

**Mid-March - Mid April Meetings:**

- 3/11 Meeting with Dep Superintendent, Area Assoc Sups, and AVPs
- 3/14 LGBTQ – Meeting on curriculum and student information system concerns
- 3/19 Testimony/Press Conference with County Council on lead issues
- 3/20 Montgomery College – Strategic Plan Meeting
- 3/20 Dual Enrollment Meeting – Rockville Campus
- 3/21 Focus Group (BOD, MCPS, Other Leaders) on Local Accountability Model
- 3/26 Delegates Assembly
- 3/27 Focus Group – HS Programming
- 3/28 FAA-RA – input session on current status
- 4/8 District Assessment Committee Meeting
- 4/8 Community Session -- HS Programming
- 4/8 Local Accountability Model Roll Out – Magruder HS
- 4/9 Vendor Presentations – Middle School Curriculum
- 4/10 Boundary Discussion – JFK HS

**Activity Summary:**

- **AVP meetings with OSSI** – In November 2018, February 2019, and again in March 2019, the AVPs met with Deputy Superintendent (DAS) Statham and the three Area Associate Superintendents to discuss several topics. Two critical items that raised:
  - We continue to ask questions about the current course offerings at the High Schools, gathered from publicly available sources that suggests a number of schools intend to proceed with “one size fits all” programming in several disciplines next year.
  - AVPs began conversation with the DAS and AAS about Principalships. In the current environment, principals do not have to “repost” for positions even if it has been decades since they were appointed at a school. For some schools, the longevity of a principal works really well. But there are instances where principals may not have grown with a community or be a good fit for the current needs even though they might have been ideal when they were appointed a decade before (or more). There is nothing particularly egregious to warrant an administrative dismissal but there also isn’t a mechanism to explore whether a community could benefit from new, fresh leadership that could help reinvigorate a community after a long tenure. To be continued...
- **Local Accountability Model Rollout** – MCPS will do 9 “community meetings” held in various parts of the county to encourage schools and communities to discuss the finding in the local accountability piece. BOD had a “sneak preview” of the information last month. A few key items I’d encourage our parents to have as expectations going forward.
  - Make it printable! The Dashboard does not allow for any comparison from school to school and because there is no print feature, Cluster Coordinators can’t see easily how one school is doing compared to another nearby school.
  - Provide more easily navigable background material. There is neither “%” nor “N” attributed to the “monitoring group” or any of the “focus groups.” An easy upgrade could be to link the “Schools-at-a-Glance” report to the Dashboard so parents can easily see the makeup of the school as they review the scores achieved.

- Mobility is not considered. Our focus groups also represent our most mobile student groups and I'd like to see mobility considered.
- Several references were made at both the BOD focus group meeting and the community meeting to this work being tied to the School Improvement Plan. Some schools encourage parent participation in School Improvement Plans (SIP) and other schools will not allow parents to participate. I'd like to see MCPS revisit the "Baldrige" expectations of including parent voice in SIP going forward.
- **District Assessment Committee** – The work of this group will be coming to a close on May 30<sup>th</sup> after delivery of our recommendations to the Board of Education. We have looked at all the state and district assessments (by high, middle, and elementary) and are preparing our recommendations for how MCPS will comply with "Less Testing, More Learning" requirement to limit testing to 2.2%
- **Field Trips** – After several months, finally, the full list was posted (previous posted from the budget questions only included A-S schools). This doesn't address the real questions I had – how many students were on each of these trips and how much did the trip cost? With more detail, we can use this as a tool – maybe there are some lower cost field trips that can be accessed by schools that traditionally see cost as a barrier. MCPS couldn't provide these numbers easily now but will consider those upgrades next year. Someone remind me to ask for it! ; )
- **Montgomery College** – I had the opportunity to sit in on the MC Strategic Planning session. DID YOU KNOW 25% of MCPS graduates go on to MC immediately following graduation? DID YOU KNOW 60% of MCPS graduates will take at least one course at MC within two years of graduation? Those are STAGGERING statistics and yet, as a parent of college bound students, I've never heard (not once) anyone discuss how MC can be a part of a student's plan (even if the "goal" is to go to a traditional 4 year university immediately after graduation). I can't wait to talk about this further. Who knew students come home in December and take a biology class (or other gen ed class) during winter term because the 300 person lecture style at the University wasn't working for him/her? I can't wait to wade further into this! Who's with me?
- **Future High School Programming** – Our Curriculum and Gifted Child Committees will provide more detail on MCPS plans going forward. All I want to raise, is concern about the lack of oversight related to Advanced Placement courses and High School Signature programs. Below are excerpts from an email I sent to MCPS after attending the focus group meeting.

*Where I'd urge MCPS to focus leading up to Phase 1 is the quality of offerings at our home high schools. Keep in mind, many of the academies and signature programs integrate AP courses into the structure of those academies and signature programs. There are two specific concerns I'd like to ensure are included in MCPS plans going forward that I'm hoping MCPS will include in the plans leading up to Phase 1 implementation.*

*The map shown the other evening included signature/academies in the offerings across our county. In truth, there is no actual "oversight" at the central level to ensure the QUALITY of these offerings and the focus of these signature programs can be very unclear. For academies (i.e., PLTW, AOF), there is a national criteria so there is a little more structure and possible oversight/support. But signature programs (i.e., PEAC, Ulysses) are homegrown and can be "hit or miss" when it comes to purpose and quality. At my high school, the highest performing students often do NOT participate. Though this program is touted as "a rigorous opportunity as an*

*alternative to having to leave the home high school to attend the test-in magnets" there is no "AEI" oversight and/or professional development to ensure there is strong instruction. I've been asking about these signature programs for several years and while there is plenty of "information sharing" facilitated through DCCAP for the signature program coordinators, Central Office takes no responsibility for the signature programs and will not intervene if there is something particularly concerning about the structure/offerings/requirements.*

*Second, AP courses... I've been raising this concern for three years and MCPS has yet to wade it to provide any oversight on the quality of the AP courses being offered. The Office of Curriculum Instruction and Programs has been very clear the content is governed by College Board and the selection of teachers is handled by the principals. In some schools, this "hands off approach" works fine. But, for some of our high schools, this "hands off approach" has led to some very poorly designed AP classes that are being promoted as preparing students for college-level courses and yet the exam results call into question what was being taught.*

- There is no central oversight regarding the teacher qualifications for teaching AP courses (AP teachers are encouraged, but not required, to get any College Board training prior to teaching an AP course -- which the system will pay the course fee but the time is not a reimbursed expense).*
  - There is no central oversight regarding what is taught (College Board provides multiple outlines/approaches and each teacher -- whether trained or untrained -- chooses for themselves how to teach the course).*
  - There is no central oversight with regard to the resources provided for the students (across our county, different text books are being used from class-to-class and strong teachers may point students to an abundance of other resources -- online quizlets, supplementary review books, flash cards, youtube videos -- while other teachers simply encourage review of class lectures to prepare for the AP exam).*
  - There is no "information sharing" among the teachers that are all teaching the same AP course across the county but experiencing very different exam results. We have a number of teachers scattered across our high schools that serve as "readers" (those that are paid by College Board to score the AP exams each year). We have no mechanism to use these experienced readers as mentors for teachers where students are getting As in the course being taught but not passing the College Board exams.*
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- **Absenteeism vs. Attendance Rates** – There is a big difference between what the State reports in the MD Report Card under “absenteeism” and what MCPS reports in the Student-at-a-Glance report under “attendance.” I’d like for our body to be paying more attention to these differences.
  - **MISA** – This month, the State Board of Education unanimously voted to put language out for public comment that would extend the date for students being required to “pass” the MISA to graduate to begin in the 21-22 school year (so the first year “passing” is applicable will be for current day 8<sup>th</sup> graders). As soon as this is posted for public comment I will circulate through e-lists with sample language for our county to send in support of delaying implementation. (Original request to MSDE is attached.)

February 20, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations (MCCPTA), we request your immediate attention to the COMAR outlining the assessments necessary to meet Maryland High School graduation requirements.

Specifically, we are concerned about the current requirement wherein students taking the Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA) in 2019-20 school year (and after) must *pass* the assessment to meet the Maryland Graduation Requirements. Over the last few months, on behalf of our association of parents, teachers, and students, our leadership has been asking for clarification about what score is *passing* for this particular assessment. We are troubled to learn cut scores will not be available until after August 2019.

For a “high stakes test,” this timing is not adequate for teachers to support our students. Teachers use prior year results to identify areas that may require re-teaching and/or gaps in the current curriculum that may need attention. Of equal concern, at this time MSDE has not defined the Bridge option that will be available to students. This creates a tremendous amount of anxiety for students that for one reason or another may require alternate means to demonstrate proficiency. Currently, there is no firm date for when State-developed, Statewide Bridge scoring protocols will be released.

We believe we all want the same thing – to see our students successfully meet the challenges placed before them. But, with the delayed release of information from MSDE, we respectfully request the following provision be amended to include an additional year, 2019-2020, wherein *taking* the MISA will meet the graduation assessment requirement for science.

(3) For all students taking the Maryland Integrated Science Assessment in the 2017—2018 and 2018—2019 school years, taking the Maryland Integrated Science Assessment will meet the graduation assessment requirement for science.

On behalf of our organization and the students we serve, thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me for clarification at [vpeducation@mccpta.org](mailto:vpeducation@mccpta.org) or by phone at 301.503.1044. Respectfully,



Cynthia Simonson  
MCCPTA, Vice President of Educational Issues

cc: MCCPTA Board of Directors