

Minutes MCCPTA Delegates Assembly
Sept. 24, 2008
Carver Educational Service Center

A Committee Fair preceded the business meeting. Most MCCPTA Committee Chairs were available to meet with and answer questions about their committee and its work.

Call to Order:

Meeting called to order at 7:35 pm by President, Kay Romero.

The officers were introduced to the assembly.

Approval of Agenda and April 24, 2008 Minutes:

The agenda was approved with one addition: Grading and Reporting Committee report.

Vice President for Administration Liz Wheeler read the PTA Mission Statement.

The minutes from April 2008 were reviewed and approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer, Dale Ryan, reviewed the proposed budget for 2008-2009. She explained the format of the budget, the line items and expenses. She noted that MCCPTA is looking for ways to save money, and reminded the assembly that our only source of funds is membership dues. There were no questions or comments on the budget. It was approved as submitted. The President's newsletter will be ponied to each school each month. PTA presidents need to make sure to share the information within with their Delegates and PTAs. One newsletter will go to each PTA and not three in order to save money and cut copying posts.

Dale then reviewed the Profit and Loss sheet and Balance sheet. We are asking that locals please submit dues payments to MCCPTA at the same time they submit dues payments to Maryland PTA. She hopes this will make it easier for Treasurers to keep track.

Question from Delegate: Is there a breakdown of how many members we have vs. how many we could have? Are the membership numbers declining?

Since PTA membership is open to all, including community members with no children in a school, there is no way to determine potential members.

Eighteen PTAs have not yet paid their insurance for 2008-2009 as of 9/24/2008. Local PTAs may need extra coverage beyond the basic depending on their particular situation.

Kay Romero stated that the treasurer's report would be filed.

Reports:

President's Report:

Kay introduced the MCCPTA Board of Directors and gave a brief explanation of the roles of each position. She then gave a brief introduction to the DA function: the meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday, the business meeting will always start at 7:30 pm, and our goal is to end by 9:30 pm.

Karen Smith, VP for Programs, gave an overview of how the DA works – how they run. There were many new faces in the assembly. She noted that it is important for them to attend the DAs to keep us in touch with what goes on at their school, and likewise to take back to their school community what is happening at the County level. We want our DA to be representative of issues from across the County. In these assemblies, we all come to understand and appreciate the differences from school to school. This is a good opportunity to talk to others from different parts of Montgomery County that you might not otherwise come to know.

Karen also explained how to bring a resolution before the DA body. A delegate can bring a resolution to a DA, but the best way is to submit a resolution in writing to the MCCPTA BOD, which meets the first Thursday of every month. They may refer it to the appropriate committee for vetting to gather more information and to research if there were any previous resolutions or motions by MCCPTA in the past pertaining to the topic. We must be mindful of State and National PTA positions –we cannot take a stance in opposition of any positions they have. If they have no position on an issue of interest to us, then we can advocate as our members see fit. We give input to State and National PTA via their annual conventions. This year, the State PTA convention is in Frederick, and we should attend to make our voices heard.

Karen then discussed the planned programs for this year. See attached sheet.

Kay highlighted the various MCCPTA listservs that Delegates may find useful to help them get information to their school communities.

Committee Reports:

CIP Committee and Legislative Committee:

Kay introduced the committee reports with a brief overview of the testimony cycle for the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan – i.e., buildings, facilities) and Operating (teacher salaries, supplies, books, etc., day to day operations) Budgets. Kay and the CIP Committee Chair, Steve Augustino will be attending MCPS CIP budget planning meetings. Kay and Merry Eisner, VP for Legislation and Legislative Committee Chair will be attending MCPS Operating Budget planning meetings. Our Budget Compact helps us shape our advocacy priorities for the coming year. There have been two CIP planning meetings so far. The operating budget planning meetings also begin this week.

There are 3 major CIP meetings with MCPS and employee unions and approximately 15 plus meetings related to operating budget.

Kay noted that she has received a list of Curricular Fees for middle and high schools as of September 2008, and it will be put up on the MCCPTA website soon. She noted that MCPS is currently looking at Policy JNA and Regulation JNA-RA implementation for consistency and looking at the accounting practices for the money collected. Kay noted that she attended the BOE Fiscal Management Committee and the BOE Policy Committee meetings this month.

Question from Delegate: Does MCCPTA currently have a position? Will we? Does the State PTA have one? National PTA?

State and National PTA do not have positions specifically on curricular fees. Both have positions on free, quality public education. MCCPTA does not currently have a position on curricular fees, and based on conversations with many parents across the county, it may be difficult for us to reach consensus.

MCPS is reacting to the criticism, and is trying to make any fees fair and consistent. The BOE policy in place now states that students will not be penalized academically for their inability to pay for curricular or supplemental materials.

Question from Delegate: Will this be discussed at the State PTA convention?

Merry Eisner, VP for Legislation, stated that she met with Laura Carr, MD PTA's VP for Legislation and said it probably will not come up because we are a large state and there are many differences of opinions regarding this issue.

She then continued with a discussion of the CIP, beginning with an explanation of MCPS's project prioritization process which can be summarized as:

- Ensure that schools are safe.
- Build enough seats.
- Modernize.

She noted that these may very well overlap and can all apply. For MCCCTA, the issue becomes how do we balance these needs in our conversations with MCPS? And, is there a way to better direct our advocacy efforts so that we capitalize on all possible sources of funding?

She also discussed our efforts with our Legislators in Annapolis. Our State Legislators have limited authority to counter the Governor (vis a vis funding). However, we are actively meeting with our State Legislators and advocating for our priorities since some funding is from the State. And there are other legislative opportunities where our relationship can make a difference.

Operating Budget Committee:

Pam Moomau, Operating Budget Committee Chair, gave a brief intro to the Operating Budget. It covers maintenance, technology, class size, etc. She reminded us that this will be a tight budget year, and next year could be even worse, and we are working for a holding action to not lose ground.

Listserv Subcommittee:

Patti Twigg, Listservs Moderator, gave a brief overview of the primary listservs operated by MCCPTA. She reminded everyone that every school should have someone on the MCCPTA Bulletin listserv.

Safety Committee:

Laurie Halverson, MCCPTA Safety Committee Chair, gave an overview of her committee's activities this year. She would like to have contact info for a Safety Committee chair from every school. One big issue this year is pedestrian safety. She reminded us that the EFOs (Educational Facilities Officers – police officers that work in the schools) and Crossing Guards are paid for out of the police department budget, not MCPS budget. She asks that schools with dangerous pedestrian areas contact her.

Questions from Delegates: Is a Safety Chair a new position? Does bullying fall under the Safety Committee? EFOs at high schools, how do they cover schools, are they shared with other schools? What is an EFO? How are EFOs allocated? Is anything being done to educate students about the dangers of walking with IPODs on so that they are not aware of their surroundings?

It is good to have a Safety Chair in case issues arise. EFOs do have responsibility at more than one school, usually a high school and the feeder middle schools. We do need to be mindful of the costs associated with anything we advocate for, so we need to research how much it would cost to have more EFOs and Crossing Guards. MCCPTA did advocate for both last spring and has a position. A pedestrian safety video was sent to principals, but we are unsure if they are using it or how.

Anti-bullying legislation was passed last spring. Each school is supposed to have a program in place. The Safety Committee will be monitoring to see if schools are actually doing this.

Another interest of the Safety Committee is IAQ (Indoor Air Quality) and portables. The current maintenance is not working well; filters are not being cleaned on an appropriate schedule, etc. Laurie advised schools that have portables to monitor them, and if there are problems, to document them with pictures. There is a procedure for maintenance of the portables that is supposed to be followed. It is standard, and necessary, for the windows in them to be nailed shut to help maintain IAQ in the portable.

There is a new security system that will be put in place soon at 39 schools - it is being phased in over a number of years. It is called the Visitor Management System, and requires that an ID be scanned for admittance to a school. Laurie would appreciate any feedback if your school gets one of these systems to see how they are working. Once she has a list of which schools will be getting this system this year, she will share it.

Grading and Reporting Committee:

Grading and Reporting Committee Chair Beth Kennington reviewed the continuing roll out and further implementation of the standards based grading system. Elementary schools are rolling out electronic grading for teachers and 24 MCPS elementary schools are currently field testing the standards-based report cards (SBRCs) in grades 1, 2 and 3. Countywide implementation is scheduled (at this time) to take place in 2010-2011. Grades in the field test schools are demonstrated by numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 (with 4 being the highest). This new standards-based grading employs a different type of grade trending than what we have seen used in traditional grades for secondary grades 6-12. The September 22, 2008 BOE meeting featured a presentation on the continued implementation of Policy IKA, Grading and Reporting, which is provided as an attachment. We are currently in the 5th year of implementing IKA.

Beth asked for feedback from delegates and parents from the elementary schools which are currently piloting the standards-based report cards. Parents from the field test school should join the Grading and Reporting listserv and/or come to Committee meetings (next meeting, Mon. 10/18/08 at 7:00 p.m. Carver Conf. Rm. 127).

Question from Delegate: Will there be Edline available at the elementary level?

No – the electronic grade book being used in elementary schools is not compatible with Edline.

Comment from Loiderman MS Delegate: The ASK system (mentioned in the handout noted above) is a wonderful advocacy tool for students.

Calendar Committee Written Report:

Kay Romero then noted the Calendar Committee written report that is also attached.

Unfinished Business:

A resolution that was sent back to committee last year, regarding background checks of employees was briefly discussed. After doing research on the resolution, it was found that MCPS is already doing what the resolution was advocating for, so the Safety Committee is not recommending that it be brought forward.

Question from Delegate: how often are the rechecks done?

If there is an arrest, that information goes to MCPS and the school where the person is employed, and action is taken.

Question from Pyle MS Delegate: Does this apply to only people on MCPS payroll? What about contractors?

Andrea Bernardo, MCCPTA Secretary for BOD: Contractors must now be screened according to State law.

Question from Delegate: What about Health Techs, since Montgomery County government, not MCPS, employs them?

Magruder Delegate, who is a former Health Tech, stated that they are fingerprinted and a background check is done.

New Business:

Pam Moomau then explained the Draft Resolution on Operating Budget Priorities and Draft Operating Budget Compact:

Draft Resolution on FY2010 Operating Budget Priorities

Whereas, MCCPTA's mission is to speak for children and without question our highest budget priority is education;

Be it resolved that the MCCPTA Delegates approve the following operating budget priorities for the organization to concentrate on this budget year.

Appropriate teacher/student ratios,

Safe, secure, clean, healthy, modern school facilities,

Sensible, developmentally appropriate, fully supported curriculum roll-out,

School-based community outreach,

and

Remediation and support for all students who need it.

Background:

MCCPTA officers visited PTA leadership in each area of the county in June and July, 2008. The list of priorities represents the most frequently mentioned concerns. Below are further details on each item.

Appropriate student/teacher ratios- MCPS has made progress toward reducing class sizes in recent years. In a period of tight budgets it is important to protect this progress. It is especially important to target staff resources in subject areas and classrooms of highest need. This would include strategies such as:

- Preserving current staffing ratios
- Hours-based staffing for special education students
- Caps on class-sizes in pivotal courses such as Algebra I

Safe, secure, clean, modern school facilities- Devoting resources to the classroom includes devoting resources to ensuring a classroom environment that facilitates learning. Components of a good learning environment include:

- well-maintained classrooms free of mold, vectors, and other contaminants
- freedom from bullying and gang activities
- reasonably limited access to school facilities

Sensible, fully-supported curriculum roll-out- Parents around the County continue to have concerns about the way major curriculum reforms are implemented, especially the accelerated math curriculum. Adequate supports would include:

- more assistance to students in filling in gaps in their background
- more teacher training BEFORE introducing the changes
- adequate instructional materials

School-based community outreach- Parent involvement needs to be more of a two-way communication process. Unmet needs include:

- school based interpretation services for parents who have limited English skills
- ongoing feedback to parents on their expressed concerns

Remediation and support for all students who need it- The high stakes nature of HSAs emphasizes the need to make sure every student has help in filling in the gaps in his education. Enhanced supports include:

- in-school tutoring opportunities
- after school programs
- summer programs

MCCPTA FY2010 Draft Operating Budget Compact

The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations (MCCPTA) believes that an Operating Budget for the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) must provide funding to make progress towards the fundamental requirements described in this budget compact. This compact will provide the basis for testimony before the Board of Education and the County Council and in other forums concerning the MCPS Operating Budget for FY 2010. MCCPTA will not support any budget, MCPS Strategic Plan, or other planning or policy document, that does not make progress towards the requirements of this compact.

Goal 1 of the MCPS Strategic Plan: Ensure Success for Every Student.

MCPS must focus on raising academic performance of all students so that all may reach their full potential. There is a need for uniformly high expectations that all students, including Special Education, ESOL, and Gifted/Talented students, will succeed and will have their needs met. There must be sufficient funding for programs to raise the performance of under-performing students. There must also be adequate funding to enhance the performance of students who have attained satisfactory levels of performance but who can do better, and to challenge students who exceed satisfactory levels of performance but are able to perform at even higher levels. In order to further these goals, MCCPTA supports the following staff initiatives from the past several years and encourages continued support for these initiatives:

- Reduced class sizes throughout the County*
- Reduced class sizes for art, music, and physical education*
- Improved staffing ratios for LAD*
- Move toward hours based staffing for special education students in order to ensure the success of a move toward promoting education in the least restrictive environment*

In addition, the budget should provide for the following:

- Math specialists to provide early intervention for students*
- Certification in the appropriate content areas for middle school teachers teaching high school courses and specialty courses offered in signature programs*
- Additional reduction in student/teacher staffing ratios for art, music, and physical education*
- Reduction in the use of substitute teachers in the classroom during academic year for teacher training*
- Academic intervention/support such as summer learning opportunities for all students based on needs of the students throughout the County, not limited to Title I schools*
- Phase-in of additional assistant principals*

Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan: Provide an Adequate Instructional Program

As adequate educational staffing is achieved, it will become even more important to provide staff with the tools necessary to assure success. In order to further this goal, MCCPTA supports the following staff initiatives from the past several years and encourages continued support for these initiatives:

- Reform of the middle school curriculum to increase rigor and ensure instruction appropriate for each student.*
- Expansion of accelerated and enriched programs into more secondary schools*
- Improvements to technology and support for improved technology use*

In addition, priority should be given to providing for the following academic and developmental supports for students

- Increased support for high school literacy*
- More emphasis on providing a well-rounded curriculum including a rich science, social studies, and arts curriculum*
- Increased academic intervention/support resources, including:*

- *Specific action/intervention plans for students not meeting standards under the grading and reporting policy*
- *Specific action/intervention plans for students not meeting extracurricular activity eligibility requirements.*
- *Consistent funding and implementation of special programs across the county*
- *Timely provision of new materials and textbooks when new curricula are introduced*
- *Improved vertical articulation to ensure students receive the foundation for future curriculum options.*

Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan: Strengthen productive partnerships for education.

In a system with sufficient teaching resources in adequate buildings, other supports will still be needed to ensure a quality education for all children. We support continuation of the following former initiatives:

- *Enhanced translation services*
- *Expanded study circles*
- *Implementation of on-line achievement and reporting systems in all secondary schools*

However, there is a desperate need for enhanced communication and outreach at the local school level, especially in light of the growing number of families with limited knowledge of English. There is also a need for more general support for students and families. Therefore, we request more support for the following:

- *Local school based resources for communications, especially with non-English speaking parents, and increased translation services*
- *Additional guidance counselors, pupil personnel workers, and other staff to address social/emotional/developmental needs at all levels*

Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan: Create a Positive Work Environment in a Self-Renewing Organization.

Development, retention, and recruitment of talented educational, administrative, and support staff are fundamental to maintaining a high quality of education in Montgomery County. The following initiatives are needed:

- *Reduction in high turnover rate for staff from Principals to building services staff*
- *Increased diversity in hiring*
- *Focus on providing timely teacher training BEFORE the roll-out of new curricula*
- *Adequate training for all staff, including supporting services.*

Goal 5 of the Strategic Plan: Provide high quality business services that are essential to the educational success of students.

MCCPTA recognizes that the supporting services, including curriculum development, maintenance, plant operations, transportation, and other central office functions play a key role in student achievement. Effective use of resources should be increased by examining the inventory of all MCPS programs to reduce duplications and overlaps. Outcome measurement should be used to rigorously evaluate programs for effectiveness

and efficiency. It is imperative that the business model for delivering all MCPS services include accountability to parents. We support the following initiatives in prior and current plans:

- Budget document that is more clearly accessible to the public, including clear demarcation of new initiatives and increases or decreases in funding levels for existing services*
- Adequate staffing for the Ride by the Rules program, to improve communication between bus drivers and principals*

We urge attention to the following:

- Assessment of new programs and curricula before and after implementation, to ensure that sufficient course materials, guidebooks, and implementation documents are available*
- Evaluation of the use of new technology to ensure that it is the most cost-effective way to increase student performance*
- More oversight of local schools by the Community Superintendents*
- Improved nutritional value for school lunch and a la carte menu selections*

Finally, the setting in which education takes place should not be neglected. For optimal learning our schools, including portable classrooms, must provide an environment where the children feel safe and their health is protected. The following issues need to be addressed:

- Increased recess supervision*
- More attention to addressing discipline problems, especially at the middle school level, including the problem of gangs, bullying and risk to student safety*
- Adoption by MCPS of objective standards for portable conditions and installation, routine building systems maintenance, and prompt response to unanticipated repair and maintenance needs*
- Revision of salary structures or increased outside contracting for positions that are persistently vacant, such as HVAC mechanics and speech and language therapists*
- More maintenance and repair personnel, particularly HVAC mechanics*
- Expanded indoor air quality staff, with training in building envelope issues*
- Increased staffing of building services*
- Adequate security personnel and other resources necessary for securing school buildings and portables*
- Reassessment and adjustment of traffic patterns around schools to promote pedestrian safety*
- Reassessment of bus stop placement to promote safety*
- More activity buses to promote participation in after school programming as well as a safe return home from after-school programs*
- More rigorous and frequent background checks for employees of MCPS and its contractors.*

The MCCPTA recognizes that an Operating Budget that satisfies all of these requirements will necessitate a continued strong commitment to education by Montgomery County. Such a commitment and investment, however, is more than justified by the benefits a well-resourced educational system provides to the community.

Kay reminded the assembly that these would be voted on next month, so tonight we were only answering clarifying questions, and any debate of the content or proposed amendments would take place next month before a vote. Pam stated that this is the third year for trying to distill priorities down, and that they are based on information gathered at that Summer Area Meetings held by MCCPTA officers. Delegates were reminded to use these thirty days to seek input from their school communities and be ready to vote at the next Delegates Assembly in October.

Question from Delegate: Is there any particular significance to the ordering, any ranking?

No, they are all equal.

Question from Piney Branch ES Delegate: For the roll out of the curriculum, does this include items already rolled out? Does it only include new things, or if there are problems with items previously rolled out, are they included too?

Delegates were told to take these documents to their local PTAs for discussion at their monthly meetings and to bring back comments and an understanding of their PTA's position to the next DA. They were reminded to try and be mindful of the fact we are trying to focus on a few key items in a difficult budget year.

Question from Richard Montgomery HS Delegate: Will this address summer programs too, and not just remediation, but also enrichment? And, both in school and summer programs?

Question from Delegate: what does the ordering of the different goals mean?

MCPS has developed a Strategic Plan, within each goal, the type of budget items are specified. We are asked to align our advocacy with the goals in the strategic plan, so our Compact follows that style.

Question from Delegate: Are these similar to last year, and if not, what has changed?

Pam Moomau: The compact is almost identical; the priorities are not the same. She reviewed the differences from last year in the priorities. Last year's compact and priorities are on the MCCPTA website.

Question from Delegate: Are delegates to bring back feedback on both documents?

Yes. Take these back to your school, and then be prepared to vote next month. We need your vote to direct our organizational priorities.

Comment from Richard Montgomery HS Delegate: Certification in Signature Programs – wants more detail on this item to be sure that all programs are included.

Comment from Fallsmead ES Delegate: When you go back to your locals for comment and discussion, bring back the general consensus, and do not focus on wordsmithing.

Question from MS Delegate: What is the exact process for these documents? And, then what happens?

Kay Romero discussed that Delegates can either bring back amendments from their local PTA or vote to approve them as they are. They can also get clarifying information during this period before the next meeting. Once approved by our assembly, these documents are then used to establish our advocacy in testimony before the BOE and County Council. They are also sent to MCPS BOE.

Pam Moomau noted that there are some typos in the documents, that it should say FY2010 everywhere, and that asterisks are just from Pam's notes to herself. Those items will be fixed before next month.

Question from Takoma Park MS Delegate: What is the relationship between these documents? Do both go forward? Why do we need them both?

Yes, both go forward. The Compact is a more detailed document. But, we also wanted a consensus document, and it can be hard to focus on so many items, so we also wanted to have a short list for emphasis of themes.

Question from Loiederman Delegate: Do they bring written input?

It will be open floor debate and voting next month. You can bring a list of what your PTA has discussed or voted on to help you in any debate, or proposed amendments.

Comment from Paul Morrison, Quince Orchard Cluster Coordinator: This is important. He has seen the County Council swayed by our position sometimes. It is important to discuss this at your local PTA meetings.

Comment from Cold Spring ES Delegate: Acronyms can be confusing. It is good for new Delegates to familiarize themselves with the terminology used.

Comment from Lori Merrill, Richard Montgomery Cluster Coordinator: The Delegates listserv can be used to start the discussion. It is more helpful for a delegate to get a sense of their local PTA, and not to be tied down by very specific items, since things can and do change during the process of discussing the resolution prior to voting. The priorities are also very important in guiding Cluster Coordinators when they write their testimony for both CIP and Operating Budgets.

Comment from Woodlin ES Delegate: It is important to have the context of the discussion for the local school levels. She requests that the Draft Resolution and Draft Compact be sent out electronically, along with a cover letter of explanation, so that the Delegates are better able to share with their PTAs to enhance the discussion.

The two documents will be put on the MCCPTA website, and the links sent out via the MCCPTA Bulletin listserv.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Patti Twigg, MCCPTA secretary for DA.