MCCPTA Mission

To Make Every Child's Potential a Reality by Engaging and Empowering Families and Communities to Advocate for All Children.

Hacer Una Realidad El Potencial De Cada Niño Al Comprometer y Apoderar Las Familias y Comunidades Para Que Intercedan Por Todos Los Niños.

MCCPTA has adopted the following Advocacy Priorities for the 2023-2024 School Year:

ACCESS TO EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES:

- Give all students equitable opportunities for challenging programming, whether core academic, elective, Career Technology Education (CTE) and other career paths, or out-of-school time[1]activities, ensuring that equitable programming is available countywide. Fund stipends and transportation for elementary students' out-of-school time activities. Make more IB and AP course options available for students to choose from, especially if a particular school is designated to serve as a specialty school for such programs.

- Provide equitable resources so that all students, at all schools and regardless of gender or other differences, have access to sports. Resources include safe playing fields, equipment, practice time, away-game transportation, and staffing.

- Provide adequate support for special education, gifted education, and programs that support Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLs)[2] in every school.

- Provide additional resources to all students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS), no matter which school they attend. Implement coordinated campaigns to narrow the gap between FARMS eligibility and enrollment for receipt of FARMS benefits.

- Increase support of and funding for music programs, particularly for middle and high school students who were precluded by the pandemic from full participation in their earlier years and for EMLs.

CAPITAL FUNDS AND FACILITIES:

- Increase capital improvements funding to reduce overcrowding, to properly maintain existing infrastructure to extend the useful life of our schools, and to ensure Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance in every building.

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[1] Out of School Time (OST) is a supervised program that young people regularly attend when school is not in session. Source: CDC Healthy Schools, https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/ost.htm#:~:text=Out%20of%20School%20Time%20(OST,school%20is%20not%20in%20session, 9/29/2023.

[2] MCPS currently uses the term EML for an individual and English Language Development (ELD) for a program or for services. In MCPS, these terms replace those still used by other organizations (e.g., English Language Learner (ELL), English Learner (EL), and Limited English Proficient (LEP) for individuals and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for programs.

30 • Before making recommendations for Major Capital Projects in the capital budget, engage students,
31 staff, families, and area communities as part of gathering Key Facility Indicator[3] (KFI) data so that
32 those data transparently reflect the full school experience.

33 • Equitably identify and prioritize projects for remediation of issues related to accessibility, health, and
34 safety (including security, condition, and utilization of buildings). Provide funding to keep aging
35 schools in an acceptable, safe condition that meets standards (e.g., ADA and applicable EPA
36 regulations and recommendations), temperatures, air quality, and other safety issues.

37 • Reduce disparities in utilization of school facilities across the county. Use existing facilities more
38 efficiently and innovatively and brainstorm a wider range of options together with MCCPTA and
39 school communities.

40 • Ensure adequate state and county capital funding to cover roadway and other infrastructure
41 improvements around schools to provide safe routes for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit
42 riders. Install bike racks at all schools.

43 • Examine enrollment projection forecast methods and compare forecasts to actual enrollment
44 annually to ensure accuracy. Set a threshold of acceptable deviation of actual enrollment from
45 forecasts that, when met, will initiate a reexamination and correction to forecasting methods.

46 • Communicate the need for and results of any boundary study directly to parents using multiple
47 communication methods; include an independent assessment of facility utilization, transit safety,
48 and safe routes to school in each study.

49 • With equity and inclusion of all voices, meet the goals of the MCPS Sustainability Policy [Policy ECA]
50 and of the 2017 Climate Action Resolution to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2027 and 100% by
51 2035 and to increase and maintain MCPS participation in the MD Green Schools Program. Commit to
52 climate resilient land management, reducing paved surfaces, and replacing impervious parking areas
53 with pervious paving.

54 **OPERATING FUNDS:**

55 • Ensure ample county funds to decrease class sizes and increase resources aimed at overcoming
56 learning loss, the achievement/opportunity gap, and lifting underperforming students.

57 • Apply best practices and innovative strategies in human resources including increasing diversity and
58 offering flexible schedules. Develop and fund a robust plan for teacher recruitment and retention to
59 combat countywide teaching staff attrition and replenish the available substitute pool.   Focus
60 particularly on recruiting and retaining Special Education educators in light of the significant adverse
61 effects of the current severe shortage.

62 • Provide equitable funding for graduations, trips, and other school activities, in part by making the
63 Independent Activities Funds more equitable; the needs are not equal across schools.

64 • Ensure adequate funds to purchase books and materials to facilitate non-digital learning.

65 **COMMUNICATION:**

66 • Maintain a strong MCCPTA-MCPS partnership with meaningful, two-way communication both to
67 ensure that families are informed of major policy, funding, procedural, curriculum, and
68 programmatic changes proposed or implemented in schools, and of school climate and security

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[3] KFIs assess major infrastructure elements in a variety of categories. KFIs are components of a facility that taken together provide an overall description of an individual school's facility condition. https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/performance/, 9/28/2023.

69 issues. Ensure that families' views and concerns are actively sought and factored into those
70 proposals and changes.

71 ● Raise minimum requirements, support, and measures of accountability around the School
72 Improvement Plan (SIP) process to facilitate school-based data transparency, community
73 engagement, and participation and collaboration in the development and ongoing evaluation of
74 school improvement at every school.

75 ● To ensure community feedback, implement outreach in multiple languages regarding (1) new
76 programs and policies and their goals and metrics for success, when implementing any new program
77 or policy, (2) curriculum standards for each core course to ensure that students have equitable
78 learning experiences, and (3) criteria and procedures for course and program placement,
79 communicated with sufficient clarity that students can determine whether they have qualified for a
80 course or program and how to apply for programs or appeal their placements. Use traditional and
81 non-traditional approaches, including partnering with community-based organizations, to target
82 these communications. Communications should reach current as well as future students and
83 families, as well as area communities. Expand translation and interpretation services for family-
84 school engagement. Provide timely, clear, and transparent publication and communication of data
85 in an accessible, downloadable format.

86 ● Ensure that all communications, presentations, and conversations are clear, concise, and accessible,
87 and enhance understanding and engagement. Eliminate or reduce use of acronyms and jargon
88 ("edu-speak").

89 ● Improve parent access to student information, such as ensuring functionality of the Synergy platform
90 via the app.

91 ● Implement transparent processes including, but not limited to, open and accessible data practices
92 and release of line-item specification on budget allocations.

93 **CURRICULUM:**

94 ● Provide and publish, online and in print, curriculum and enrichment guides for all courses.

95 ● Include and support enrichment, acceleration, differentiated instruction, and challenges for all
96 students, as appropriate, including students receiving special education (Individual Education
97 Programs and 504 plans), ELD, and/or gifted education services.

98 ● Provide professional development for all staff implementing new curriculum and technology.

99 ● Shape the curriculum for all grades to include diverse content and culturally relevant teaching
100 strategies that reflect the MCPS student body along all dimensions of diversity. Acknowledge and
101 address the fear and exclusion students experience when they do not feel "seen" or represented in
102 the curriculum. Develop programs to prevent hate and bias and to promote inclusion,
103 understanding, and respect for differences.

104 ● Follow evidence-based best practices for use of digital content in the classroom and review how time
105 spent on screens relates to outcomes.

106 ● Include more hands-on and experiential learning, lab experiments, and use of manipulatives, and less
107 use of electronics-based instruction.

108 ● Work to maximize student success by matching skills and specialties of long-term substitutes with
109 the subject matter they are required to teach.

110   ● Retain tutoring services and free summer school for students with a demonstrated need and make
111   the resource better known to students, families, and staff.

112   ● Provide comprehensive support and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of elementary
113   and secondary one- and two-way language immersion programs, including: provision of
114   curricula/materials in the target languages that are reasonably equivalent to MCPS's English-
115   language curricula/materials; effectiveness of instructional approaches; student achievement among
116   all demographic groups (including EMLs) in the target languages and English; appropriate, evidence-
117   based identification and provision of special education and formal enrichment/acceleration
118   opportunities for students in these programs; and equitable eligibility/placement for immersion
119   students vis-a-vis their non-immersion peers in any criteria-based programs (e.g., magnet programs).

120   ● Provide Central Office support so that schools engage in a continuous cycle of improvement of
121   instruction. Direct MCPS's Office of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction and Office of Curriculum to
122   provide more robust training to reading specialists (and, in certain situations, directly to teachers).
123   Ensure reading specialists are given time to provide this professional learning to teachers and, more
124   broadly, ensure that professional development provided to teachers is not a "one-off" event, but
125   part of a continuous pathway of development of the teacher.

126   **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING:**

127   ● Examine every action through the lens of DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging).

128   ● Improve experiences for families who are new to MCPS with welcoming environments in all schools
129   and provide students and families with the information, services, and encouragement they need for
130   the students to be successful.

131   ● Improve the family-school partnership by facilitating intentionally inclusive family and community
132   outreach that empowers all students and families to participate in easily accessible communication
133   methods that include continuous feedback and improvement opportunities.

134   ● Implement proactive, measurable actions based on reports from the Anti-Racist System Audit, the
135   countywide boundary analysis, and the evaluation of the ELD model, and the respective community
136   discussions of the findings, ensuring accountability for evaluation of each recommendation and
137   timely implementation, where appropriate.

138   ● Ensure greater transparency surrounding Restorative Justice practices, including situations when
139   Restorative Justice is appropriate versus when it is not appropriate. Provide students, parents, and
140   staff with information regarding their rights under the Restorative Justice process, including policies
141   surrounding the ability to opt out of Restorative Justice circles and appeal for other methods of
142   discipline where indicated. Engage these groups to establish transparent metrics to identify strengths
143   and weaknesses, to perform a comprehensive review of current practices, and to develop a program
144   of continuous review and improvement.

145   **HEALTH AND WELLNESS:**

146   ● Expand all students' access to and awareness of mental and physical health and wellness resources,
147   including prevention and intervention for suicidal ideation, and support to students with mental
148   health and substance use disorders.

149   ● Train all staff to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health and/or substance use
150   challenges, in how to refer students for help, to use trauma-informed practices, and in effective
151   classroom management for adjusted maturity levels post-pandemic.

152 ● Seek to identify, understand, and address root causes of concerning behaviors. Provide the
153 resources, professional development, and consistent guidance and accountability to all school staff
154 to prevent, identify, and address student behavioral health needs including consistent development
155 and implementation of appropriate accommodations, instruction, and/or educational settings to
156 support students with disabilities.

157 ● Improve school communities' access to existing services by increasing exposure and ease of access to
158 wellness resources, by adding wellness and crisis resources to the banner at the top of every school
159 website with a school-specific list of services and how to access them, and by implementing a
160 "counselor of the day/duty" program.

161 ● Increase crisis prevention and de-escalation training and use community partnerships for behavioral
162 health intervention, diversion, and treatment to avoid crises that are traumatic for individual(s),
163 peers, and staff. Eliminate isolating punishments that often exacerbate impacted students'
164 conditions and risk further harms or death.

165 ● Use non-stigmatizing language and images in all substance use and mental health curriculum,
166 communications, forms, and policies.

167 ● Meet student-requested substance use prevention goals, including updated curriculum with more
168 depth, realistic and factual information about the reasons for and risks of specific substances (versus
169 blanket statements), and frequent inclusion of stories shared by individuals with lived experience.
170 Access and utilize recent settlement funds to address vaping and other substance use, including
171 prevention, treatment, and recovery resources.

172 ● Explore the establishment of a post-hospitalization re-entry program for students.

173 ● Monitor and publicly post air, water, and athletic field quality at all schools.

174 ● Establish Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) policies that include science-based thresholds and clear mitigation
175 procedures pertaining to all schools, including occupied schools under active construction.

176 ● Establish and communicate clear written policies and procedures to ensure safer school construction
177 in occupied schools, including exploring alternate sites/holding schools to minimize student and staff
178 exposure during construction.

179 ● Equitably update schools, as necessary, to provide comfortable facilities with clean air and water,
180 and safe outdoor infrastructure, prioritize Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) projects
181 and other quality of life and safety projects. Maintain filter replacement schedules to maximize
182 effectiveness.

183 ● Advocate for universal, higher quality, culturally appropriate, locally sourced school meals with
184 options for vegetarians and students with other dietary needs.

185 ● Ensure sensitivity to students who are fasting when scheduling tests and other high-value
186 assignments.

187 ● Allow for age-appropriate movement in the classroom to avoid long periods of sitting. Encourage
188 the use of outdoor recess when there is no significant condition or weather event that precludes the
189 safe use of outdoor spaces.

190 ● Publish guidance for schools to ensure that all students, especially elementary school students, have
191 access to snacks and snack time during the school day to eliminate long periods without food due to
192 early or late lunches.

193   ● Educate parents, students, and MCPS staff on best practices for technology use to reduce the effects
194   of screen overuse such as eye strain, sleep disruption, screen addiction, attention deficit, and
195   reduced learning outcomes.

196   ● Raise awareness about strategies to promote online safety, and about the potential threats to both
197   physical safety and mental well-being from the misuse of social media platforms.

198   **SCHOOL CLIMATE AND SECURITY:**

199   ● Better inform all students, families, and staff about how to report incidents of hate/bias, bullying,
200   harassment, etc., and how to escalate their concerns if not properly addressed. Hold MCPS
201   accountable for applying MCPS's policies in a consistent and timely manner.

202   ● Maintain safe conditions and positive school environments to protect all persons from bullying,
203   discrimination, harassment, and assault.

204   ● Expeditiously improve security in all school buildings by providing secure vestibules at all remaining
205   schools, by expanding video surveillance in and around all facilities including elementary schools, and
206   by ensuring adequate MCPS security staff and updated and functioning security and audio/visual
207   equipment at all schools. Regularly audit schools and procedures to ensure all schools are safe from
208   intruders. Ensure all classroom doors can be locked from the inside by permanent and temporary
209   staff (i.e., substitutes).

210   ● Ensure that public use of facilities when students are present is closely monitored to ensure student
211   safety.

212   ● Inform students, families, and staff of the purposes, training requirements, and oversight of security
213   staff and armed law enforcement personnel utilized in and around school facilities and events.
214   Expand family engagement in all schools with creative programs such as "Dads on Duty".

215   ● Provide safe, reliable, equitable, and timely passage to and from schools and school-related
216   activities, including arrival and dismissal configurations and procedures, sidewalks, crossing guards,
217   and protected bus stops. Fund and undertake a study for multi-source student transportation
218   consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U. S. Surgeon General, and
219   National PTA guidelines on bell times.

220   ● Address, track, reduce, and transparently report to the MCPS community incidents of bias,
221   discrimination, bullying, hate, sexual and other harassment, and abuse of and assault on students
222   within schools, on school buses, and during school activities. Develop, share, and implement policies
223   and procedures to ensure timely communication with students, staff, and guardians of these
224   incidents.

225   ● Develop, share, and implement policies and procedures to ensure timely communication with
226   students, staff, and families during emergency situations and avoid breakdowns in communication
227   during crises. Provide advance notice of emergency drills and support for students and staff as
228   needed during and following drills, which can be anxiety-producing or even traumatizing.

229   ● Advocate for education on policies and laws that increase safety and reduce students' and school
230   communities' access and proximity to firearms, so as to reduce violence including self-harm.
231   Annually distribute information on Maryland laws regarding firearm safe storage requirements via
232   MCPS communication channels as previously approved by the Board of Education.

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- Provide "upstander" intervention training/education to all staff and students. Provide age-appropriate, evidence-based lessons at all schools and grade levels for violence prevention, online and in-person bullying and harassment, childhood obesity, suicide, and substance use prevention.

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- Address distractions caused by cell phones and Chromebooks in the classroom by enforcing MCPS's regulation on use of cell phones.

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- Ensure that MCPS-approved apps have appropriate privacy policies in place to protect student data.

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- Involve parents and guardians in decisions on where to place new portable classrooms.