

The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, Inc (MCCPTA), works with MCPS to provide qualified representatives for task forces and other groups and to help disseminate information about changes in the school system and board of education policy

MCCPTA also has active standing committees that work on making recommendations for improvements in curriculum, special education, education for the gifted and talented, cultural arts, grading and reporting, technology and other advocacy priorities

The Technology committee has received feedback from the parent community that they would like to see improvements in our school websites (Elementary, Middle and High School).

Hence the Technology committee worked with the Department of Web communications this past year to come up with a recommendation to ensure school websites follow a standardized format offering the same depth of information and content across all MCPS while allowing for individual design

Detailed in this presentation is a high level review of the taskforce findings, recommended standards and a overall recommendation to improve the quality and content of all the County MCPS Websites

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Current Situation and themes across Montgomery County :

- Lack of time and resources to keep web sites up-to-date
- Webmaster duties are being assigned without prior training in web communications
- There seems to be a lack of a general set framework for MCPS schools to follow in terms of content

- A taskforce was put together of MCPS Web staff, MCCPTA, parents and teachers
- Three meetings were held; Feb 26, April 23 and May 14th (School web sites workgroup)
- The objectives of the meetings were to:
 - Define the desired state or framework for school web sites (ES, MS, and HS)
 - Outline the obstacles to reaching the desired state
 - Make recommendations for change to improve the school websites

Standards for Elementary schools -

<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Gold</i>
•Staff email	•Educational link
•Calendar	•Performance links
•Principal/school newsletter	•Event Photo
•PTA and cluster info	•Parent Handbook
•Mission and vision	
•Staff photos	

Standards for Middle Schools -

<i>Parents</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Staff</i>
•Daily calendar of events	•Edline	•MCPS link to staff page-diversity, directory, outlook, IMS
•Staff directory with departments/teams	•Resources to subscriptions	•Resources to subscription
•Daily announcements for after school activities	•Photos	•Announcements
•Extracurricular activities	•Forms (trips, registration, emergency)	•Comprehensive calendar
•Payment ability (lunches, field trips etc)	•Curriculum links	•Staff Development (open for parents to see)
• PTSA link		
• Edline		
•School-odex-data		
•Link to forms/policies		
•Emergency information		
•Crisis plan		
•Reunification outline (parent to child)		
•Newsletter		
• MCPS link		

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Standards for High School -

<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Gold</i>
•Administrative communications, school policies	•Alumni
•Links to PTA websites	•SIP
•Staff contacts	•Links to MCPS info for that school
•Sports schedules, extracurricular activities	•Event photos
• Calendar/school functions	•Online courses/EdLine
•Forms	•Payment ability
•School programs/services	•Student registration
•Clubs	•Merged calendar
•News	•Translation services
•Departments	•Friendly domain name
•Mission	•Teacher resources & forms

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Summary of Obstacles to meeting Standards-

<i>Elementary Schools</i>	<i>Middle School Group</i>	<i>High School Group</i>
•MCPS curriculum sites need to be updated	Time	•Limited student input and access –administration doesn't trust students
•Time to work on the site-money/stipend	Funding	•Lack of webmaster time
•Resources (funding for subs, expertise with software & content, staffing/delegation of jobs)	Training	•Lack of financial compensation
•Hardware (good quality cameras to document events)	•Perception	•Administration & staff undervalue the website
•Getting content from grade level teams	•Resource constraints	•Webmasters not always proactive – not always easy to get info
•Knowing expectations (from school, community,system)	•Summer break – getting site updated before school starts within a very limited time frame	•Lack of technical ability/writing skills/content/editing
•Feedback from staff, parents, students what's useful, whats not, how can we improve	•Proposed resolutions – •Students could work on school sites as part of SSL hours •Schools could create class to help update the site •Administration buy-in •Parent and volunteer help	•Inconsistent updating – lack of review by departments

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Recommendations -

(Chris these are my thoughts based on taskforce findings, I'm open to any suggestions you have, especially since you understand the MCPS culture)

A structure needs to be developed and defined county wide for all schools to make the web site content a priority for the school and the community.

The expectation is that school leadership will play a key role in making this a priority and supporting it with the necessary resources for maintenance and improvement

MCCPTA feels that this should be a budgeted line item in every school budget

(it can be combined with another function but needs to be supported)

Need to define the role of the website manager – job description needs to be developed (maybe this is a communications position in school) Is it a FT or part-time job?

How often should sites be updated? Daily, weekly, monthly, depth of content? (I think daily hence the need for a dedicated individual)

Maybe instead of suggesting how the position should work if we defined how often the site should be updated and content expectations at a minimum, then leave it up to the schools to figure out how to support? We will advocate for funding

Once job function is defined with skills needed, the reality is MCPS will probably need to spend some time on training to get school personnel trained on what ever standard is suggested for use throughout the county

What will the role of web communications dept be? You may need more resources to assist schools with content etc...feel free to add any other resources or equipment needs you foresee for the future to support such a program

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Vision for the next three to five years

•Feeds – subscribe to certain topics of information
•Calendar – filtering/XML- using Outlook as input tool and output via XML
•Tron – web publishing system- is future
•List serves (feeds)
•Ecommerce – generate revenue
•Bill paying – all fees could be paid online
•Enrollment/change of address/yellow cards
•Online publications (Connect ED)
•Online surveys