

## MCCPTA Health Committee February 08 Update

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Update as of February 1, 2008

### **Citizens Advisory Committee on Family Life and Human Development**

I attended the Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Family Life and Human Development. We reviewed materials for the middle school health curriculum – a video on the developing fetus and some educational posters on male and female anatomy. Betsy Brown, Director, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, MCPS provided an overview of the progress with implementation of the new sex-ed classes in eighth and tenth grade.

All the middle schools have now had the Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality units, and 95 percent of students participated. Participation requires that students/parents OPT-IN to participate in the curriculum. In the tenth grade classes, 97 percent of students participated in the new classes. Ms. Brown indicated that attendance at the parent meetings held at the schools prior to implementation of the curriculum was around 2% and that is unchanged from previous semesters. While most high schools had attendance by zero-to-three parents, one school had 46 parents show up, one had 26, one had 22. Ms. Brown indicated that health teachers – who ran the meetings – did not experience any problems. Ms. Brown attended one school meeting where some parents were angry when they arrived, but many ended up thanking her for the information before they left and 97 percent of the students at that school took the classes.

On Friday, Feb. 1, a state court judge ruled in favor of new sex-education lessons in 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades dismissing a legal challenge from Citizens for Responsible Curriculum and 2 other groups. The Circuit Court Judge ruling affirmed a decision last year by the Maryland State Board of Education, which determined it had no place to "second-guess the appropriateness" of the curriculum chosen by the Montgomery community.

**Food Marketing Report Released:** At the request of Councilman Leventhal, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, in partnership with MCPS Division of Food and Nutrition Services and the County Department of Health, conducted a food marketing survey in a random sample of schools. The final report was presented to Councilman Leventhal, Chair of the Council Health Committee, and other Council members, on January 31<sup>st</sup>. CSPI provided comments about marketing and the impact on childhood obesity, and summarized report findings, I provided comments (representing myself – not PTAs or School Health Council) in response to some of the recommendations, and MCPS and BOW reps provided info and answered questions as well. Key findings:

- Most prevalent forms of marketing are on exteriors of vending machines
- Food sales in vending machines
- Posters, signs
- School fundraisers

One of the key recommendations from the report called for the BOE to reconstitute the Wellness Committee and strengthen its policy on marketing in schools. MCCPTA has been calling for this for over a year – since the wellness committee was disbanded once the wellness policy was approved. In a letter to Council member Leventhal prior to the Jan. 31 meeting, Dr. Weast and

Dr. Tillman (MC Health Officer) did support this recommendation and will be reconvening the wellness policy committee to review the other recommendations in the report.

There was a fair amount of discussion regarding school fundraisers involving foods and beverages of low nutritional value such as fundraising nights at restaurants, cheese cake and candy sales. The current MCPS policy states that all fundraising events held during the school day that involve food must comply with the nutrition standards. But since many of the fundraising events highlighted in the report are beyond the school day, and are sponsored by other organizations like PTAs, the wellness policy guidelines do not apply.

PTAs and other school organizations are encouraged to promote healthy foods in their fundraising efforts that involve food.

To see the report, the MCPS Wellness Policy, and for examples of healthy fundraising options, go to the MCCPTA Health Committee Web site at: <http://www.mccpta.com/health.html>

**Indoor Air Quality Bill Introduced:** House Bill 15 was recently introduced by Delegate Rice (District 15) in the MD legislature to Establish a Task Force on Classroom Indoor Air Quality Standards. This bill establishes the membership of the task force, requiring the task force to evaluate and make recommendations regarding certain issues, and seeks a report by 2010. A number of PTA members and students were active in advocating for improvements to indoor air quality leading to this bill action. For more information about this bill, please visit [www.studentsforhealthyair.org](http://www.studentsforhealthyair.org).

**April Delegates' Assembly Program:** the April DA program will be devoted to Nutrition and Physical Activity/Education topics. Parents interested in helping plan this program are encouraged to contact Tracy Fox ([tracyfox@comcast.net](mailto:tracyfox@comcast.net)).