

MCCPTA Special Education Committee Report for June 2019 Board Meeting

To: MCCPTA Board

From: Julie Reiley, MCCPTA Special Education Committee Chair

Date: June 11, 2019 for June 13, 2019 Meeting

These are various events, goals, and objectives, of the committee.

Advocating for MCPS Policy Prohibiting Police from Questioning Minors in School Without a Legal Guardian (or Consent thereof)

June 11, 2019, I learned of a recent incident involving a 10-year-old African-American child with an IEP, who was questioned by the police, during school and in the presence of the principal, without his parent's presence, consent, or knowledge. The child was not being questioned as a witness to another student's conduct, but with regard to his own (he was apparently playing with what was clearly play money and questioned about passing counterfeit money – the child was apparently seen on the school bus cameras, so his race was apparent, raising bias issues as well).

We need an MCPS policy that requires the presence of a student's legal guardian (or consent) whenever an MCPS student is questioned by law enforcement. This case is especially problematic because the child was questioned in light of an accusation of possibly illegal conduct on his part. In this case the accusation was clearly baseless, but in the future the lines could be blurry, and a policy is needed.

Here is a link to the Bethesda Magazine article on the incident:

https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/schools/mcps-cites-clear-missteps-after-calling-police-on-black-boy-with-play-money/?fbclid=IwAR3KZQOvicsjjGQTIIUgVIOTke-GL5gtkUdetzaTP7u_CODjUg4BsUI3CTo

Planning Annual MCCPTA Special Education Committee Awards

For the 2020 ceremony, I highly recommend:

1. **Forming a multi-member award ceremony committee in the early fall**, with a ceremony chair (this could be the special education committee chair), and three or more members who are assigned specific responsibilities;
2. Specifically stating on the nomination form that submissions by any single person are limited to one nomination per category (or stating that under special circumstances, permission may be given to submit more than one nomination per category, but it must be requested and received in advance for the additional submissions to be processed);

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3. Specifically stating on the nomination form that individuals must be nominated by a third party (*i.e.*, you can't nominate yourself);
4. No longer *ensuring* that everyone receives at least an HM; and
5. Specifically stating on the form (and in the emails soliciting nominations) that the top half of the form requesting the contact details, *including the nominee's email address*, **must** be filled out in order for the nomination to be accepted and processed.

2019-2020 Special Education Committee Budget

We need to increase the committee's budget to cover the costs of the awards ceremony, including the reception, the certificates and frames, and printing costs of the program.

I still have to submit my reimbursement request for my expenditures, and there may be other submissions from the vice-chair and one other volunteer. However, the certificates and frames, and programs, were donated, and we can't count on those in the future, especially as one of the donors may no longer be affiliated with the committee, as her last child has left MCPS this year.

I will request a budget comparable to other committees that sponsor large events, and would like to see the current budget.

Parent Outreach / Support

We have continued to support parents who contact us. The committee vice-chair hosted speaker meetings for parents. We should include a meeting / training for local PTA special education chairs.

Local PTA/PTSAs Special Education Chairs

We need to fill special education committee positions on local PTAs. We also need to create an updated list of the local chairs schools, names and email addresses. I would like to send a survey asking for this information, **but I need help creating one.**

Quarterly Meeting with Kevin Lowndes, Associate Superintendent for Special Education

We will continue quarter meetings with Kevin Lowndes, Associate Superintendent for Special Education.

Rachel Watanabe Tate and I met with Kevin Lowndes on April 4, 2019. We discussed: (1) the new curriculum and special education; (2) the expansion of support for SESS programs, including social workers assigned to every school with an SESS program, training RTSEs to oversee SESS programs at elementary schools (instead of principals), and consult support on the cluster level to support Dr. Sandi Posner and Nancy Fava in central office, the new SESS program in Clarksburg, shifting boundaries for the Westbrook ES SESS program (which was significantly under capacity) and the Silver Spring SESS programs; and (3) summer training. They also hope to open a new autism program up county in the next elementary school to open

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up, possibly 2024. Currently they are over capacity.

With regard to the FY 20 operating budget, concerns have been raised about cuts to special education programs, specifically para-professional support (something that has been raised twice, though I am not sure if it was by the same person). I have discussed the FY 20 operating budget with Kevin Lowndes on more than one occasion, reviewed the original FY20 operating budget for special education, and here is my understanding: Originally the FY 20 operating budget had an increase in special education funding, including an increase in the number of para-professional positions, but also eliminated 4.2 special education teachers and 3.6 RTSE. I submitted testimony opposing these cuts and explaining their detrimental impact.¹ Subsequently, MCPS received additional operating budget funds from the state. A significant amount of this funding was designated for special education, including, but not limited to, reinstating the RTSE and special education teacher positions, and providing social workers for SESS programs. Kevin Lowndes confirmed this was still the case when we met the first week of April. So, it is my understanding that any cuts to para-professional staff at certain schools would be due to a decrease in needs; which is not based upon enrollment *per se*, but rather on the number of service hours needed pursuant to the students' IEPs (the hours-based staffing model).

2019 Class Size Workgroup

I served on the superintendent's workgroup on class size in MCPS.

FY20 Special Education Staffing Planning Committee

June 12, 2019, I represented the committee on the annual Special Education Staffing Planning Committee for FY20.

¹ I also submitted written testimony, along with others, opposing the elimination of the sole APE specialist, and that position was ultimately not cut.