and implement school climate action plans.
  + RECOMMENDATION #1.6: Develop a “School Climate” dashboard to provide an online monitoring tool for school climate data, as well as critical safety data, including arrests, bullying and harassment, gang incidents, truancy and chronic absenteeism, and school discipline

[MCPS School Safety and Security at a Glance](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/safetyglance/)provides information about the reporting of incidents related to school safety and security, school climate, local school safety program descriptions, and serious incidents. Information is presented for each school. A County summary is available [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/regulatoryaccountability/SafetyGlance/currentyear/schools/county.pdf).

We will be following up with MCPS/OSFSE to learn more about all of the above. Our next meeting is on December 14th.

Gillian Huebner, Chair

MCCPTA sub-committee on school climate and safety

November 27, 2018