Curriculum Committee Report Submitted by: Michelle Gluck

January 2022 curriculum@mccpta.org

**Meetings/Calls/Events**

12/7/21 MSDE GTAC meeting

12/8/21 AEI Feedback Council

12/10 /21 Curriculum Committee meeting

12/13 /21 Budget Advisory Committee meeting

1/2/22 Budget Advisory Committee “Deeper Dive” meeting

1/8/22 Budget Testimony workshop

1/14/22 Curriculum Committee meeting

1/18/22 BOE Budget Hearing

**Upcoming**

1/19/22 BOD meeting

1/25/22 Delegates Assembly

1/26/22 OCIP/Curriculum meeting (to be confirmed)

1/27/22 Meeting with Montgomery County Jewish Parents’ Coalition

**Key Developments**

1. **Budget Testimony**

This year, MCCPTA tasked committee chairs with testifying on county-wide advocacy points in our respective subject matter areas. I submitted testimony on behalf of the Curriculum Committee. The link to the virtual testimony can be found here:

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!AiOSY_Al7dp7jlHT4JYeWoDmiMOc?e=DNytkS>

The written testimony is included as an appendix to this report.

Highlights of the Committee’s testimony include:

* Support for the use of ESSER money to provide 1:1 and small group instruction outside the classroom for students who have suffered the most learning loss.
* Concern abou the use of ESSER money to fund positions and interventions that should be more permanent.
* Support for restoration of certain OCIP specialist positions that have been lost to budget cuts, attrition, and hostility to central oversight.
* Advocacy for the BOE to start budgeting money to collect and assess data on the efficacy of new curricula, interventions, and other promising but unproven ideas.
* Advocacy for a longer-term vision for the Virtual Academy, which could become a silver lining of the pandemic if it is used to equalize access to curriculum offerings across the county.

1. **Meetings meetings meetings**
2. Curriculum Committee meeting registration

The committee meets every second Friday at noon. Starting with the Jan. 14 meeting, Curriculum Committee meetings are open by registration to members of the community (please don’t have people email me anymore.) The registration link can be found at: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIlc-GrrD4jGdCEFBgZo6RfbGnBtXj0hiRu>

Recent topics of discussion have included:

* Lack of curriculum coordination in the dual language immersion programs
* Frustration with poor planning for quarantined secondary students.
* Opacity around learning loss in general.
* Lack of parent access to online curriculum materials
* Inconsistency in AP offerings across high schools

1. Meetings with MCPS Administrators
2. OCIP

The OCIP meeting scheduled for 1/12/22 will be rescheduled (tentative date: 1/26/22) as the Carver staff were called to serve as substitutes in schools on 1/12.

1. Curriculum Advisory Assembly

The CAA scheduled for 1/20/22 has been cancelled to allow the Carver staff to serve as substitutes in schools.

1. AEI Feedback Council

In response to unanimous feedback after the first meeting, the Dec. 12 meeting was expanded from 60 to 90 minutes. We discussed the need to expand access to the ELC, the inferiority of the Benchmark Advance “enrichment” and the potential for using the Virtual Academy to increase access to accelerated and advanced curriculum opportunities. I also advocated for MCPS’s continued participation in the MSDE GTAC, where the previous AEI Supervisor had been an active leader.

1. Other meetings
2. MSDE GT Advisory Committee

At the GTAC quarterly meeting in December, we heard a really excellent presentation on equity in gifted education from Joy Lawson Davis, PhD, which I commended to AEI and anyone else who would listen. Her central premise is that cohorting is necessary to support gifted students from underrepresented groups, who otherwise often end up overlooked and without advocates.

<https://www.giftedunlimitedllc.com/joy-lawson-davis-edd.html>

Testimony of Michelle Gluck on behalf of the MCCPTA Curriculum Committee

Dr. McKnight, MCPS leaders, and Members of the Board:

My name is Michelle Gluck and I am the Chair of the MCCPTA Curriculum Committee. This is my 8th year on the MCCPTA Board, on which I’ve held a variety of positions, and my 16th year as an MCPS parent. I am also the proud product of 19 years of public education. I mention all of this at the outset so that you will know that I come to you today with the perspective of someone who has seen a lot of budgets, a lot of budget testimony, a lot of ruminating about the purposes of public education, and a lot of unkept promises about how needs that are not explicitly included in budgets will be met.

Our biggest concern about this budget is its myopia. It is too narrowly focused on near-term priorities. In particular, it devotes one-time pandemic funding to positions that should be part of a longer-term strategic plan. We support many of the initiatives born of necessity due to pandemic-induced learning crises, but we are concerned about the sustainability of those initiatives.

I’d like to start by commending to your attention some features of the budget that we believe deserve particular support.

The pandemic has exacerbated and brought into sharp relief the wide disparity of learning levels in many schools and classrooms. Supporting students whose preexisting challenges and pandemic-induced learning losses leave them far behind their grade-level peers has never been more critical.

We applaud and commend the use of ESSER money to provide **1:1 and small group tutoring** to students whose needs for support to recover from learning loss exceed what any teacher can be expected to deliver through scaffolding in a regular classroom setting. We hope, in fact, that future budgets will recognize that there have long been many students who have languished because teachers were expected to meet them where they were while teaching a class full of students at several different levels. We hope you will plan and budget to continue to provide that extra 1:1 and/or cohorted support to students whose needs are significantly different from the average level of their grade or classroom.

We applaud the use of **expanded summer school** to recover from learning loss, and we hope that future budgets will consider how targeted summer school can supplement the regular school year for students at all levels of achievement.

We applaud the development of the **Virtual Academy** to allow students to learn outside their assigned school buildings, although we are disappointed that there has been no discussion or money devoted to the idea of **using the Virtual Academy to** **expand and equalize course offerings across schools**. Many secondary students are deprived of the opportunity to partake of classes offered to their MCPS peers – for example, middle school computer science, or specialized high school AP classes -- because their home schools lack the teaching expertise or a large enough cohort to allow their schools to offer those classes. The Virtual Academy has the potential to be a silver lining of the pandemic by creating a structure for students to benefit from the expertise of teachers at other schools and/or create a critical mass online for a class they can’t take at their home schools due to staffing formulas. We hope that future budgets will sustain and expand the Virtual Academy to promote equitable learning opportunities across the entire county.

We also feel that this budget, like many before it, is missing certain critical components that should be funded.

MCPS is not just a collection of schools, it is a school **system** that should offer consistent and equitable learning opportunities to all of its students at all of its schools. For a system this large to ensure equal opportunity, we must have a central administration with sufficient staffing and expertise to not just develop curriculum but also oversee its implementation and monitor its continuing fidelity. Years of budget pressures and hostility to central administration has significantly reduced the ability of the Curriculum office to perform those critical functions.

OCIP needs **mission critical specialists** in several areas where positions have been cut or lost to attrition. Just a few examples of these areas include:

* The **Two-Way Immersion** programs, which were launched with great fanfare just a few years ago and are currently supported by an ESOL supervisor who is not a specialist in such programs;
* The **World Languages** program, where we also lack appropriate specialists;
* **Career Readiness** and certification programs, which were also launched with great fanfare under Dr. Smith but are insufficiently supported at the central office.
* Last but certainly not least, the elimination in 2018 of the **Director position from the Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction** has clearly degraded MCPS’s ability to nurture and support students who need advanced or accelerated learning opportunities to remain engaged in school and meet their potential. **MCPS identifies over 35 percent of the student body as gifted, but the office tasked with meeting those students’ needs has shrunk to fewer than four FTEs**. The community and the Board were explicitly promised that the loss of the AEI Director position would be countered with multiple OSSI positions charged with responsibility for the implementation of gifted education opportunities in all schools, but **not even one such position was ever created or filled**.

Finally, I bring to your attention, as I have in the past, the short-sightedness of failing to budget for central oversight of new programs. This budget has many initiatives, but like many budgets of the past, it lacks funding for **monitoring the implementation of initiatives or evaluating their efficacy**. That is particularly critical when rolling out new curriculum and new strategies. Curriculum and curriculum delivery initiatives in MCPS are developed, announced, rolled out with one or maybe two years of professional development, and then ignored as we move on to the next great thing. I have lost count of the number of times over the years that I’ve asked for data on the efficacy of new curriculum, interventions, or other changes, only to be told “there was no money in the budget to collect or analyze data” on these promising but unproven ideas.

Because there is so little centralized monitoring or oversight, curriculum implementation and delivery in MCPS is highly variable across the county. This is not equitable, it is not fair, and it is most damaging to our most vulnerable populations. Those of you who have heard me speak in the past know my mantra: In a large system, what doesn’t get measured doesn’t get done. Please consider funding more oversight for curriculum fidelity and equity.

Thank you.