Curriculum Committee Report Submitted by: Michelle Gluck

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**Meetings/Calls/Events**

12/3 BOE Public Meeting

12/9 BOD Meeting

12/11 GCC meeting with Brenda Lewis re Small Group Instruction

12/15 BOE Public Meeting

12/21 GCC/CC Advocacy Strategy meeting

1/6/21 Curriculum Committee meeting with OCIP/OSSI

**Upcoming**

1/14/21 MSDE GTAC meeting

TBD MCPS Fall Instructional Recovery Team Meeting

**Key Activities/Concerns**

1. **Continuing Concerns About Pandemic Curriculum Decisions.**
2. Secret Changes to Rules Regarding Course Load.

Please see last month’s report regarding my opinion (aka “rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic”) of MCPS’s proposal to reduce stress on students being asked to complete seven courses on a college model even though a full load for a college student would be only 3 or 4 classes.

OCIP reported this week that the option for students to take fewer than seven classes during the pandemic, while “always an option” (albeit a well-kept secret heavily discouraged option) is now being “elevated but not advertised” as an option for students struggling to pass seven classes in online instruction. The requirement that students take 7 classes unless they have a DARN GOOD REASON NOT TO is an MCPS internal requirement, not imposed by the COMAR. Therefore, MCCPTA’s response (voiced by President Simonson and VP Peele as well as the committee chairs in attendance) can be summarized as follows:

1. Public schools should not have well-kept secrets – this option needs to be advertised so that students and families can make informed decisions. So far, schools have been providing misinformation (as in, turning down requests) even to students who knew to ask for a course load reduction.
2. The option for calendar relief should be extended without stigma to students who are passing all their classes, if they and their families feel that the continued effort is too stressful. All MCPS reporting to date has focused on students earning Ds and Es in online classes.
3. Counselors, while trained academic advisors, do not have timely information about which students need this option and cannot be relied upon to approach families on an individualized basis to propose course load reduction.
4. MCPS needs to change the penalty for dropping classes after the 25th day of the semester, otherwise students who need calendar relief will be seriously discouraged from seeking it due to the penalty of having a W/E on the transcript. Dropped classes during the pandemic should not be reflected on the transcript at all.
5. Lack of Guidance for students experiencing significant learning loss in sequential classes.

We asked how students are being advised during the upcoming registration period with respect to sequential classes such as math or world languages in which students may have experienced significant learning loss. We are particularly concerned about students in Grades 10-12 whose learning loss has not been systematically measured at all (since the MAP testing administered to 10th-12th graders to create the illusion of compliance with the MSDE requirement reveals little or nothing about learning loss for students above grade 9.) OCIP reports that MCPS is planning learning recovery on a 2-3 year model, incorporating lost material into future years of sequential classes. They acknowledged that this will do nothing to help rising seniors.

Left unsaid, but clear at this point, is that there will be no generalized guidance to students and families, and students who may need to repeat courses or take additional time to graduate will be approached on an individual basis. The option to take 4.5 or 5 years to complete HS requirements is another well-kept secret existing option.

1. Update regarding small group instruction in ES.

Last month, we discussed with OCIP anecdotal data indicating that some elementary schools are providing daily small group instruction in Math and English; some are providing only intermittent small group instruction; and some are not providing any at all. GCC Chair Audra Dove and Vice Chair Evelyn Chung and I met with Brenda Lewis last month to discuss this, and she provided an update at the 1/6 OCIP meeting indicating that small group instruction training “has taken place” since the last conversation. SSI director Donna Redmond-Jones, new to the OCIP meeting, told us that reading specialists support small group instruction and meet with supervisors 2-3 times per month. We asked how SSI is monitoring compliance with the training and expectations, and were told that SSI looks at assessments measuring student growth as proof that SGI is taking place. We suggested that this is not a very accurate measure of small group instruction. SSI also suggests that parents can raise concerns to teachers and escalate if changes aren’t made. CC Vice Chair Jennifer Young, echoed by every MCCPTA BOD member on the call, asked that Carver not rely on parents to enforce system expectations. SGI in math wasn’t addressed at all, even though we have been promised for years that mixed ability math instruction could be achieved using SGI on the reading model.

Bottom line, ES parents: Your child should be getting small group instruction every week. If that isn’t happening, please speak up.

1. **Timid Actions in Pandemic Grading and Reporting**
   1. Pass/Fail option proposed, but only for classes no one would want to take pass/fail

OCIP reported this week that MCPS will be offering a pass/fail option for online classes, subject to the following restrictions:

* Core classes (such as math and English) are not eligible for P/F
* Classes required for graduation cannot be taken P/F
* Classes required for Certificates of Merit cannot be taken P/F
* P/F decision on the few classes that are left must be made by the 25th day of the semester.

We asked why this option was being limited to the point of being useless, and were told that MCPS is “having a hard time letting go of what we are used to” in nonpandemic situations. Since the limitation on P/F grading is also an internal MCPS rule, not required by the COMAR, we suggested that MCPS try harder to let go of the idea that underage adolescents taking all their classes online with two hours of instruction per week be treated in the matter MCPS is “used to.”

* 1. Inconsistency in application of relaxed deadlines rule to AP classes

As previously discussed, MCPS reacted to the significant evidence of widespread struggle and failure among students in MP1 grades by reducing the number of graded assignments allowed in courses that do not have external final assessments (i.e., other than AP/IB). Other rules, such as the relaxation of deadlines for completing work, were supposed to be extended to AP/IB classes, but we are hearing reports that AP/IB teachers are not getting that message. OCIP has promised to look into this.

We are also hearing reports that AP classes in magnet schools are being taught to a more stringent level with significantly more graded assignments than the (supposedly) exact same class in local schools. OCIP has promised to look into this, as well.

1. **Curriculum concerns in the hybrid planning**

I noted last month that parents have expressed concern and confusion about how the proposed framework will alter delivery of instruction for either set of students (those who remain all virtual and those who elect the hybrid instruction model.) MCPS has yet to update the framework to address those concerns. The BOE will meet this week to discuss the timing of hybrid instruction, and we will follow up accordingly.