

JUNE 2012 MCCPTA COMMITTEE REPORTS

OPERATING BUDGET COMMITTEE REPORT – JUNE 2012:

Since the last report, the Committee worked to inform and engage the membership in the effort to avert the State "doomsday" budget, which was achieved with the support of many stakeholder groups including MCCPTA. The Committee also continued to represent the interests of MCCPTA in MCPS Budget Work Group meetings in connection with the County Council Education Committee hearings and hearings of the Council at large, leading ultimately to the unanimous full Council vote in support of the Board of Education's recommended FY 2013 MCPS Operating Budget, as detailed further below.

In addition, all Clusters Coordinators and Delegates were asked to provide input with respect to Operating Budget priorities for FY 2014 to the MCCPTA Board during the upcoming summer meetings.

As summarized in the MCPS June Quicknotes, "[t]he Montgomery County Council approved a \$2.1 billion Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 operating budget for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) on Thursday, May 24. The budget represents a 2.2 percent increase over the current year, the minimum increase allowed by state law. The budget allows MCPS to keep up with its continued growth but includes no new major initiatives or programs. The budget also allows MCPS to provide a compensation increase to its employees, most of whom have not received an increase in two or three years, while asking them to pay more out-of-pocket expenses for health care services. The FY 2013 operating budget approved by the Council includes a \$22.2 million increase in local funding and a \$28.5 million increase in state funding. The Council also will pay \$27.2 million to absorb the partial shift of the state teacher pension costs, although additional revenue approved by the state will offset the added pension costs in FY 2013. The Board of Education is expected to approve a final budget for FY 2013 on June 14."

The Committee has separately provided suggestions and considerations for the work of Operating Budget Committee going forward, and would note - in particular - the importance of ensuring that MCCPTA is positioned to provide timely input in the development of the MCPS Operating Budget going forward.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Schlesinger

CULTURAL ARTS COMMITTEE REPORT for JUNE, 2012:

Since my last report a month ago, there have been some changes in the schedule for the Cultural Arts Showcases in the fall. Some of the times we had requested for use of the auditorium in the Carver Educational Center have been taken by the Board of Education. Barring any further changes, the Showcase schedule will be:

Tuesday, October 2nd

Thursday, October 4th

Thursday, October 11th (9-12 only)

Wednesday, October 17th (9-12 only)

Friday, October 19th

All Showcases will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at approximately 2:30 p.m. (except for those noted as ending at noon), depending on the number of performers we have for each day. The exact schedules for each day will be posted in the fall after the annual auditions for new performers have been held by the Superintendent's Committee for Performances in MCPS in September.

Please note that the final day of Showcases, October 19th, is a day when there is NO SCHOOL. However, parents are more than welcome to bring their children with them to the performances. The performers actually prefer this since their shows are geared toward children anyway.

The PTArts e-list continues to be widely used by cultural arts representatives from schools in the county and is an excellent way for them to communicate with each other about performances they are interested in having, or have had at their schools. I also post information periodically regarding the Showcase schedules, cultural arts workshops, tips for arranging successful performances at your schools, etc. Anyone who wishes to join the PTArts e-list should send their Name, School, Position (Cultural Arts Chair, Co-Chair, Staff Member, etc.) and E-mail Address to:
PTArts-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

We continue to seek ways of reaching out to some schools that have seldom, or never, sent anyone to the Cultural Arts Showcases (the best way to preview performances for your schools) and also have no one on the PTArts e-list. Each year I do a Cultural Arts Budget Survey of all the schools in the county, and again, some schools never participate in this survey. However, last fall I had the request for information sent to the e-list for all PTA Presidents and got responses from a few schools we had not heard from previously. (Budgets ranged from 0 to \$12,000!)

We are never quite sure whether some schools have no cultural arts programming because they have no money to spend on it or if they do not consider cultural arts a priority. It is our feeling that if they could see the incredible diversity and talent at the Showcases, of the performers available for the schools, they would realize the importance of exposing children of all ages to the arts as much as possible.

Gifted Child Subcommittee Report June 2012

Chair: Michelle Gluck
gluck.michelle@yahoo.com

The Gifted Child Committee has focused on two main themes this month: initiating and/or continuing conversations with MCPS personnel about local school opportunities for advanced level learners, and planning for increased organization among interested parents for next year.

Communications:

In early May, Michelle had a follow-up conversation with MCPS staff about comments made at the BOE Special Populations Committee work session on April 16, specifically the comment that MCPS believes the current number of magnet spaces available fully meets the need for magnet slots – in other words, all students whose needs cannot be met at their local schools who want admission to magnet programs receive offers of admission, and those who apply and are turned down do not exhibit “need.” As noted last month, this statement is noteworthy for several reasons, beginning with the fact that between elementary and middle school, the total number of magnet spaces offered is reduced by one third (from 457 to 300). MCPS bases this conclusion primarily on the idea that all else being equal, it is better to improve gifted services at local schools than to increase magnet programs. MCPS’s official position is that what it describes as the continuum of accelerated and enriched options in elementary school (Junior Great Books, William and Mary, Jacob’s Ladder, and placement in above-level math classes) and the introduction of “advanced” Middle School Reform classes, along with Honors, AP, and IB classes in high school, constitute a robust local school GT program.

Feedback received by the GCC over the past few years indicates that parents strongly prefer to keep advanced students in local schools if their needs can be met there. Nevertheless, parents do not share the perception that genuine opportunities for advanced or accelerated instruction in local schools are being strengthened or even really exist in many schools, especially middle school parents at many local schools who believe that there are no real advanced or accelerated options in the middle school reform curriculum core subjects apart from math (until accelerated math is phased out under C2.0). The significant disparity between the official line and the implementation observed by parents (what one MCPS staff person describes as the “gap between our Say and our Do”) continues to be a source of major concern and frustration.

Later in May, Michelle met with Dr. Starr, accompanied by outgoing and incoming VPs for Education Issues Laurie Halverson and Lynne Harris. The conversation was a wide-ranging continuation of the conversation Dr. Starr began with GT parents at the Spring Community Forum on March 22, focusing primarily on Michelle’s perception that we need significantly improved communication to diffuse the mutual distrust that often inhibits conversations about GT issues between parents and MCPS or school staff. Dr. Starr expressed concern about the charged and sometimes ad hominem rhetoric expressed by some parents in discussion lists and online forums, and also that some parents feel entitled to GT services to a degree that is unseemly in a time of tight resources and more urgent needs. Michelle described the past history of broken promises, ad hominem attacks from school staff against parents, and calculated sacrifice of advanced students’ needs to political agendas that has led some GT parents to become very bitter and disillusioned. She reiterated, however, that in her experience most parents of advanced level learners are seeking a balance among the needs of all students and are open to compromises as long as their children are not ignored. She stressed her desire and readiness to work with MCPS in partnership to better communications and foster a working relationship in which parents can be sure that their concerns are heard and taken into account before decisions are made. Dr. Starr expressed interest in improving the intersection points between MCPS and MCCPTA for such communication.

In addition to the general need for better communication, data collection, and mechanisms for honest input, the meeting addressed three “hot topics” of particular concern to GT parents that were not part of the format of the March 22 meeting. For elementary school parents, Curriculum 2.0 continues to be a source of considerable anxiety, as evidenced by high levels of interest on discussion list and a large volume of messages Michelle receives or is cc’d on by parents. The future of the math pathways is the biggest source of concern. Michelle shared her own perception and feedback she has received from some other parents that the C2.0 language arts curriculum is significantly improved over the old curriculum, for advanced students as well as everyone else. Parents of advanced math students, however, are dissatisfied and anxious. Michelle described many accounts she has received of inconsistent implementation of C2.0 math grouping options. Some schools continue to regroup for math in order to allow for critical mass small group instruction, while others insist that all students have to learn in lockstep under C2.0. Some schools allow small groups to move at different paces but keep students in homerooms with 5 or more different levels of mastery among the students, making it impossible for the teacher to spend meaningful time with all of the students on a regular basis and requiring him or her to prepare and grade multiple different lesson plans every day, which is an unrealistic expectation across many if not most schools. And even at schools that are trying to provide acceleration or enrichment opportunities that C2.0 is supposed to contain have found that the late roll-out of the Grade 3 curriculum made it difficult or impossible to consistently offer those options, either because the curriculum pieces were missing until April or because the assessment tools that would allow them to confidently ascertain mastery are still in development. Michelle noted the fact that the Math Pathways diagram remains on the MCPS website, but the Elementary Integrated Curriculum materials that go home to primary students do not explain why those pathways are no longer available to C2.0 students. Last but not least, every C2.0 classroom still contains a poster of the Seven Keys of College Readiness, which states that a student who is not testing as “advanced” in

reading by second grade, testing “advanced” on the MSAs by third grade, or in Math 6 by 5th Grade is not on the path to college readiness. Given that the Seven Keys are not even a GT level benchmark to begin with, it is very difficult for GT parents to accept that a curriculum in which no one in elementary school can do “advanced” work is really going to meet their children’s needs for a curriculum that challenges these students to learn at an appropriate pace. Dr. Starr acknowledged that he had not focused on the disconnect between C2.0 and the Seven Keys.

For middle school parents of advanced level learners, the biggest source of concern has been the reduction or elimination of GT level classes in favor of one-size-fits-all “advanced” Middle School Reform classes that call on teachers to achieve unprecedented levels of differentiated instruction within a 45-minute class period, but were rolled out without any professional development on differentiated instruction or any system for monitoring whether such instruction is actually taking place. The GCC has collected a lot of anecdotal accounts from parents in schools all over the county who feel that their advanced students are left completely unchallenged in these heterogeneous classrooms. Anecdotal data is by its nature incomplete, but we have nothing else to work with due to the lack of monitoring. The problem is perhaps the opposite of elementary school; in a system in which everyone is described as doing “advanced” work, no one really is.

For high school parents of advanced level learners, the biggest expressed concern has been the “excellence gap”; the perception by parents, teachers, and students that advanced level classes offered in some schools are of lower quality than the same classes offered in other schools and far less likely to lead to successful mastery of the material or success on nationally-normed tests (AP and IB).

Although the meeting did not end with any specific action points, Dr. Starr seemed amenable to making better use of the MCCPTA structure to improve communication, and Michelle will continue to offer ideas and observations through written communications.

Organization

Looking back over this year, the GCC’s biggest accomplishment has been increased visibility, both for the committee and for the parents and students whose interests it represents and advocates. Michelle has had conversations and developed relationships with more MCPS personnel, both at Carver and in schools, and has heard from and advised many more parents than last year. She has also organized two meetings between parents and MCPS personnel (one on C2.0 math, one on GT options) and participated as a panelist in the Superintendent’s March 22 GT Forum. We hope to build on this visibility and these connections, and also continue to develop a positive and productive relationship with Dr. Starr and his staff.

Going forward, we believe that the GCC’s next main mission is organization: helping parents with concerns find each other across school and cluster boundaries, and developing a body of input and feedback that can help MCPS understand and respond to the breadth and depth of the issues that GCC advocates. Michelle has been developing eLists of interested parents and administrators, and would like to see those stakeholders receive a monthly newsletter or similar communication that helps parents connect with each other and with MCCPTA for more effective advocacy for concrete improvement in the options for advanced level learners.

**Monthly Report for June MCCPTA Board Meeting.
W/ Regards, Dave Lechner
MCCPTA High School Committee Chair**

1. Prom Safety Video contest - last-year's sponsor pulled out since it had a low response (3 schools). Need to rethink this for next year - cash prize and running it in the Fall would be better. General format was good, but it takes a year or 2 to build up awareness. Prize was DJ services, but most schools could not use that since they needed a firm commitment up front to plan their PROM budget, so signed contracts with a paid DJ.
2. Traffic Safety Report - was not able to update this report further - recommend finalizing it for now and releasing it.
3. Shakespeare Video contest - 1 school asked questions - no entries. The concept seems good ("HS Shakespeare on Youtube"), but didn't catch on.
4. Report on long-term Strategic options for special High School programs (e.g. IB, Cambridge, etc) in MCPS - started, but never completed a draft. Ongoing project - could be completed over the summer (after summer swim team finishes).
5. Performing Arts Festivals:
Held a "Starter Event" consisting of 2 days -
Folk Dance event in Rockville Town Center (all grades) - was held from 1:30pm - 3pm on Sat. May 12, with 5 groups performing.
Jazz Band/Choir Performance in the plaza at Silver Spring (HS bands and jazz choirs) held Sunday May 13 with 3 music groups performing.
This event was quite successful and informative. The cost of the venues was a bit higher than anticipated, but participation was fair for a "first time" event. Running this event in April of 2013 would be much more successful. Several groups inquired about participating next year. Need MCCPTA authorization to submit a grant to the MC Arts & Humanities Council for hosting it in 2013, and for seeking Corporate sponsors. Overall a 2-day, 2-venue format seemed useful and good. An event next year, in 2013, would cost about \$4,000 to hold over 2 full days, but the MCAHC Grant could cover the that cost fully. See photos (sent separately).
6. E-Book support for literary magazines - no progress made on this in 2012 - the PAF (#5) consumed all committee time.
7. MCCPTA Resolution on how MCPS manages choice in the consortium schools - Approved at the Feb. DA. meeting.
8. Started looking into a remodeling of the HS Committee web page on the MCCPTA site. Of particular interest is the ability to set up some sort of internship matching site for high school students. This was identified as a potential committee project last fall. Setting up an Internship program probably requires some sort of discussion on legal liability - what happens if an intern is injured on the site, or is abused? Good project for discussion in the future, but might be better handled by an MCPS initiative in which MCCPTA helps promote it.
9. Significant Email dialogue within MCCPTA on problems facing Middle Schools, and whether MCPS is providing adequate "grading" motivation to students that need extra work in order to succeed - either extra learning to catch-up, or extra challenge because they already know the core material. Problem has become more significant since MCPS allowed MS teachers to eliminate "Honors" level classes and class grouping is now heterogeneous. Potential resolutions and solutions discussed.

Currently gathering data in order to assess how significant the problem is. Recommend a working group over the summer that includes teachers, Principals, and parents to discuss this problem and present some options and recommendations for piloting in 2013.

MCCPTA Special Education Sub-Committee Report

To: Exec Committee

From: Jeanne Taylor, frtjmt@aol.com

June 5, 2012

Our twenty-fourth annual recognition ceremony was a great success. On Monday, May 14, 2012 we honored 38 individuals and groups that have had a positive impact on students who receive special education services in MCPS. Students, Parents, Programs and Educators were honored. Dr. Starr, Roger Berliner and other VIPs helped us celebrate the evening. MCPS staff photographer, Bill Mills, took pictures.

During the past school year we held the following:

Kickoff Meeting, Monday, October 3, 2011 7:30 PM –
Met BOE Special Populations Committee member Phil Kauffman and Laura Berthiaume

Meeting, Monday, December 12, 2011 7:30 PM –
Met Shirley Brandman, President, Board of Education

Meeting, Monday, February 13, 2012 7:30 PM –
JR Marghi, RN, MS, LCMFT presentation to group regarding special needs - Carver Auditorium

Over the past several months, Julie Reiley, Karen Smith and I worked on getting IDEA Burden of Proof Resolution passed by the Delegates.

http://www.mccpta.com/resolutions/2011-2012/Resolution_on_Burden_of_Proof_in%20Special_Education_passed_4_24_2012.pdf

Tonight I will be attending the MCPS Special Education Staffing Plan meeting at Carver.

Our members continue to advocate for the MCPS special education community.

Parent Involvement Committee:

Elisia George

This year was a very trying year on all levels. We were only able to meet one goal for the year and that was the November 9th workshop "Rolling Out The Red Carpet Part 2". This was a success and something that I hope can be continued. The foundation has been set, and so it is sustainable.

It is so needed right now, but the issue is and would be advertising and scheduling so that parents can attend and benefit from the wealth of information available. I'm not able to continue as chair person, but I'm more than willing to assist in any capacity with putting on another workshop.

A suggestion for improving committee efficiency is to have a smaller group of committed members, rather than a bigger group. With a large group, meeting attendance has been very poor – everyone assuming everyone else would be there. One person cannot function as a committee.

End of year Committee Report, June 7 2012

ESOL Subcommittee

Antonio Hernandez-Cardoso: hercarant@gmail.com

The original Work plan of this committee was written based on preliminary successful experiences in several schools. Latin Night Celebration model was proposed to be performed in more schools in the County with high ratio of ESOL students in order to identify local leaders willing and able to be volunteers and engage them in scholar activities. Also, they could be incorporated into the local PTAs to create a multicultural awareness in schools. However, during the efforts it was recognized that several already identified barriers require a comprehensive plan, instead of isolated activities.

After meeting with key people: volunteers, leaders, and officers, it was noticed that there was a need to exchange information and join efforts and resources since many individuals, organizations and scholar offices are intended to the same purpose. Involvement of parents is widely recognized as a key component of academic success. Guidance and information is a priority for this purpose.

The Chair of the MCCPTA ESOL Subcommittee was also the Chair of the MCPS ESOL Bilingual Committee (EBAC). Participation in Board of Education hearings and deliver of award to scholar staff was done on behalf of the EBAC.

Exchange of information in both senses happened during the year. The EBAC currently sponsored by the MCPS ESOL Division was invited to merge with the MCCPTA ESOL Subcommittee. A preliminary positive answer was received from EBAC to increase their ethnic groups representation. A meeting for discussion was held in March. The commonalities between EBAC and the ESOL subcommittee of the MCCPTA were explored. Some advantages identified: stronger MCCPTA support (budget and access to all PTAs). MCCPTA should be supporting all ESOL students, not just Latino students, elimination of duplicated efforts. Some disadvantages: Dues are a requirement for PTA membership, while an EBAC member does not pay dues. Discussions will continue.

The Latino Civic Association (LCA) sponsored by the Councilmember Nancy Navarro (D-4) has been recently created. The MCCPTA ESOL Subcommittee Chair was part of the Steering Executive Committee devoted to Education and supported the phase one of creation of a preliminary structure. Now, phase two was started with the creation of six Committees, including volunteers and young people. The MCCPTA ESOL Subcommittee Chair was appointed as the Chair of the Education K-12 Committee. Several interviews with Resident Experts have been carried out and participation in the June Hispanic Summit of the White House will be the short period goal. Long period goal is the strengthen of PALA (Padres y Alumnos Latinos en Acción-Latino Parents and Students in Action) to involve Latin parents in both scholar and civic actions.

The objective of meetings with leaders from several schools have been performed in order to formalize the spreading of a County-wide organization of Latino parents, with its own structure and a common objective. This organization would support the activities and goals of the original workplan of the MCCPTA ESOL Subcommittee and might be covered and supported under the umbrella of the LCA.

Besides, a leadership group managed by Gloria Bonilla, Latino Outreach Advisor of the Montgomery College, speaker at the radio program “Mi Escuela es tu Escuela” in 1540 AM two Mondays per month, is planning a supportive group for Latino HS senior students. Main informative events have been held with the participation of the MCCPTA ESOL Subcommittee Chair.

In summary, this year was mainly focused in the creation of a network of key people and gathering information about the current mechanisms and organizations involved with the scholar system. In future, these experiences and contacts should add efforts in coordination to support PTA (mainly parents and students) to work together to reduce the academic gap and improve the indicators and metrics accordingly.

ESOL Multicultural Awareness Committee

Antonio Hernandez-Cardoso: hercarant@gmail.com

The group of Multicultural parents sponsored under the MCPS Department of Family & Community Partnerships (DFCP) has been invited to merge the MCCPTA Multicultural Awareness Committee. A first positive approach was made after a presentation and discussion in March. Participation in Board of Education hearings was done on behalf of the group, as Latino leader. Meetings with Superintendent and the Board of Education were performed in order to support decision-making process and to provide a multicultural perspective, upon request.

This committee was created during this scholar year and it is expected that the re-structure of the MCCPTA BOD will facilitate its performance to positively impact and support the PTAs.

Presidents and Principals Dinner Committee Report Dale Ryan

Dinner held on 5/17/2012 at Bethesda Marriott Conference Center

Approx Income - \$32K
Approx Expense - \$25K
Net \$7K

MC – Leon Harris
Guest Speaker – Hillary Howard
Sponsorship approx \$15k - helped with the cost of the ticket

Timing was almost perfect.....

Started a little late, but 5 min. buffer was included in program prior to dinner

Ended a little after 9PM, but most people stayed till the end.

A strict adherence to the planned timeline helped with keeping the dinnertime contained.

Thanks to the work of the committee members and special thanks to Pam Loebach.

*** Need to sign a contract to reserve a date for next year - in August timeframe.