# Health and Wellness Committee

# Year End Report 2019-2020

Reporting on School Year: 2019-20

Committee Name: Health and Wellness

Chair: Sunil Dasgupta

*Subcommittee Chairs:*

School Nutrition: *Lynna Amano*

Substance Use Prevention: *Laura Mitchell*

Safe Technology: *Lisa Cline*

Committee Members: 164 members on the Listserv

Date of this Report: June 19, 2020

Budget: $5,900 Final Expenditure: $1586.16

# Overview

The Health and Safety Committee worked on a range of issues and common concerns in 2019-20. The Committee functioned as whole and through its three subcommittees on Safe Technology, School Nutrition, and Substance Use Prevention. Notable highlights:

* + Organizing the Third Annual MCPS-MCCPTA Mental Health and Wellness Forum on Jan 11, 2020. See attached agenda for details.
  + Met with MCPS officials and committees across various issue areas including family engagement, mental health, substance use, compliance, curriculum, and technology.
  + Organized Mental Health First Aid training in the Clarksburg HS community with EveryMind and UPCounty Network.

# Did the activity implement at least one of the PTA Purposes?

The Health and Wellness Committee engaged parents, staff, and students in a number of ways to foster an inclusive community, advocate for issues of common concerns, and enable parent and teacher involvement in PTA activities.

# Did the activity meet the needs of the parents, students or community?

Yes. The committee’s work was driven by the needs of parents, students, and community members. In particular, we looked at safe technology, substance use, and mental health related issues and advocacy.

# Was it interesting and/or helpful to the members? How?

The issues the committee examined are all top of the mind for the school communities. First, the national political climate made school more challenging. Second, Covid-19 and school closures changed education landscape. This was followed by the murder of George Floyd and others leading to subsequent protests and calls to end racism. Third, mental health and wellness during Covid has become a growing concern. Fourth, student privacy and screen time are increasingly relevant as distance learning grew. Montgomery County experienced all these issues directly or indirectly.

The Committee’s work encouraged participation, dialogue, advocacy and reform as necessary. We see growing numbers of parents and teachers joining the committee listserv and MoCo Mental Health and Wellness Facebook group. We routinely receive inquiries and requests for help from parents. On the other side, H&W has developed relationships across a number of MCPS offices to help parents addresses issues of common interest and to help disseminate information from schools to the parent community.

# Did it involve the greatest possible number of members? Address event, not committee.

As required, we marketed the Mental Health and Wellness event widely. All school principals and PTA presidents received invitations and dissemination information, including flyers. We also used Facebook and other social media for outreach. More than 300 people attended the event. We had over 30 provider tables and great presenters.

Next year, we need to work on a more coherent program. We will look into offering Mental Health First Aid training to the school community, to parents and to teachers (exploring CEUs). We will promote more aggressively. Suggested dates are Jan 23, 2021. Snow date Jan 30, 2021.

# School Nutrition Subcommittee

Lynn Amano, Chair

With all that was going on this year, School Nutrition was not top of mind in 2019-2020. The Food and Nutrition subcommittee intends to continue to advocate for increased access to fresh and healthy food for our students who depend on school meals. We envision this advocacy to take place working with DFNS, local vendors and advocate groups to improve on our current meals, snacks, and community access. Access to healthy food is especially important now as more and more families are affected by Covid-19.

# Safe Technology Subcommittee

Lisa Cline, Chair

Report submitted to Board separately.

Health and Wellness Committee proposes that Safe Technology become its own independent committee starting 2020-21. School Climate and Safety was hived from this committee last year to highlight and better represent their work. In the coming year, we believe Safe Technology, with its 54 members, regular MCPS meetings, and strong agenda should also have the chance to present itself directly to the MCCPTA Board, the Delegates Assembly, to MCPS, and school communities at large.

**Substance Use Prevention Subcommittee**

Laura Mitchell, Chair

The Substance Use Prevention Committee partnered with several outside groups and agencies toward prevention efforts and to address current substance use by MCPS students.

Montgomery County Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council (AODAAC): MCCPTA representative and voting member. This committee reviewed and contributed to the anti-vaping legislation with Councilmember Gabe Albornoz and provided feedback to improve the effectiveness of the bill to help keep vaping products out of the hands of minors. The committee provided review and testimony on several state legislative bills and provided community educational forums.

Opioid Intervention Task Force (OIT): Workgroup Member. Worked with Montgomery County Police Department to design and implement the C.O.P.E. trailer to educate community members on the signs of substance use, particularly youth use in the home. The trailer is a mock teen bedroom and bathroom which allows for guided tours to adults who are shown some of the places illicit substances could be hidden in a typical room, what some of those substances look like and resources to access if they suspect use. The C.O.P.E. trailer made its debut at the Mental Health and Wellness forum in January 2020. Plans to have the trailer at the Delegates meeting and local schools were put on hold due to COVID-19 but will resume when possible. The group worked with local pharmacies to distribute Deterra drug deactivation kits and information pamphlets to patients prescribed opiates. The kits neutralize left over opiates and make them safe to dispose of in the trash. This keeps these dangerous drugs out of the house where they can be accessed and misused by teens. This group also does community education.

*Parity and Equity Coalition, Legal Action Center*: Work closely with members to ensure that insurance companies provide coverage for mental health and substance use benefits equal to those provided for other healthcare services as required by the Federal Mental Health Parity and Substance Use Parity Act. The coalition meets at least monthly to monitor and assist in filing complaints to the Maryland Insurance Commission (MIA), draft legislation where needed to achieve equity and testify to the State Legislature where needed. Presented with the Legal Action Center Director, Ellen Weber, at EveryMind’s Legislative briefing, educating legislators, judges and others on the importance of Parity and Equity in securing treatment for mental health issues that, left untreated, often lead to substance use.

*MCPS:* Worked with OSFSE to plan the anti-vaping symposium for MCPS families. Continued working with OSFSE on the implementation of Handle With Care, a program that has first responders notify school officials when a school aged child is present at a scene to which they responded. The school is then able to meet with the child with a trauma informed approach to assess the level of trauma (if any) experienced and to provide or refer the family for trauma informed care. Addressing childhood Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) in a timely and effective manner is a very important step toward reducing the risk of future. Studies have shown that more than 80% of individuals treated for substance use experienced at least one ACE and most went unaddressed. I am working with Arise and Flourish, Caren and other groups to bring smoking cessation and substance use education programs into our schools at no cost to our families. The committee provided support and testimony regarding the need for an on site phycologists at every school and for the continuation of the Recovery Academic Program (RAP) to provide a safe space for our students in recovery from substance use to complete their high school education.

Substance Use Prevention Subcommittee requested budget: $1,500 (printing and awareness campaigns)