

MCCPTA FY 2013 OPERATING BUDGET COMPACT

Adopted October 25, 2011

Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations (MCCPTA) believes that an Operating Budget for the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) must provide funding to advance the programs and initiatives, as 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 2013. In addition to the initiatives addressed herein, which correlate to the Strategic Plan for Montgomery County Public Schools, MCCPTA supports an array of long-standing programs and practices that are fundamental to our schools (and as such, are no longer considered initiatives in the context of the Strategic Plan). To the extent that MCPS considers changes to such programs or practices, MCCPTA urges MCPS and the Board of Education to provide a process for seeking input from all stakeholders, including MCCPTA, with regard to such changes.

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, as well as under-achieving, on level and above-level students will have their needs met, and will continue to advance. In furtherance of this goal, MCCPTA supports in principle continuation of the following current and standing initiatives:

- Reduced Class Sizes
- Safe and Secure Schools, including
 - Ongoing collaboration between MCPS and Montgomery County Police Department to ensure continuation and full restoration of the School Resource Officer program (SROs are responsible for improving coordination and communication in an emergency, disaster, crisis or dangerous situation, with the overall goal of maintaining and enhancing a safe and secure learning environment)
 - Digital closed-circuit television surveillance program (now in fourth of six years) to provide security at all middle schools and high schools, and visitor management at all elementary schools. The access control systems, consisting of an exterior camera, intercom, and remote strike/release locking system on entry door, will allow elementary schools to lock exterior doors during the instructional day and admit visitors after they have been identified
- Monitoring performance of every student at every school, including “M-Stat process” to provide a framework for monitoring critical student achievement and performances data
- Middle School Reform to provide a rigorous instructional program with professional development and instructional strategies to meet the unique needs of every learner, including Math content and Literacy coaches to build instructional capacity and to increase participation in advanced and enriched courses
- High School learning initiatives, including continuation of, and full support for signature and academy programs with the goal of developing high interest and rigorous programs that enhance learning process for all
- Minority Student Achievement Initiatives, including
 - “Education that is Multicultural,” a continuous, integrated, multidisciplinary process to educate all students about diversity and commonality
 - Initiative to lower disproportionate ineligibility rates for minority students

- English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) service initiatives, including
 - Professional development to build teaching capacity at all levels (elementary through high school)
 - Students Engaged in Pathways to Achievement (SEPA) program, to build entry-level job skills for Spanish-speaking high school ESOL students ages 18-21
- Removing Barriers to Learning- Student Services and Mental Health initiatives, including
 - Collaborative Problem Solving Teams and Educational Management Teams to provide early intervention and ensure school success
 - Truancy and dropout prevention initiative
 - Intra-County collaboration to provide students with intense needs access to available community services
- Elementary School Leadership Initiative to enable principals to focus on instructional leadership, with the support of vice-principals

In addition, the budget should provide for the following:

- Measurement/evaluation to determine the impact of Middle School Reform on student performance and to ensure equity across all middle schools
- Additional guidance counselors, pupil personnel workers, and other staff to address social/emotional/developmental needs at all levels
- Certification in the appropriate content areas for middle school teachers teaching high school courses and specialty courses offered in signature programs
- Increased staffing for art, music, and physical education
- 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
- Adequate and equitable allocation of elementary school resources and staffing, based on school enrollment
- Further development and communication of best practices to address discipline problems, especially at the middle school level, including the problem of gangs, bullying and risk to student safety
- Increased recess supervision

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

As adequate educational staffing is achieved, it will become even more important to provide staff with the tools necessary to ensure success. To further this goal, MCCPTA supports continuation of the following initiatives:

- Online learning community to provide curriculum, instructional resources, and professional development for the Elementary Integrated Curriculum in a collaborative environment while reducing need for substitute teachers, with emphasis on ensuring participation in, and the effectiveness of, training across all staff and schools
- Continued implementation of hours based staffing for special education students
- “Continuum of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction” from pre-k to 12, including honors, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate and Advanced-level courses

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

- Increased academic intervention/support resources, including:
 - Specific action/intervention plans for students not meeting standards under the grading and reporting policy
 - Consistent funding and implementation of special programs across the county
- Timely provision of course materials, guidebooks, textbooks and/or other instructional materials and textbooks when new curricula are introduced

- Additional emphasis should be given to providing and ensuring comprehensive and consistent teacher training across all schools BEFORE the roll-out of new curricula
- Improved vertical articulation to ensure students receive the foundation for future curriculum options
- Continual evaluation of technology used for instruction and training to ensure most effective and equitable use of technology across all secondary and elementary schools in the county

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 initiatives:

- Language Assistance and Translation services
- Expanded use of study circles (trained facilitators enable dialogue among small groups of diverse parents, staff and students to address racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement)
- Parent access to on-line achievement and reporting systems in all secondary schools
- Parent Outreach Staff Training Program to ensure parent outreach staff have the most current and accurate information about academic programs, graduation requirements and school and community resources
- Partners for Success, through which parent outreach staff work with parents and school staff to promote and encourage parents as full partners in special education process by providing resources and information, facilitating workshops for parents to support learning at home and parent advocacy, and provide support to parents for EMT, IEP and other school meetings

There is also heightened 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. Therefore, we request additional support for the following:

- Local school based resources for communications, especially with non-English speaking parents, and increased translation services

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. We support the following initiatives:

- Professional Growth System for Teachers, Administrators and Supervisors, and Supporting Services, with the goal of continuous growth and improvement at all levels
- Recruiting and Retaining Highly Qualified Staff
- Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Work Force
- Higher Education Partnerships, working with local colleges and universities to expand the teacher and administrator candidate pools to include applicants representing critical fields and diversity
- Equity Training and Development to build capacity of leaders to eliminate racial disparities in student achievement
- National Board Certification and Development Program to recruit more teachers for this rigorous professional growth endeavor

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 maintenance, plant operations, transportation, and other central office functions play a key role in student achievement. 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 includes accountability to parents. We support continuation of the following initiatives:

- Publication of *Budget in Brief* and other efforts to improve the understandability and transparency of budget documents and the budget process
- Focus on School Meals to provide well-balanced, nutritious meals at an affordable price, and to communicate menu choice and nutritional information to students and parents
- Long Range Planning to promote feedback on school enrollment projections from principals and build in midyear forecast revisions and later adjustments, as needed
- Indoor Air Quality Program to ensure that heating, ventilation, and air conditioning equipment operate properly and to develop building preventive maintenance programs to ensure the equipment continues to operate at peak performance until it reaches obsolescence and is replaced, including assessment of portables, and to provide for evaluation and selection of environmentally friendly products for use in schools
- Facility Assessment System to capture and report the status of MCPS facilities during a weather emergency, to allow leadership to make real time decisions and to inform parents and community as soon as possible
- Environmental Stewardship to promote recycling and lower energy consumption in all schools, promote energy efficient retrofit projects for existing facilities and green building initiatives for new construction
- Partnerships with MCCPTA and Employee Associations and other stakeholders in developing the Operating Budget, including hosting community roundtables

For optimal learning our schools, including portable classrooms, must provide an environment in which children feel safe and their health is protected. The following issues need to be addressed:

- Development of objective standards for portable classroom conditions and installation, routine building systems maintenance, and prompt response to unanticipated repair and maintenance needs
- Increased staffing of building services, maintenance, and repair personnel, including HVAC mechanics and indoor air quality staff, with training in building envelope issues
- Continued assessment 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
- Development and implementation of Building Maintenance Plans (BMPs) for all new schools and increased implementation of BMPs for all other aging MCPS schools
- Evaluation of nutritional values for all “a la carte” cafeteria items, with the goal of providing healthy food choices in all school cafeterias

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.