

MCCPTA FY2009 OPERATING BUDGET COMPACT

Passed at the November 27, 2007 MCCPTA Delegate Assembly

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 2009. 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, no matter where they reside in the county. 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
- Phase-in of additional assistant principals

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
- A larger 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.

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.
- Increased support for high school literacy
- 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

- 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 increase 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 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.

Consistent with the goal of promoting maximum performance by all students, there must be greater accountability by MCPS for improved academic performance of students. MCPS accountability for effective use of resources should be increased by using the inventory of all MCPS programs to reduce duplications and overlaps, and through outcome measurement rigorously evaluate programs for effectiveness and efficiency. We support the following initiatives in prior and current plans:

- Overhaul of the financial and budgeting information systems.
- 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
- 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
- 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 staffing for 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.