

Overview:

OH FOR THE LOVE! There is a lot going on. Apologies for all the things I'm forgetting!

Late December/Early January Meetings:

12/10 – MCPS/MCCPTA Meeting with Damascus Parent Leadership
12/12 – District Assessment Committee (Cancelled)
12/17 – Executive Committee Meeting with Dr. Smith
12/17 – MCCPTA/BOE Roundtable Discussions
12/18 – Curriculum Committee Meeting
12/18 – MCCPTA Legislative Reception
1/5 -- MCCPTA Operating Budget Workshop
1/8 – MCPS BOE Meeting – Public Comment on behalf of MCCPTA
1/8 – OSSI Director Meeting
1/9 – BOE Operating Budget Hearing

Activity Summary:

- **Curriculum** – MCPS has selected the curriculum for Math (k-5), Math (6-8) and ELA (6-8). This purchase was approved at MCPS BOE meeting on January 8th. On behalf of MCCPTA, I provided testimony and provided specific suggestions based on input from MCCPTA members that participated throughout the process.
 - Create strong feed forward and feedback mechanisms to keep community apprised.
 - Schedule meetings with the special populations – English language learners, students with disabilities, and students needing accelerated and enriched instruction – to ensure they are clear on the opportunities for their students.
 - Commit to track by school and by class how screens are used in the classrooms.

Testimony available at --

[https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/B894CS52A277/\\$file/Cynthia%20Simonson.pdf](https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/B894CS52A277/$file/Cynthia%20Simonson.pdf)

- **Transitions/Course Selections** – **REPEATED TOPIC FROM LAST MONTH!** If you know me, you probably know, this is my “personal passion project!” Next month, middle and high schools will begin talking to students about what courses they should take next year and I continue to challenge MCPS to elevate these decisions with students/families. Last year, we still had “gatekeeping” occurring where students were not permitted to take courses because they weren’t in a certain grade. We still had counselors putting kids into courses they aren’t interested in taking because “there is room.” We heard from several parents this year about the concerns they had when their student was placed in honors courses having barely passed the prerequisite and by the time they yell “mercy” they were told “too late to move out of the course.” I know we can do this better! Who’s with me?
- **Bridge Projects** – **REPEATED TOPIC FROM LAST MONTH!** I’m repeating this piece from last month because I’m not sure how well folks are connecting to this point and **I think this may be worth discussing as we go into the Operating Budget season.**

The chart below (in red) represents the number of students that didn’t pass PARCC 10 ELA last May (passing this test with a 3 or better is a graduation requirement currently). In just a few conversations with parents of students that are currently on Bridge Projects (and looking on the MCPS site), there are two concerns – 1) what is the actual “process” schools follow when a student doesn’t pass PARCC 10 ELA and 2) do we have adequate staffing to support more than a quarter of our students that will likely have to complete these Bridge Projects to be eligible for graduation.

I’ve had this conversation with several MCPS staff in the last month and this is a growing concern. What I am challenging us to all think about is the timing of these bridge projects. The process is a local one (each

school does it differently) – so highly organized schools may be following one proactive pathway while another school may find themselves scrambling to meet these students’ needs.

2018 Results for English Language Arts Grade 10 All Students										
Show # Descriptions »	Exceeded (5)		Met (4)		Approached (3)		Partially Met (2)		Not Met (1)	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
2018										
TOTAL Students	23.6	<u>3148</u> 13325	32.6	<u>4341</u> 13325	16.5	<u>2205</u> 13325	11.7	<u>1558</u> 13325	15.6	<u>2073</u> 13325

- **Operating Budget Notes for record...**

Professional Development Needs

(Background -- having time available and access to highly skilled individuals to support the teachers in necessary for the student/teacher success.)

- New Curriculum (k-8)
 - Ensure in "operational excellence" focus area, the professional development platform includes the ability to conduct on-line peer sessions with smaller modules (~1 hour) that would not take teachers out of the building for large chunks of the day strictly to participate in discussion groups.
- World Studies and Math Expansion Courses (6-8)
 - It's unclear how the PD will work with these courses while schools are also rolling out the new ELA/Math curriculum. Request assurance clusters that will implement universal screening in spring 19 for the first time will keep this PD priority.
- Advanced Placement (AP) courses at high school
 - Professional Development is needed for teachers that have struggled year after year to prepare students for the exams.
 - To our system's credit, College Board hires dozens of MCPS teachers to serve as "graders/readers" and score AP tests from across the country.
 - Currently, these graders/readers are required to use personal leave to attend these scoring sessions (and whether they can attend is at the discretion of the principal)
 - OCIP has mentioned on multiple occasions, the "grader" experience is the best "professional development" an AP teacher can receive.
 - We are advocating for these College Board-selected teachers have their leave considered professional leave AND we request these selected teachers be "peer mentors" to provide professional development/insights for teachers across the county teaching these particular disciplines -- particularly in schools with multi-year scores that are below the county median.

Strengthen College/Career Pathways --

(Background -- every college and career pathway generally begins with meeting the graduation requirements. Beginning with this year's graduates, students must *pass* the ELA PARCC10 or if the student is unable to pass the PARCC10 after 2 attempts, they may complete a Bridge Project. The last several years, students were only required to *take* the exam, not required to *pass*.)

- "Bridge" Project Impacts -- With the current requirement to pass the ELA PARCC10 and the introduction of next year's Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA) "passing" requirement, we are growing increasingly concerned about the impact and communications surrounding these projects.
 - Request MCPS create a budget line item for the following:

- Ensure funding to support clear information for families that will be sent immediately following any assessment "failure" and will clearly outline the next steps. This process and the impacts should no longer be handled through "word of mouth" transmittal.
- Ensure funding is available for staff to support students through the Bridge Projects. It is unclear if there is funding allocated specifically to support staff that are necessary, particularly in schools where students may be completing multiple bridge projects simultaneously.

NEW ASKS -- Curriculum Enhancement

- Reconsider suggestion to review social studies curriculum to build stronger "Civics" courses in Middle School.
- Multicultural & Diversity
 - Heritage Months added; on curriculum websites now, but not widely distributed.

Communications

(Background -- what is available, how to access, what to ask, when to expect -- this is a mystery for even the most engaged parent trying to navigate MCPS. Even the parents that work for the system find themselves consistently surprised.)

- Encourage MCPS to implement a feedback loop to determine if information is making it to the communities as Central Office intended. Lots of great information is generated but too often, MCPS relies on information to pass through multiple channels before reaching the end user -- far too often, the message never arrives. This concern is compounded with our ESOL and impacted communities.

Transparent Programming for G/T students

- Identify those schools that OSA identified as having a cohort to implement Elementary Literacy Curriculum (ELC) but chose not to implement. How are those students needs being met instead?
- Identify for parents of students that meet the G/T designation but are in schools without the ELC what (precisely) students should be accessing? What questions should parents ask and how can they verify students have access to William & Mary, Junior Great Books, and Lucy Caulkins Writing.
- Outline how "grouping" occurs at middle school in mixed-level courses. What guidance are schools following to ensure teachers are not struggling with too many learning bands within a single class.
- Expand entry point to accelerated math (currently only at 3rd grade, expand entry point at 6th grade)

Transparent Programming for G/T students

- There are more than 30% students from all racial/ethnic background identified as G/T within MCPS. MCPS shall measure its success also with proper a G/T education framework and results.
- Elementary Schools
 - Ensure the continuity and the quality of programs (CES, Math 4/5 and 5/6, ELC) and proper pathways in the new K-8 curriculum.
 - Ensure G/T students have room to grow within the assessment framework. The latest grading scheme capped the performance at the on grade level. We would like to see that students achieved top letter grade could still have chances to grow. And desirably such a growth can be properly measured even beyond ES or A grade. Well, an example for consideration is our Fed

- government pay grade. For many branches, there are GS-n grades (n is a number between 1-15). There are options for employees to go beyond GS-15.
- Ensure English literacy is properly taught beyond basic reading/writing. Majority of students including G/T students at the end of 5th grade are not exposed to English literacy even though they can read / write. They are not aware of names of great English authors and any of their works. This seriously limits their potential in their future development in reading/writing and reasoning.
 - Support teachers with right materials including HW materials. Teachers are pulling HW materials from various sources. Some may not be with the right quality. MCPS shall consider taking an initiative to identify a range of resources and assess their qualities and matching students' levels.
 - - Middle Schools
 - Ensure the continuity and the quality of the cohort based programs and pathways in the new K-8 curriculum.
 - Balancing the heavy load in 4-year HS to 7-year MS/HS. While many parents and stake holder groups criticizing the work load in HS is too high, we would like to urge MCPS to consider strengthening the core offerings in MS curriculum. It can potentially balance the load to a 7 year period instead of heavily loading the last 4. In this way, students can have good chance to get ready both mentally and physically.
 - Enhance our middle school science curriculum. Science curriculum is a big one-size-fits-all STEM subject today. We would like to see either different pathways similar to the math pathways or a stronger offering. To many G/T students, today's science curriculum is shallow if not childish. A recent 6th grade homework passed to me requires students to draw fish/flower/grass etc. It is very elementary level.
 - Consider adding a new English pathway for G/T students or making advanced English truly advanced. In many MS, where only adv English is offered, there is no transparency of how advanced courses are.
 - High Schools
 - Add one FTE to AEI for supporting HS. There is currently no HS specialist in AEI after the last budget cut.
 - Other
 - Improving communications: Within MCPS, there is a tendency to contrast under-served students and others. Unfortunately, G/T students are viewed by default as "over-served" implicitly. In reality, there is rarely any student get over-served with MCPS due to lack of funding. The so-called good elementary schools are with classes as large as 28 or 29 students. Instead of being over-served, G/T students are a large group of students with their needs insufficiently addressed. We hope to see an improved communication which does not alienate G/T students and their families. They are assets of our society as others.