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October 15, 2008

The school year is already a busy one.....

We see PTAs hard at work getting budgets approved and meetings taking place. PTAs are also busy getting their informational/educational programs started and membership drives underway. Many dedicated PTA members are tending to school communities and advocating for children in our schools on various levels. Without the dedication of our members, it would not be possible for PTAs to do!

At the September MCCPTA Delegates Assembly, the proposed FY2010 Operating Budget Compact and the FY2010 Operating Budget Priorities were introduced. Delegates are encouraged to share both with their school communities to seek input. At the Delegates Assembly in October, delegates should be prepared to discuss and vote concerning what direction MCCPTA should take in budget advocacy for the upcoming year. It is important that your local PTA membership help us identify what overall budget goals we should focus on in the upcoming year.

The MCPS Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget will be released on October 29. Since the budget dollars are very tight, it is important for PTAs to stay on top of what is being recommended for school facilities in their communities. The MCPS Board of Education has scheduled CIP hearings on November 12th and 13th. MCCPTA, Cluster Coordinators and AVPs will be

testifying about their cluster schools' facility needs on those nights. It is important for school communities to come out and support others testifying on their behalf. The hearings start at 7 PM in the Carver auditorium. Our MCCPTA CIP Committee maintains a committee webpage located on our MCCPTA website. There are past and present CIP advocacy items posted to share with your local PTAs. The MCCPTA CIP Committee will host a testimony workshop on November 8 from 9:30 - 11:30AM in the Media Center at Gaithersburg High School. This workshop will help those testifying to craft their testimony. Come join us and participate in the sharing of ideas and pointers.

Membership dues should be paid monthly to both Maryland PTA and MCCPTA. In order to participate as voting members at the monthly MCCPTA Delegates Assemblies, dues should be paid to MCCPTA. Dues are \$1.00 per member for MCCPTA. The dues voucher form is located on the MCCPTA website under our PTA Resources Tab:
<http://www.mccpta.com/Duesvoucher.htm>.

Since Maryland PTA collects for National PTA, the \$3.25 you pay per member to the state PTA covers your National PTA dues portion. Membership cards were mailed to local PTAs in August. Maryland PTA will mail invoices each month to locals to collect for membership cards sold to PTA members. It is important that you do not throw away any unused cards. Those unused cards must be sent back to Maryland PTA in the

late spring, or your PTA will be charged for the full number of cards mailed to your PTA. Our MCCPTA treasurer, Dale Ryan is available to answer any questions related to PTA dues or any other question of a financial nature from your local PTA. MCCPTA maintains a listserv for treasurers as well. For more information related to MCCPTA listservs: <http://www.mccpta.com/listserves.html>.

As a reminder it is important for all PTAs to send in your school PTA contact information to be included in our MCCPTA Bluebook. The Bluebook contains contact information for local PTAs, county, state, and community organizations. Please make sure you have submitted your information to the MCCPTA office by calling 301-208-0111, or faxing to 301-208-2003 or you can send the information by email to office@mccpta.com. We are getting ready to submit the final draft to the printer so please send in your school PTA information as soon as possible.



**Draft 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 discussed the Draft Operating Budget Resolution and Operating Budget Priorities and Compact. 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.

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.

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:
 - o Specific action/intervention plans for students not meeting standards under the grading and reporting policy
 - o Specific action/intervention plans for students not meeting extracurricular activity eligibility requirements.
 - o 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. MCCPTA Committee Reports for October 2008

MCCPTA Committee Reports for October 2008

Curriculum Committee

Chair: Rebecca Smondrowski

rsmon@comcast.net

Ted Willard and Rebecca Smondrowski met with Erick Lange and other members of the Office of Curriculum and Instruction to discuss MCCPTA's request to offer a course in financial literacy. MCPS now has available a one semester course in Financial Management (4158), although it is currently only at eight high schools (Blair, Blake, Paint Branch, Seneca Valley, Sherwood, Springbrook, Whitman, and Wootton). A separate one semester course in Financial Planning is offered at the six high schools that have National Academy of Finance (Einstein, Gaithersburg, Magruder, Northwest, Paint Branch, and Watkins Mill). That still leaves eleven schools that do not offer any financial literacy courses. While Financial Planning can only be offered at the schools that have National Academies of Finance, the Financial Management course could be offered at any high school provided that there were sufficient student interest. Any schools that might be interested should contact the curriculum committee. In addition, MCPS is considering making Financial Literacy available as an online course.

Special Education Committee

Chair: Jeanne Taylor

frtjmt@aol.com

At the beginning of September I sent an ICB form to Pat Gamage, Business Manager, to reserve Rockville High School for our annual Special Education Recognition Ceremony. The tentative date is Monday, May 4, 2009.

During the month of September electronic communications were sent out to PTA Presidents stressing the importance of recruiting Special Education Chairs for each and every school. As a direct result the number of schools which identified a Special Education Chair for the current school year went from 33 to 69.

Additional Activities:

Providing new incoming chairs with information about the position has been a priority. Updating the SPED Chair Directory has also been a top priority. It is an ongoing labor-intensive project. Chairs have been asked to identify what special education areas they are familiar with so that they can be listed as a resource in the Directory. A column will be added to indicate areas of specialty.

For clarification purposes I sent out an E-mail about the difference between the terms "special needs" and "special education". More than one person has expressed confusion over these terms. The MCCPTA web site was updated to reflect our meeting program for the 2008/2009 school year.

We will hold our Annual Kickoff Meeting for the local PT(S)A Special Education Chairs On Monday, October 6, 2008, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Members from numerous special education advocacy groups will present information about their organizations. Our audience will hear how advocates from around the county provide support for various special needs populations. All meetings are held at Carver, in the cafeteria.

Last week the Special Education Committee had a table at the Delegates meeting. I handed out Baltimore's Child Resource Guides, Chair recruitment letters, and a copy of our meeting program.

Yesterday I met with Judy Pattik, MCPS Director of Special Education Operations. Judy brought up the deep budget cuts and I once again shared the impact I have experienced with at least two schools. Instead of meeting on a regular basis we agree to meet as needed. Judy will attend the December SPED Chair meeting to introduce herself and explain how she fits in the MCPS organization. Hopefully her counterpart, Gwen Mason, Director, Dept. of Special Education Services will also attend.

Communications Committee

Chair: Patti Twigg

listservsmod@mccpta.com

1) Website Subcommittee (Website Coordinators: Sharon Goodall & Lin-Lin Mao)

The Website subcommittee updated the MCCPTA website with the following:

- Added new events to the MCCPTA calendar
- Posted the schedules for the Cultural Arts Showcases
- Updated the following committee webpages with new information: Safety, Technology, Operating Budget
- Posted testimonies from the Community Forum
- Posted memos from Superintendent Jerry Weast to Members of BOE on Montgomery County Fiscal Plan and on FY2009 Operating Budget - Expenditure Restrictions
- Posted letter to Superintendent Jerry Weast from MCCPTA on Student Curricular Fees
- Posted Middle School Fees Parts 1, 2, and 3
- Posted September 2008 Executive Committee minutes
- Posted "Insurance and Loss Prevention Guide" from Maryland PTA
- Added link to Reflections guidelines booklet on Maryland PTA website
- Added link to "A Practical Guide to Accelerating Student Achievement Across Cultures"
- Posted report from Calendar committee
- Posted approved MCCPTA budget
- Posted Grading and Reporting update
- Posted information on PTA Membership Chairs meeting
- Posted draft operating budget compact, the priorities resolution, and background information.
- Posted September's President's Letter and standing committee reports
- Updated the homepage with new information including awards announcements, and new Spotlight article
- Posted PTA Asks You...What has your PTA done to boost student achievement?
- Links to Maryland High School Assessments website
- Posted Phoebe Apperson Hearst Family-School Partnership Awards - Flyer and information
- Posted Outstanding Advocacy Award - Cover letter, Newsletter blurbs; link to Application: State Outstanding Advocacy Award; link to Application: Local Outstanding Advocacy Award
- Posted Shirley Igo Advocate of the Year Award – Information, Application

The Website subcommittee is striving to keep the MCCPTA website up-to-date and relevant. Committee chairs, please look at your committee's website page and let the Website subcommittee know of any changes you would like to make.

All the MCCPTA standing committees website pages can be accessed from the following link:

<http://mccpta.net/committees.html>.

2) *Listservs Subcommittee* (Listservs Moderator: Patti Twigg)

As of September 27, 2008 membership on the various lists is as follows:

Listserv	# subscribed	Net increase/decrease from last report
MCCPTA_Board	81	+5
MCCPTA_Bulletin	609	+47
MCCPTA_Delegates	464	+39
MCCPTA_Presidents	289	-1
MCCPTA_Treasurers	216	+3

The new school year transition continues as new members are added and old members removed from all five listservs.

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).

MCCPTA Cultural Arts Committee

Chair: Priscilla Peterson

prisfp@verizon.net

On Saturday, September 6th, a Cultural Arts workshop was held during the MCCPTA Fall Training at Rockville High School. Attendance was good (despite the rains from Hurricane Hannah that day!) and we had 15 people sign in for the workshop. Liz Wheeler came to talk about grants, and Randy Chin (the 2007-08 Cultural Arts Chair) and I gave tips on how to get started to those who are new as Cultural Arts reps, and information on how to join the PTArts listserv, how performers are chosen for the Cultural Arts Catalogue, and how to get free performances at schools.

On September 11th and 15th, the Superintendent's Committee for Performances in MCPS held auditions for performers hoping to be hired by our county's schools. This year we had 16 new performers audition and 14 were approved. Most of these will be performing at the annual Showcases coming up in October, along with many others who have already been approved in past years.

I was present for the Committee Fair held at the Delegate Assembly on Wednesday, September 24th, and answered questions from many delegates interested in what information they could pass along to their school's Cultural Arts reps. I distributed many information flyers about the upcoming MCPS Cultural Arts Showcases as well as the schedule of performances; and I also passed out information on "Cultural Arts Committee Basics" (how to hire performers for your school), and on how to join the PTArts listserv.

The dates for the 2008 MCPS Showcases are:

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7

The Showcases will be held at Carver Educational Center in the auditorium from 9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. each day. A different performer will be presented every 15 minutes. Most of the new performers will be presented on October 7th. The Showcases are a marvelous opportunity for representatives from the schools to see the wealth of talent available to us in this area, to preview and decide which performers would be best for their own schools.

I am fortunate to have had four people offer to serve on the Cultural Arts Committee: Randy Chin (last year's chairperson), Lorna Sykes (from Julius West Middle School), Joni Williams (from Beverly Farms Elementary School), and Pam Malmgren (from Great Seneca Elementary School.) One or more of us will be working at the sign-in desk all day at the four days of Showcases.

Reflections Committee

Chair: Melissa A. McDonald

melissa.mcdonald@verizon.net

Our year is off to a good start. This year's theme is "Wow!" The official Reflections guidelines were sent by MDPTA to the local presidents in September. The guidelines and other resources (flyers, posters etc) are also available in .pdf format on the National PTA website, the MDPTA website, the MCCPTA website, and the committee MCCPTA Yahoo! Groups listserv.

I participated in the MCCPTA Fall Training Session on September 6, 2008, and although attendance was low, several new local chairs contacted me and I forwarded the training handout via e-mail.

Last year, a total of 39 Montgomery County Public Schools participated in Reflections, with a total of 541 entries. 350 entries moved forward to participate in the Maryland competition, and Montgomery County students were well represented in the 'winners circle' at the state level.

This year 55 schools have indicated an interest in participating in Reflections (33 elementary, 14 middle schools and 8 high schools), so this could be a banner year for total number of submissions, as well as winners at both the State and National level.

All of last year's artwork left at the MCCPTA office has been returned to the local chairpersons. As a courtesy to our local chairs, many were hand-delivered by me.

A committee meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

MCCPTA Reflections Awards Ceremony is scheduled for Wednesday, April 29, 2009, at the BlackRock Center for the Arts in Germantown.

Grading and Reporting Committee

Chair: Beth Kennington

bkenn@starpower.net

The Grading and Reporting Committee met on October 6 and welcomed Ebony Langford, Director - Elementary School Instruction and Achievement and Theresa Cepaitis, Director - Curriculum Development and Program Implementation, who provided a detailed presentation on the revised first, second and third grade standards-based report cards ("SBRCs"). The presentation was followed by a Q&A session, during which Committee members provided feedback including: marking period grade history, measurement topic grade computations, teacher comments included with the report card, gathering of feedback from the SBRC field test elementaries and more. We learned that it is possible that only elementaries field-testing SBRCs would be the ones to field test the fourth and fifth grade SBRCs in 2009-2010. That decision may be made in January 2009 as to whether to expand (and if there are budgetary resources sufficient to expand) the SBRC field-test to more elementaries (130 in MCPS). On the question of whether all ES SBRCs will be implemented at once or whether implementation will occur on a grade level by grade level basis, it is likely that a full-school (grades 1 to 5) rollout will take place when the SBRCs are implemented county-wide. Providing an SBRC reading chart for 3rd through 5th grades, similar to the one provided on the 1st and 2nd grade SBRC, would prove costly in terms of technology hardware, software development, teacher training and implementation. The recommendation is that 3rd grade SBRC grade values be reported on a 4/3/2/1 scale as opposed to the current A/B/C/D/E scale. A recommendation has not issued forth on the grade scale to be used in 4th and 5th grades, but it

appears logical that the 4/3/2/1 scale would be recommended. Grades at or above the .5 mark are rounded up to the next number. Grade values at or beyond the hundredths are truncated, therefore a 2.497 would be reported as a 2.

Although Pinnacle is the online gradebook currently used in standards-based grading, which is compatible with Edline, there are currently no thoughts toward displaying ES standards-based grades via Edline. MCPS is considering whether to use Edline at the ES level as a school-to-home communication tool.

We continue to advocate for MCPS to issue a communication memo to principals and staff in MCPS secondary schools, communicating to parents and students, the correct use and application of special grades Z, X and 0 (zero).

Next Meeting: December 1, 2008 - 7:00 pm CESC Conference Room 127.

If you are a parent at an elementary currently field-testing the standards-based report cards, we would like to touch base with you to discuss the potential for collecting anonymous parent feedback. Please contact me to discuss this opportunity for parents' feedback to be heard.

High School Committee

Chair: Sharon St. Pierre

stpierre619@verizon.net

The High School Committee will have its "High School PTSA President's Fall Interactive Forum" on Saturday, October 25th from 9:15 AM to 12:15 PM at the Gaithersburg HS Media Center. It is a great opportunity for PTSA Presidents and their officers to come together to discuss high school issues, concerns and share best practices. Lunch will be provided. PTSA Presidents should RSVP to Sharon St.Pierre at stpierre619@verizon.net to let me know if they are attending and how many from their school will be coming.

Safety Committee

Chair: Laurie Halverson

Lauriehalverson@verizon.net

Local PTAs are encouraged to have a Safety Chair, especially if your school has issues that include bullying, gangs, safety and security of school buildings and school grounds, pedestrian safety issues, or poor building and portable conditions which can affect the health and safety of our children and teachers.

Resolution on Background Checks: The Resolution on Background Checks was referred to the Safety Committee and discussion was completed at the September Delegates Assembly. Because arrests are shared nationwide and the MCPS HR Department has access to the database and receives notification of employee arrests, the committee found no reason for the Resolution to move forward, which called for a periodic fingerprinting/background check of staff.

Recess Supervision: The Safety Committee will meet with Director of Systemwide Safety Programs, Pam Montgomery to find out how MCPS currently trains and allocates its staff at recess time. Last year, MCCPTA advocated for additional recess aides. If we want to be effective this year, we need to do more research and gather more facts to support our request. Some parents have suggested fencing around the playground as a safety measure.

Pedestrian Safety: We need to gather information from local schools where crossing areas are dangerous. *PTAs are encouraged to email Laurie Halverson if they are concerned about pedestrian safety in their schools-please provide detailed information on exact location and why you are concerned, and any incidents that have occurred.* In

November of 2007, MCCPTA passed a resolution to advocate for more crossing guards in middle schools. Salaries for crossing guards come from the MCPD budget, not the MCPS budget.

Bullying and Teasing: HB 199 passed which is legislation for Maryland schools to have a bullying preventive program. MSDE is charged with developing a model plan by March 2009 and counties must implement a program after that date. The MCCPTA Safety Committee will work with the MCCPTA Legislative Committee to keep MCCPTA members informed and may suggest jointly how best to advocate at state level during model plan development. We have received contact information at the state level and will be in touch with them throughout the year.

Air Quality: Indoor Air Quality is currently not listed as a Safety category in the MCPS budget. Poorly maintained portables and buildings lead to poor indoor air quality which affect the safety and health of our children and teachers. MCPS currently leases portables that meet the bare minimum of specifications and have design flaws that allow water to penetrate. *If PTAs are concerned about the condition of their buildings or portables, you are encouraged to take a picture of visible problems and share it with Laurie Halverson who will gather the pictures to help us advocate for better maintenance and better quality portables.*

Down County Consortium Committee

Chair: Sally Taber

sataber@mindspring.com

The DCC Committee, which is composed of the cluster coordinators from the 5 Downcounty Consortium clusters—Blair, Einstein, Northwood, Kennedy and Wheaton, met on September 30 at the home of Jennifer Chambers, Northwood cluster coordinator. We discussed our advocacy priorities for this year, which include: high academic ineligibility levels in our high schools and middle schools, AP success rates, SAT participation, HSA pass rates, and middle school reform efforts. The DCC coordinator, Sally Taber, will address these issues in her testimony at the BOE Community Forum at Einstein HS on October 16. We will also focus on these issues as cluster coordinators prepare their cluster Operating Budget testimony later in the year.

Health Committee

Chair: Susan Young

susan@youngspa.com

I am continuing to actively seek names of people who would like to stay abreast of MCPS health issues via our email list. If you would like to be included, please send your email address to me at susan@youngspa.com.

Update on MCPS School Wellness Committee

MCPS has reconvened a Wellness Policy Work Group, on which I will represent MCCPTA, along with two other parents. Currently, the Committee is working with the MCPS Office of Shared Accountability to develop a survey that will assess the current level of wellness activity in our schools. The Committee is also working toward creating a “toolkit” with resources for schools to use in developing wellness policies and programs at the local school level.

Montgomery County School Health Council

I also represent MCCPTA on the Montgomery County School Health Council. The SHC is comprised of representatives from: MCPS, the Department of Health and Human Services, Linkages to Learning, the Montgomery County Medical Society, the American Cancer Society, the Mental Health Association, and other community members (including 3 student members).

At the October 7, 2008 meeting of the School Health Council, the following items were discussed:

- The effect of public health budget cuts on school health
- The Council's support of Students Against Smoking's effort to encourage MCPS to adopt uniform enforcement of school non-smoking policies.
- MCPS is conducting a formal evaluation of the implementation of BOE Policy JPG (School Wellness). The Office of Shared Accountability will collect data through surveys, focus groups, school visits, document reviews, etc.
- School fundraising using "junk foods" such as candy, cookie dough, restaurant nights, etc.
- MCPS Dept. of Food and Nutrition Services is developing a program to help students (especially high schoolers) make wise food choices, both in and out of the cafeteria. For example, high school focus groups have asked for a pocket-sized card on reading food labels and dietary guidelines.
- Reminder: nutrition information is on the MCPS website for all school menu items, and posters with this information are posted at the point of sale in cafeterias.
- An update was given on the status of the School-Based Health Center at Northwood HS. Although a major focus is on preventing teen pregnancy and STDs, the SBHC also provides services ranging from sports physicals, to parent education training to support groups. There is also an onsite mental health therapist, and immunizations are also available. There is a plan to expand the SBHC program to other sites, including Watkins Mill, Gaithersburg and Wheaton high schools.
- MCPS has developed a pandemic flu plan, in cooperation with the county Department of Health and Human Services.
- 31 MCPS schools are officially participating in International Walk-To-School Day.

Meeting with Robyn Levy from the Jewish Community Services Center

On October 7, 2008, I met with Robyn Levy, Community Liaison for Child and Family Services at the Jewish Social Services Association (JSSA). JSSA provides emotional and mental health services for people of all denominations across a wide range of issues, including social skills, behavioral challenges, divorce, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, depression and anxiety, ADHD, etc.

JSSA would like to partner with MCCPTA to inform families of the many services available to all in our community. Possibilities include a presentation at a Delegates' Assembly and/or providing JSSA speakers at local PTA meetings.

Training Committee

Chair: DeBora King

dkndc@msn.com

Despite the weather, we had over 120 attendees for this year's MCCPTA Fall Training at Rockville High School!

The classes that were offered were Presidents/VPs, Delegates, Treasurers, Reflections, Cluster Coordinator, Advocacy, Membership Recruitment in Immigrant Communities, SIP, Facilities, Running Effective Meetings, Outreach, Cultural Arts, Operating Budget, and Bylaws.

The trainers and volunteers did an awesome job!

Breakfast and lunch was served and enjoyed by all.

The feedback for the Fall Training presenters was phenomenal.

Planning for Spring Training is already underway, and we hope to deliver the same quality service as we did in the fall.

Legislative Committee

Chair: Merry Eisner

Merry@TheEisners.Net

The Legislative Committee continues to work on getting ready for the Legislative Dinner on November 10th. As of today, 22 of our 32 representatives plan to attend the dinner and only one has confirmed that they won't be able to make it. We have also had quite a few coffees with members of our delegation and shared concerns raised at this summer's area meetings. A few highlights from our conversations as well as from the Committee for Montgomery meetings:

- When budgets are tight, advocacy becomes even more important. Please let the MCCPTA Board of Directors members that serve you know what your issues are so that they can represent them at the Legislative Dinner. Seating is by District, so they will be chatting with your Maryland State Senator and Delegates.
- Our Legislators are open to out of the box thinking about issues that are important to us. Yes, there's no money. But that doesn't mean that the needs of Montgomery County's public school children should go unmet. Come up with a creative solution to a problem, and let's go for it.
- We all read the newspaper so we know how tight budgets are (and where the economy is taking us). GCEI and the state-funded portion of our teacher pensions are in play. The teacher pension shift would require a vote of the legislature, so it's critical that we let our legislators know how we feel about the impact this would do to our local budgets.

The committee is also continuing our work with the MD PTA Legislative Committee on their section of the MD PTA website, which we hope to have completed by the state convention. In closing, the committee would like to remind everyone to vote on November 4th!

Membership Committee

Chair: April Keyes

KevesA@sec.gov

The Membership Committee was busy during the month of September. We were invited to attend five different back-to-school nights at Silver Spring International Middle School on September 4th, Matsunaga Elementary School on September 15th, Cannon Road Elementary School on September 22nd, Earle B. Wood Middle School on September 23rd and Clopper Mill Elementary School on September 24th.

At Silver Spring International MS, the membership table was down the hall from the main entrance of the school. I would suggest next year that the membership table be moved closer to the main entrance of the school. The Membership Team helped with signing up new members to the PTA. The MCCPTA Membership team also covered the membership table while the local membership team went to their student's classrooms. It was a successful back-to-school night and the local membership team appreciated our presence at their event. The MCCPTA Membership Committee handed out stickers and pencils at this event.

At Matsunaga ES, we attended their first night of BSN. Their membership table was the first table that you saw when you walked in the main entrance. The PTA at Matsunaga ES is extremely organized and I was impressed with the planning that had gone into putting on their BSN. Most of their memberships were received from the summer mailing and parents arrived with their membership form completed. The PTA had all of their Spirit Gear available for purchase. The MCCPTA Membership team did tattoos, handed out stickers and pencils. It was fun for all and the BSN was a major success.

At Cannon Road ES, we attended their first night of BSN. Their membership table was in the same room as the assembly for the evening. We suggested that they bring the table in the hall outside of the room the next BSN. They

agreed. The MCCPTA team did tattoos and handed out stickers, candy and pencils. The PTA President for Cannon Road ES stated that she would be putting her request in early next year, so that MCCPTA can attend each of their BSN nights.

At Earl B. Wood MS, we attended their BSN. The membership table was the first table that you came to when you entered the school. The MCCPTA team basically covered the membership table for the entire evening signing up new members and giving out tattoos, stickers, candy and pencils and the local membership team went to their student's classrooms. This was a very successful evening and the local membership team was glad that MCCPTA was available to cover their membership table while they visited their student's classrooms.

At Clopper Mill ES, we attended their BSN. The membership table was the first table that you saw when you walked in the door. The local PTA was extremely organized. The MCCPTA team did tattoos and handed out stickers, candy and pencils. Most of the new members received their membership form through the summer mailing. Most of the parents have joined the PTA prior to BSN. However, some parents returned the membership form at BSN. This was a very successful BSN and the local President stated that she would be requesting that the MCCPTA attend their BSN next year.

The Membership Committee is planning meetings with all of the local Membership Chairs. A notice will be sent out once the room has been reserved.

Calendar Committee

Chair: Jane De Winter

janedew@verizon.net

The MCCPTA Calendar Committee (Jane de Winter, Kristin Tribble, Suzanne Weiss) met with the following MCPS staff:

Robin Confino—Executive Assistant to Chief Operating Officer Larry Bowers

Rosie Ramirez—Assistant to Associate Superintendent Jody Leleck

Donna Hollingshead—Executive Director to the Deputy Superintendent Frieda Lacey Andrew Miller—Assistant to the Associate Superintendent of the Office of Organizational Development

Karen Crawford—Coordinator of Student Affairs

on Monday, September 15, 2008, and gave input on the draft 2009-2010 calendar based on feedback received from MCCPTA members via the Bulletin Listserv. Although representatives from other parent groups had been invited to attend, none were present.

The MCPS calendar faces many constraints including state laws, the need to equalize length of quarters and semesters, and the technical capacity of the transportation department and computer servers. Some of the issues that these constraints present are:

- Students must attend school at least 180 days each year; there are additional requirements for the number of hours of attendance which play a role in the length of the school day.
- Half days of school do count toward the 180 day total as long as the requirement for total hours of attendance is met; as a consequence combining two half days into one full day off lengthens the school year by one day.
- Maryland State Law (COMAR) designates Easter Monday and Good Friday as public school holidays.
- By contract teachers receive ½ day at the mid-quarter point of first and third quarters to prepare interim reports.
- By contract teachers receive one professional day at the end of each quarter to prepare grades plus at least one additional day before grades are required to be entered electronically.

- By contract teachers have one day of the Maryland State Teachers Association annual conference off. (This year October 17th).
- School cannot be held on general election day due to parking, security, and space issues. In addition, teachers want to be free to work the polls.
- Due to server capacity and other demands on the central computing system, the time frame for running and printing report cards must always span a weekend and then include time for review of printed report cards by local school staff before distribution.
- The department of transportation requires at least one full work day between the MS and HS orientations and the start of school to make bus route corrections therefore these orientations for 6th and 9th grade students and new secondary students may not take place the day before school starts.
- Aside from religious holidays dictated by COMAR, the decision whether or to not hold school on a religious holiday is driven by the extent to which student and/or staff absences will disrupt the instructional day for the entire student body.
- The Maryland State Department of Education does not finalize testing windows (for HSA, MSA, and make-ups) until summer which prevents the release definitive school calendars more than one year in advance. MSDE may also make late changes to the testing schedule which may cause changes in the current year calendar.

Other issues which drive the school calendar from the MCPS perspective are the desire to have as many instructional days as possible before the administration of the MSA and HSA exams in the spring; the desire to not have the school year end on a Friday which would require the professional day to be on the following Monday; the desire that first semester be scheduled to be one or two days shorter than second semester since snow days are more likely to fall during second semester; desire to have the timing of interims err on the side of preparing them before mid-quarter rather than after the mid-quarter point if mid-quarter is not possible; and that the schedule of holidays and professional days not encourage excessive teacher and student absences.

MCPS presented a draft calendar based on the draft calendar released by the Board of Education in December, 2007, which can be found at: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe/meetings/agenda/2007-08/2007-1113/4.0%20School%20Calendar.pdf>

The calendar committee made comments on this draft calendar based on the following feedback received from MCCPTA members:

- By an overwhelming margin parents preferred a Tuesday start day to a Monday start day. A significant number of parents continue to prefer to start school after Labor Day. Many parents questioned why MS and HS orientations were held on Friday rather than Monday. These orientations have been held two days before the start of school for at least 15 years to allow time for bus route changes. Some parents informed us that despite the shift to a Tuesday start, their Elementary Schools continued to hold the open house the week before on Thursday or Friday and asked that schools be required to hold the open house on Monday if school is to begin on Tuesday.
- Most parents like the change to a half day before Thanksgiving although some felt it should continue to be a full day of school and some felt there should be a full day off. Many parents commented that while the half day is nice, this is not their highest priority.
- Most parents want professional days to be linked to weekends and even four day weekends although several brought up the problem of students missing weekly specials or special education services when days off consistently fall on Mondays or Fridays.
- Several parents asked that Columbus Day and/or Veteran's Day be professional days.
- Several parents questioned why we had October 17th off and not Columbus Day.
- Most people prefer that half days be the day before a weekend or non-school day although many commented that the Monday half day before the full day off for the general election seemed poorly planned.
- Many people commented that they would prefer two half days be combined into one full day off so the year could be shorter.
- Monday half day is better than a mid-week half day.
- Half days are hard for working parents, many end up taking a full day off of work.

- Ending the school year early in the week (eg Tuesday) is hard for working parents who then have to find 3 days of child care.
- Several people called for a shorter school year.
- Several people commented on the idea of shortening the school year if there are unused snow days. The general opinion was that this would make planning extremely difficult for both schools (final exams, ES graduations, end of year activities and field trips) and parents (having to scramble at the last minute to find childcare after camp schedules were set).
- Several parents mentioned they like having the day off after Halloween.
- Several parents asked for a longer winter break.
- A couple of parents mentioned the difficulty of their students missing school for Eid Al Fitr and wanted schools to have a better understanding of the Muslim calendar.
- Several parents mentioned their desire to have no changes in the calendar after it was released and many supported the idea that the calendar be planned out more years in advance.
- A parent suggested having MCPS release the calendar in Google or Outlook format so it could be easily downloaded to electronic calendars.

Based on the comments that MCCPTA received and the discussion regarding the draft calendar, MCPS made some tentative changes. These changes will now go to the MCPS Executive Leadership Team (which includes representatives of the three unions) and then to the Board of Education. The BOE is scheduled to approve the 2009-2010 calendar on November 11, 2008.

The items discussed at the calendar meeting included:

- A tentative change in the start date to Tuesday, September 1, 2009. However, it was noted that this would push the end of school to a Thursday and a Thursday end is not particularly liked by teachers due to deadlines for submitting grades.
- The tentatively scheduled early release day for Monday, October 5, 2009 might be changed to Friday, October 2, 2009.
- They will continue to hold teacher conferences on Veteran's Day so that parents who have Veteran's Day off can attend a conference w/o having to take off from work.
- MCPS will have an early release day on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving but will evaluate to determine if this will continue in 2010-2011. Because the calendar is slated to go to the BOE for approval before Thanksgiving, MCPS will not have data to inform them whether this half day led to excessive absences. Based on data comparing student and teacher absences in November, 2008, to earlier years, they will make a determination for 2010 on.
- There is a half day tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 2, 2009. We believe that parents would prefer this half day fall on Friday, February 26, 2009. However, MCPS felt that moving another item to a Friday would then cause students to miss specials which we had also told them was undesirable. WE SEEK INPUT ON WHICH DAY PARENTS PREFER.
- Spring Break was tentatively scheduled to coincide with the beginning of Passover and Easter. We suggested that a professional day scheduled for the Thursday before break (with school on Friday) be delayed until the Tuesday after break (extending the break for students by one day.)
- We urged MCPS to think of a way to make sure that all students are getting services and specials on equal number of days rather than leaving it up to individual principals to reshuffle schedules.
- MCPS sends a letter to each school every year with religious holidays noted (eg Ramadan, Lunar New Year). We suggested that this letter be more widely released so that parents and students have easy access it and can refer to it if they need to when requesting accommodations for student absences due to religious holidays which fall on school days.
- MCPS thought that the suggestion to release the calendar in an Outlook file or something similar was doable and would be appreciated by their staff as well.

It was strongly emphasized that the calendar is still tentative and must pass through the Executive Leadership Team for their comments.

Other comments: Karen Crawford, representing students, informed us that students have similar concerns to parents. In 2010-2011 Easter and Passover are separated by one month. If break coincides with Easter, it will be at the end of April.

Maryland PTA Training

Maryland PTA offers training in many forms to our officers, councils and local units. This is accomplished thru Summer Leadership Conference, Regional Trainings, Maryland PTA Convention, Local Unit training, Council Officer training, National PTA events, BSP Training and more.

If you are interested in any of our training programs, please contact the state office at office@mdpta.org or call 410-760-6221.

2008 Regional Trainings
October 25, 2008 <u>All Day Financial Workshop</u>

Registration is FREE but a must. Contact the state office to register at 410-760-6221 or office@mdpta.org.

SAVE THE DATE IN 2008!

Maryland PTA
93rd Fall Convention
Registration Information
<http://www.mdpta.org/documents/09ConventionMailing.pdf>

PRESIDENT'S LETTER
MCCPTA
2096 Gaither Road

PONY MAIL to PTA
Presidents to be shared

**Suite 204
Delegates
Rockville, MD 20850**

with School PTA

October 2008

MCCPTA Calendar 2008-2009

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

Upcoming Calendar Items:

October

- 20 MCCPTA Safety Committee Meeting 7pm-9:30 pm**
- 28 MCCPTA Program "Multi-Cultural Outreach & the Purpose of PTA" 6:30-7:30
Delegates Assembly in Auditorium 7:30pm-10pm**

November

- 3 MCCPTA CIP Forum 7:30pm-9:30pm**
- 6 MCCPTA Board of Directors Meeting 7:30pm-10pm**
- 8 CIP Workshop 9:30am- 12:pm
MCCPTA CIP Work session 9:30am-12 pm**
- 12 MCPS Facilities and Boundaries Hearing (CIP) 7:00pm**
- 13 MCPS Facilities and Boundaries Hearing (CIP) 7:00pm**
- 14 Maryland PTA Fall Convention**
- 15 Maryland PTA Fall Convention**
- 19 MCCPTA Curriculum Committee Meeting 7:00pm- 9:00pm**
- 20 MCPS BOE Facilities and Boundaries Decisions 6:00pm**
- 25 Delegates Assembly 7:30pm-10pm**

December

- 1 MCCPTA Special Education Committee Meeting 7:30pm- 9:00pm**
- 4 MCCPTA Board of Directors Meeting 7:30pm- 10:00pm**
- 11 MCPS Operating Budget Presentation (released) 7:30pm**
- 17 MCCPTA Curriculum Committee Meeting 7:00pm-9:00pm**
- 18 MCCPTA Safety Committee Meeting 12:30pm- 2:30pm**