

## Safety Committee Report 10/13/2006

The safety committee holds its first in-person meeting for the 2006-2007 school year on October 19, 2006. Members of the safety committee have been working on advocacy in the areas of school violence prevention and security, bus safety, mold and indoor air quality, sex offender screening, and underage alcohol abuse. As we are in the thick of homecoming season, please remember that motor vehicles are the leading cause of death for U.S. teenagers. See the MCCPTA website for resources and responsibilities with respect to teen drinking and driving and other safety related issues.

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

We are interesting in hearing from parents about their safety concerns, general and specific. Please email [Pammoomau@comcast.net](mailto:Pammoomau@comcast.net) or call me (Pam Moomau) at 301-530-9691.

**School security.** With recent incidents of school violence across the country combined and threats of violence in Montgomery County schools, the safety committee recognizes that this issue is a top priority for parents. We have been researching and discussing possible areas for improvement and advocacy positions for MCCPTA. We are aware that many parents were dissatisfied with the amount of communication from MCPS and their local schools during the widespread Code Blue events, and have been communicating concerns to MCPS officials.

Because the MCPS philosophy is that each school is in the best position to make many of the decisions affecting its own security, emergency response, and parental notification, it is important for each local PTA to familiarize itself with its own school plans and procedures, and to work with local principals to address community concerns. The safety committee works with MCPS safety and security officials to determine school policies and communicate them with local PTAs. We will try to assist with local advocacy strategies as we examine possible areas for change at the system level. See the report on school security procedures posted to the MCCPTA website, under "safety committee" for information about current security procedures and measures parents can take to promote security in their schools.

**Bus safety.** At the beginning of the school year, there were several incidents that raised parental concerns about bus safety. One incident raised questions about procedures for ensuring that students board the correct bus get off at the correct stop; the other led to concerns about the safety of bus stop locations.

Parents should know that each MCPS school bus is supposed to have at least a two-way radio as a means of communication with the bus depot, and bus driver training emphasizes the importance of ensuring each child gets off the bus in the right place. However, because on the way home students sometimes ride how with friends, or get off at alternate stops for a variety of reasons, MCPS officials stress with parents that they work with their kids and with school staff to make sure the kids and the school know which bus the kids should board and where they should get off. If there seems to be a delay, parents should first call their school; if the school has no information, call the bus

depot; if the bus depot is not helpful, call the central bus depot and division of transportation. It will help considerably if you know your kid's bus number. Information about bus policies and bus depots can be found at:

<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/transportation/policies.shtm>

According to the MCPS director of transportation, John Matthews, bus stop selection criteria follows the same safety guidelines as those used to determine whether there are safe pedestrian routes for students. The safety committee is planning to research whether we should advocate for changes to these guidelines. If parents have concerns about the safety of a bus stop location, you should start by communicating with your principal and bus depot. Also, please let us know about specific bus stops that you believe pose safety concerns.

**Mold and indoor air quality.** While MCPS was ahead of many school systems in creating a special environmental safety unit to address mold and other indoor air quality issues, the resources they have devoted to this problem have declined significantly in recent years. If you have concerns about these issues, be sure to mention this unit in your budget testimony. If you are concerned that your school has mold issues, have your school staff submit a request form, or you can submit one yourself. Forms can be found at: <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/forms/staff.shtm#facilities>

Scroll down to the "health and safety" section and click on indoor air quality for the form. If your school has already been treated for mold, but you find there is still a problem, another request needs to be submitted. MCPS does not always follow up to make sure the problem has been solved.

**Sex offender screening.** In a special session last June, the MD legislature passed a bill to prohibit registered sex offenders from working as contractual employees at schools. Implementation of screening is up to the local school district. Safety committee members are continuing to monitor MCPS's policies and regulations on this issue.