

MCCPTA President's Letter

February 15, 2008

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Greetings,

It was wonderful to see so many PTA members at the CIP testimony on February 6th. We also had a good turnout at Annapolis Night on the 11th. Many thanks to Victor Salazar and Merry Eisner for organizing the MCCPTA presence and to Dale Ryan and the Clarksburg 4-H for making canvas bags with the MCCPTA logo for the Montgomery County delegation. Montgomery County has received \$20 million of the promised \$55 million in school construction money so it is worth contacting your state senator and delegates to remind them we are counting on this money.

Unfortunately, our first mini trainings fell victim to the weather. We have more coming up—some still looking for a host PTA. All we need is a local PTA to reserve their school's media center. We do the rest. If you are interested in hosting a training, contact Liz Wheeler, vpadmin@mccpta.com.

Maryland PTA just sent us an updated membership report that shows that membership is down across the state, including in Montgomery County. The state has added some new incentive awards described in the attached letter. They close their membership year on March 31, 2008, so all dues and unused membership cards are to be sent to Maryland PTA by the 31st. If you still owe MCCPTA dues, the payment voucher can be found on our website.

Several PTAs have already returned the completed surveys based on the book "Beyond the Bakesale". In response to some comments, I want to mention that we realize that some of the listed items reflect a mentality that most of us would find offensive. Because these responses

came directly from the book, which MCPS is using to guide their outreach efforts, we didn't want to paraphrase them. PTA presidents may want to make an effort to explain that some of the responses reflect a point of view that we don't want to see in our schools—so we would like to know if anyone feels they are an accurate reflection of their own school. If you haven't had an opportunity to fill out the survey, it can be found on our website.

At our Board meeting last week, Kay Romero reported that the BOE policy on transportation is being revised and will be out for public comment on March 11. MCCPTA had the opportunity to give preliminary input on the policy and will likely draft further comments to be presented at the March DA. PTAs should plan on discussing the changes at their April meetings.

The February DA will include a program on the role of school counselors. We will also vote on the resolution regarding the PSAT, which is attached. Remember that the March DA will not be held on its regular fourth Tuesday due to spring break, but will be held on Wednesday, March 19th. There will be a program on School Improvement Plans that evening.

The BOE policy committee is about to start its next review of policy implementation with Policy CNA: *Informational Materials and Announcements* (the infamous flyer policy). At first glance it appears that they will be verifying that PTAs and other users have access by looking at the flyers that do go home in backpacks—if there are PTA flyers, then the PTAs have access and the policy is being implemented. We are not looking for problems, but do think that this approach has some shortcomings. Therefore, if

your PTA has run into any problems/impediments with full access to backpacks, or knows of problems with other groups, please let us know. We have a representative on the advisory group to the policy review process.

The BOE policy committee recently finished a review of Policy IPD: Field Trips without gathering any input from parents. Three of the items in the position portion of the field trip are: 1. Students' grades or eligibility to participate in other activities shall not be adversely affected based on participation in school-sponsored trips. 2. Students' participation in trips is voluntary, and students may not be penalized based on nonparticipation. 3. No student may be denied participation in a school-sponsored field trip or overnight trip that directly relates to the instructional program due to financial circumstances. We believe that asking the school whether these three parts of the policy are being followed is not adequate—parents should be surveyed, especially to determine whether financial circumstances are preventing student participation and whether there have been negative consequences from nonparticipation. We have discussed our concerns with two members of the BOE policy committee and will continue to raise the issue of parent input in the policy review process.

Don't forget to be thinking of nominating committee members for your local PTA and to begin the process of getting a full contingent of officers on board for next year by the end of this school year. Summer planning time is very important to getting your PTA off to a good start next fall.

Jane

February – Committee Reports

Communications Committee

1) Website:

Website Coordinators:

Sharon Goodall sharon.goodall@gmail.com

Lin-Lin Mao linlinmao@earthlink.net

Testimony given in January before the BOE on the Operating Budget, as well as many other documents, have been added to the website. The calendar has been kept up-to-date with new additions.

2) Listservs:

Listservs Moderator:

Patti Twigg LPTwigg@erols.com

As of February 1, 2008 membership on the various lists is as follows:

Listserv	# subscribed	Net increase/decrease from last month
MCCPTA Board	93	0
MCCPTA Bulletin	539	-5
MCCPTA Delegates	429	-3
MCCPTA Presidents	284	-1

** Note – the decreases in subscribers this month is due to a purge of bouncing addresses, some of which had been bouncing for almost a year. There were subscribers added this month also.

3) Spotlight:

The MCCPTA website has a corner just for your school or PTA and its accomplishments! “Spotlight” is the place for your school or PTA to shine – for the whole county to see! Don't be shy - you know how great you are, here's your chance to let everyone else know it too! If you have news and/or achievements from your school or PTA, please notify MCCPTA (via email to office@mccpta.com and/or webmaster@mccpta.com).

Patti Twigg, Chair and Listservs Moderator

LPTwigg@erols.com

Gifted Child Committee

Our committee held it's January Meeting with over 100 parents in attendance. MCPS Staff, Kay Williams, Sophie Kowzun and Michelle White presented information about identifying students who need above grade level instruction in reading.

We have 2 additional meetings scheduled for this year.

- **February 24, 2008 – Carolyn K webmaster of Hoagiesgifted.org will speak of the topic of Underachievement: Enforced, Learned and Twice Exceptional** Enforced, learned, or twice exceptional: underachievement can have many causes, and a variety of solutions. Come learn about the differences, and similarities, and many of the possible solutions, to underachievement. The first step to resolving underachievement is to figure out what's causing the underachievement - then we can begin to resolve it! Time: 7:30 – 9:00pm Location: Carver Auditorium
- **April 24th - Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices in Grouping Strategies & Teacher Preparation** - What does differentiated instruction look like in Reading, Science and Social Studies at each school level? What are grouping strategies MCPS uses in ES and MS? What are the pros and cons of each? Does research support a particular strategy for gifted students? What are some practical strategies teachers can use for students who learn at different rates or bring prior knowledge to the classroom? How are teachers prepared/trained by MCPS to address the needs of gifted students and advanced learners? Is any training required? Does MCPS maintain information on what training each teacher has received? Time: 7:30 – 9:00pm Location: Walter Johnson HS Cafeteria.

Holly Gaut, Chair, hollygaut@hotmail.com

Health Committee

Citizens Advisory Committee on Family Life and Human Development

I attended the Jan. 30th 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 8th and 10th 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 31st. 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.

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).

Curriculum Advisory Committee: Subcommittees for PE and Health Seeking Parent Input: Parents of students in Montgomery County Public Schools are urged to consider serving on the Curriculum Advisory Committees (CAC's) Subcommittee for PE and Health Ed. These are important sub-committees that make recommendations to MCPS for enhancements/modifications to the curricula. Here are some details: There are two more CAC meetings this year (which is half the meetings), on January 28 and March 10 (Mondays). The meetings are at Shady Grove Middle School from 7 to 8:30 pm.

If interested, please contact Sharon Schulman (sharon29@comcast.net or 301-881-0465) or Ted Willard (twillard@aaas.org).

The time commitment is not huge – there are generally 4 meetings a year (with 2 remaining for this school year). It is fine to have more than one parent involved in each subcommittee since you may not be able to make each meeting. If a parent agrees to do this, we would like them to commit to attend most, if not all of the four yearly meetings. At the end of each meeting, Sharon and Ted would like to have a very brief report to let them know what happened – this info is then passed on to the MCCPTA delegates. Parents can also attend the MCCPTA Curriculum Committee meetings – but that is not mandatory. There is an MCCPTA Curriculum Committee listserv that parents are encouraged to join as well.

Physical Activity: BOE Member, Steve Abrams is interested in looking at recess in elementary schools to ensure that children are being active and that recess remains an integral part of the day. I will likely be meeting with some other PE teachers who have met with Mr. Abrams and looking at ways to enhance recess. County Council member Berlinger is also interested in the issue of physical education and activity in schools.

Tracy Fox, Chair, tracyfox@comcast.net

Parent Involvement Committee

The parent Involvement Committee is in the process of planning an "International Parent Education Program," to offer parents, especially those of foreign origin, the tools needed to breach the gap between school, home and culture. This program has been successfully implemented in Howard County under the name "International Parent Leadership Program." I have received permission to tweak the name so that the word "leadership" won't scare the parents away.

Due to the intensity of this program, it can only be offered to 16-20 parents at a time, so we are looking into offering it by Clusters, with Wheaton Cluster being the pilot. However if there are not enough interested from that cluster, it will be opened up to those outside that are willing to make, and keep the three week commitment. I am looking into securing Parkland for this. I have already spoken to the Principal and he is looking into it.

Elisia George, Chair, dalisha3313@hotmail.com

Reflections Committee

The list of MCCPTA Reflections award recipients (yellow highlight = Award of Excellence—moves on to the Maryland state competition; gray highlight = Award of Merit) is located on the MCCPTA webpage at:

http://www.mccpta.com/reflections_dir/awards_recipients2008.pdf

Our judges found the judging extremely challenging, due to the amount of artistic talent in the county--there are some VERY talented kids that we have in our school system. The judges were alternately touched and inspired by the spirit, dedication and caring of the kids, and expressed to me how grateful they were to have had the experience. We sincerely hope that we continue to encourage and nurture this talent so that our budding artists flourish. This information has been sent via e-mail to all of our local chairpersons. In addition, Lin-Lin has posted on the MCCPTA web site (under Reflections Committee), and Patti Twigg has sent via the MCCPTA distribution list.

We held a successful committee meeting on January 30th. Planning continues for the April 23rd MCCPTA Reflections Awards Ceremony.

Melissa McDonald and Chuck Benjamin, Co Chairs

Melissa.mcdonald@verizon.net, chuckdebb@verizon.net

Technology Committee

The Technology committee met in January and reviewed and discussed avenues to raise money to help support the addition of a web designer to the Web Services group. We also discussed the changes in the technology curriculum and will be setting up meetings with Shelly Johnson Division of Career and Technology Education and others to understand the process by which they are deciding to integrate the new Technology curriculum into the current technology curriculum. The team also discussed setting up a meeting with Sherwin Collette Chief Technology Officer. The next meeting is scheduled for March 3rd @ 7:30 pm at Carver Educational Center.

Linda White, Chair

LindaBWhite1@aol.com

MCCPTA Committees and related information that include updates on committee webpages:

<http://www.mccpta.com/committees.html>

MCCPTA Mini Training Dates

MINI TRAINING INFORMATION

This flyer is to inform you that several mini training sessions will be available throughout the county. Please mark your calendars, and stay tuned as we confirm the locations for the trainings. The areas that have been determined are listed, and we still in the process of confirming areas for all dates and representatives.

SESSIONS

MCCPTA Mini Trainings

Secretaries – led by Ted Willard, MCCPTA Secretary Delegate Assembly

Date: February 20

Time: 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Location: Paint Branch High School – Media Center
14121 Old Columbia Road
Burtonsville, MD 20866

Use the north entrance to the school - the small parking lot, find the flag poles, and you are in the right place!

Treasurers – led by Dale Ryan, MCCPTA Treasurer

Date: February 20

Time: 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Location: Richard Montgomery High School – Room 170
250 Richard Montgomery Drive
Rockville, MD 20852

Presidents - led by Jane de Winter, MCCPTA President

Date: February 28, March 12

Time: 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Location: Looking for a host PTA—contact Liz Wheeler if you will host

CONTACT INFORMATION

MCCPTA Office 301-208-0111 or DeBora King, Training Chair (301) 879-9511.

From Maryland PTA regarding new membership incentives:

February 1, 2008

Dear Membership Chair:

We have some exciting news to share with your PTA/PTSA! MDPTA is holding a Membership Incentive Drive from now until the end of March. All PTA/PTSAs who turn in their membership invoices and unused PTA cards postmarked no later than March 31, 2008 are eligible for membership incentives. Your PTA/PTSA will receive recognition for the following accomplishments:

- All PTA and PTSA names will be placed in a drawing for a cultural arts program sponsored by MDPTA. (Gift certificate valued up to \$250)
- 5 percent growth over last year membership will be recognized with a certificate.
- 15 percent growth over last year would be recognized with a plaque.
- 25 percent growth over last year would be recognized with plaque and PTA/PTSA school banner.
- Units that distinguish themselves by maintaining 100 percent of classroom Teachers and 90 of parents and/or students over a two-year period would receive a certificate and be entered into a drawing for a free conference registration for a PTA and PTSA parent, teacher, and student member.

All awards will be presented at a MD PTA Membership Awards Reception that will be tentatively held in April during National Volunteer Appreciation Week. Please submit attached PTA/PTSA Membership Form with your PTA/PTSA invoice. We look forward to reviewing your PTA/PTSA accomplishments. Please contact the MDPTA office if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Debbie Ritchie
Debbie Ritchie
MDPTA President

Rhonda S. Ulmer
Rhonda S. Ulmer
MDPTA Membership Chair

PRESIDENT'S LETTER
MCCPTA
2096 Gaither Road
Suite 204
Rockville, MD 20850

Pony Mailing

FEBRUARY 2008

MCCPTA Calendar 2007-2008

**Unless otherwise specified all meetings take place at the
Carver Educational Services Center (850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD 20850).**

February

20	7:30 pm	PTA Secretary Training – Paint Branch HS Media Center
20	7:30 pm	PTA Treasurer Training – Richard Montgomery HS Room 170
26	10:00am	Guidance and Counseling - Board Room 120
		Delegate Assembly - Auditorium
	7:00pm	Program: Counseling
	8:00pm	Business Meeting
28	7:30pm	Gifted Child – Auditorium
28	7:30 pm	PTA President Training – location TBD

March

1	9:30am	MCCPTA Board Training-Garrett Park Town Hall
3	7:00pm	Grading and Reporting Committee - Auditorium
5	7:00 pm	Grading and Reporting Committee – Room 127
6	7:30 pm	MCCPTA Board of Directors Meeting – Auditorium
7		MCCPTA Special Education Recognition Nominations
12	7:30pm	Special Education Committee – Cafeteria
12	7:30 pm	PTA President Training – location TBD
19		Delegate Assembly – Auditorium – Wednesday Meeting