

## **2020-21 MCCPTA ADVOCACY PRIORITIES**

Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA) comprises 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 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. Audit every MCPS school and their individual budgets to identify and reduce disparities in courses offered, diversity of staff, and access to academic resources. This audit should identify existing resources in MCPS and best practices.
2. Implement a plan to address academic and recreational inequities in access to opportunities and expand options, especially in historically disadvantaged groups, with a priority of implementation given to schools with higher poverty rates. This plan should highlight partnerships with community-based organizations, increased transportation options, and distance learning opportunities.
3. Provide additional resources in underperforming cohorts that have been identified in each school's Equity Accountability Model. Create clear and transparent processes that are specific, measurable, accessible, realistic, and time-oriented to identify and enroll students of color in accelerated courses.
4. Provide more consistent, appropriate support for students with special needs and their families: this should include promoting and enhancing participation in general education, academic, extracurricular, and social programs and activities.
5. Provide adequate equipment, including a physical center in digital deserts, and additional online support during the Covid emergency. In-school opportunities should prioritize students in special populations or that show need due to financial hardship.

### **CAPITAL FUNDS AND FACILITIES**

*Legislators should:*

1. Increase the State and County capital budgets to reduce overcrowding and maintain existing infrastructure.
2. Update the Growth Policy to ensure school infrastructure matches ongoing development. The policy should ensure that the county and MCPS planning departments collaborate to develop a comprehensive strategy to serve both immediate and long-term MCPS needs.
3. Direct additional funds to schools in order to provide a healthy environment during the Covid emergency, including upgrades to HVAC systems.

*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. Resume the practice of inviting MCCPTA to meetings with the MCPS Planning Department while preparing the Superintendent's proposed Capital Budget.

## **2020-21 MCCPTA ADVOCACY PRIORITIES**

3. When prioritizing construction projects, consider the socioeconomic makeup of the school population as a 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. Reduce disparities in the utilization of school facilities by engaging with MCCPTA and school communities to consider all available options, including adjacent capacity.

### **INDEPENDENT OMBUDSMAN AND OPEN DATA**

*MCPS should:*

1. Install an Independent Ombudsman whose sole purpose is to serve as a family advocate for the school system.
2. Provide Open Data in a downloadable format and share on all MCPS platforms to make data more accessible to school communities.

### **COMMUNICATION**

*MCPS should:*

1. 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. 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. Require a second semester parent-teacher conference in order to ensure clear communication throughout the year.
3. 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. Offer translation services during video conference meetings with the community.
4. 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.

### **CURRICULUM**

*MCPS should:*

1. Implement a curriculum that meets the needs of our diverse student population by including enrichment and appropriate challenges for all children. The curriculum should include culturally-relevant teaching strategies, approaches for different types of learners, and hands-on experiential learning. This should be consistently delivered during distance learning.
2. Provide professional development for staff implementing existing and new curriculum.
3. Re-evaluate and re-establish as necessary final exam policies that encourage college readiness.

## **2020-21 MCCPTA ADVOCACY PRIORITIES**

4. Ensure students' use of screens/digital media results in positive outcomes by examining the use of digital content in the classroom and through distance learning and offer paper-based alternatives for those families who prefer it.

### **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

*MCPS should:*

1. Hire qualified teachers and support staff that reflect the diversity of the MCPS student body.
2. Develop a plan to address issues of diversity and inclusion, recognizing the research showing that truly diverse schools enhance learning for all students.
3. Provide staff with training and resources to help in curriculum planning in order 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, implement Local School Wellness Councils, and increase staff to ensure that all MCPS students have access to appropriate physical and mental health support. Students should have access to suicide prevention, addiction services, vaping education, and cessation programs in all secondary schools.
2. Expand the pilot program for extended recess in elementary schools when we return to school buildings. Include outdoor education when possible, within CDC guidelines, even when distance learning is in effect.
3. Implement training for trauma-informed practices among school staff, including the Handle With Care program.
4. Test air quality and use health-based standards to guide remediation. Also ensure HVAC systems are updated to increase ventilation and filtration in order to reduce exposure to Covid-19.
5. Continue efforts to have no traceable lead in drinking water and encourage use of reusable water bottles by expanding access to filtered water filling stations, especially to schools whose PTA's cannot afford to provide these stations.
6. 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.

## **2020-21 MCCPTA ADVOCACY PRIORITIES**

7. Improve nutrition, quality, and access to school-provided meals and snacks that support the health of our children. Expand access by delivering food closer to student's homes during the Covid-19 Emergency.
8. 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.
9. Use health-based metrics when deciding to re-open schools, with the health of teachers, staff, students, administration, and the safety of the community prioritized. When in-person school resumes, provide each school with adequate PPE, cleaning supplies, maintenance staff, Covid-19 tests, and strict protocols when Covid-19 is detected.
10. Uphold MSDE's Digital Best Practices in the Classroom so that screen time guidelines are adhered to. Include this in summer trainings for teachers.
11. Ensure that all in-class apps and extensions used by teachers are vetted/approved through MCPS's Office of the Chief Technology Officer's Online Digital Tools portal. This helps avoid federal FERPA, COPPA and CIPA violations.

### **OPERATING FUNDS**

*Legislators should:*

1. Fund the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission (Maryland State Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education) in order to meet the needs of Montgomery County's diverse population of learners.
2. Appropriately fund the MCPS budget in order to hire more teachers and staff to achieve class size reduction and to provide more resources to special populations.

*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 and ensuring adequate security staff at all schools.
3. Provide prompt and transparent reporting of incidents to appropriate authorities and the school community, including incidents within schools, on school buses, and criminal activity near schools.
4. Reduce disproportionality in discipline by promoting restorative practices.

## **2020-21 MCCPTA ADVOCACY PRIORITIES**

5. Prevent, address and track incidences of bias, discrimination, hate, bullying on social media during and after school hours, and sexual harassment. Provide student and staff culturally-competent support to address the mental health outcomes due to incidences.
6. 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. Implement a safe routes plan when building or renovating schools.