

OCTOBER 6, 2020

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOE MEETING SUMMARY**

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## Board of Education Business Meeting (Virtual) 10/06/2020

### Item 4: Recognitions by Dr. Smith

10/19-23 as National Bus Safety Week

Gratitude to Montgomery County Family Justice Center for their work in partnership with MCPS and all that they do to support MCPS's ability to address the needs of adolescents and helping them develop healthy relationships.

### Item 5: Public Comments

### Item 6: Action on Board Policies

Item 6.1:

P. O'Neil as the chair of the Policy Management Committee (PMC) presented final action on policy JEE-Student Transfers. The policy was discussed by PMC 7 times, presented to the board 3 times and went out for public comment twice, garnering more than 600 comments. The proposed policy was adopted unanimously with an amendment to line 361 to include that the policy is to be reviewed on an annual basis. Link to presented policy and resolution: [https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BTWJSK4E5DBD/\\$file/Final%20Action%20Policy%20JEE%20201006.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BTWJSK4E5DBD/$file/Final%20Action%20Policy%20JEE%20201006.pdf)

Item 6.2

Non-substantive changes to the following resolutions were unanimously improved to update directory information in each of the following policies:

ACA-Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency  
JGA-Student Discipline  
JHC-Child Abuse and Neglect  
JHF-Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation

### **Item 7: Recess**

### **Item 8: Opening Schools in Recovery of Education**

Dr. Smith stated that schools are not going to open tomorrow! There has to be planning, logistical building of systems and structures to be put into place for WHEN it is time to return to buildings SAFELY. Safety has to be first priority.

This discussion is no way a signal of when this will happen. Topics to be covered include building use, special education services, athletics/extracurricular activities, and enrollment/engagement updates.

Dr. McKnight summarized the guiding principles: health and safety precautions, equity, excellence, and communication.

Essie McGuire presented information related to health and safety metrics:

- Currently Montgomery County reports a positivity rate of 2.5% and a case rate of 9 per 100,000 people.
- There have been 79 MCPS employees who have had to be out of work due to testing positive for COVID-19 since March, which accounts for 0.27% of MCPS total employees, including substitutes.
- MCPS continues to support virtual instruction as primary model while simultaneously planning for in-person return so that MCPS is positioned to respond to changing health conditions.
- People ARE in buildings! Facilities are being used for food and material distribution, facility/operations maintenance, teacher access, and administration presence/functions.

- Safety protocols in the building include limited capacity, requiring face coverings, check in/out procedures and documentation, health attestation, and signage outlining physical distancing, health, and hygiene measures.
- If there is a confirmed positive case in an MCPS facility, MCPS contacts DHHS, conducts contact tracing regarding staff interactions, notifies other employees as need per healthy guidelines while protecting employee privacy, determine extent of area/facility closure required, and clean/disinfect as needed.
- PPE to be used universally for in-person groups. PPE kit (masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, saniwipes) are in all schools, touchless hand sanitizer dispensers, gallon hand sanitizer dispensers as well. PPE supplies to be replenished quarterly but there is a process to restock if needed sooner.
- Special education will be provided with face shields/gowns/special face coverings/goggles because of the more intense proximity.

Board comments/questions related to Item 8 up to this point:

K. Silvestre:

Q: were the employees who tested positive on the job?

A: most were but some are reported

Q: are the masks n95?

A: range of types, including n95; n95 will be reserved for specified and indicated use

J. Docca:

9/100k means we do have to continue to be careful

J. Dixon:

Reminder to everyone to wash hands, wear masks, and practice social distancing

N. Asante:

Q: Will DHHS protocol be the same when students return?

A: yes

P. O'Neil:

N95 masks are effective when uniquely fitted

Q: Will there be an update to the related to indoor air systems?

A (Essie McGuire): work has begun in part by procuring increased standard of air filters and 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors for additional manpower. They are starting at

facilities with more programming (such as the buildings that housed the SATs). The work will be done regardless of council funding as it is not optional.

R. Smondrowski:

Q: Is it cleaning or replacing air filters?

A (Essie McGuire): all buildings will be brought up to new standards of air quality but it is different approaches for each based on systems. All will be getting new filters to meet new standards.

Q: Similar to lead in water dashboard, will/can air quality reporting be made public as it is being addressed?

A (Dr. Smith): Information has to be standardized in a way that makes sense because there will be different approaches based on the different systems in the buildings but it will be made available.

P. O'Neil:

Importance of funding for the air quality issues should be made clear to county council.

President Evans suggested that the council knows the importance and that they have implied the funding will be approved so it is not necessary to force it at this time.

James Koutsos, Area Associate Superintendent Office of Teaching, Learning, and Schools, spoke about activities involving students/small groups in the building. Consideration for in-person learning is being identified in collaboration with recovery design teams. Priority of building use is to support students most in need of in-person learning.

Keven Lowndes, Associate Superintendent Special Education spoke about the need for in-person assessments to determine what services a student qualifies for/needs. Formal assessment cannot be done virtually because it is not normed. 3 testing centers (one up-, one down-, and one mid-county) for assessments in-person. He emphasized that there is no intention to take services away from any student. Before return to in-person learning, staff must be trained on use of PPE equipment and protocols to ensure safety for

situations where maintaining distance is not an option. He also wanted to especially thank transportation and Todd Watkins who made it possible to distribute the various adaptive materials needed to make the remote learning possible. Video examples of remote learning highlighting special education students using various technologies were shown.

Jeff Sullivan, Athletics Director, provided update on sports, including that MCPS is continuing with the virtual athletics and that winter sports registration opens today.

Each school has a webpage for extracurricular activities, including athletics and SSL opportunities.

Board comments/questions related to Item 8 up to this point:

J. Docca wanted to know why there was such focus on athletics, was it scholarship related? President Evan shared her family's experience with the effectiveness of virtual athletics in response.

P. O'Neil cited outbreaks in profession and college sports with testing protocols in place.

B. Wolfe thanked MCPS for sharing the videos highlighting special education successes.

R. Smondrowski also shared appreciation for the video and asked if all special education students and staff now have the equipment that was promised to be forthcoming at the last BOE meeting. The answer was that the last outstanding computers came in last week and are being prepared to be distributed next week.

J. Dixon asked about secondary students' access to counselors for social emotional issues and college applications. Dr. Smith responded that the schools should be polled as to what they have seen in terms of applications

and number of requests. Ms. Dixon also asked how after-school programs in elementary and middle schools are going to which Dr. Smith said that information from the schools could be gathered on that as well. Student board member, Mr. Asante, shared that he knew that there were windows of counselor availability at his school but that it is on the student to be proactive. He also shared that students are concerned about getting recommendations from counselors who they may not have interacted with since first semester last year.

Sean McGee presented information related to enrollment statistics:

- 1,189 students unenrolled in MCPS to go to non-public schools in Montgomery County, compared to 986 last year
- 1,018 students unenrolled in MCPS to go to non-public schools outside of Montgomery County, compared to 148 last year
- 1,080 students unenrolled in MCPS to homeschool, compared to 74 last year

Pete Cevinini, Chief Technology Officer, shared updated details on student engagement. As of last week, the week of 9/28-10/2, there are only 1,561 students, <1% who have not connected week.

Steve Neff, Director of Pupil Personnel and Attendance Services, share that the school based staff members and student wellbeing teams have done excellent work to capture those who hadn't engaged and will continue to meet to problem solve obstacles that may be preventing these students from connecting. These initiatives will continue after return to in-person learning to determine the root issues that prevent certain students from learning effectively.

Board comments/questions from the remainder of the presentation:

R. Smondrowski wanted to ensure that students who miss the class but take advantage of the opportunity to engage by watching the recording and completing the work are also supported.

K. Silvestre:

Q: What is the grade distribution of the missing 1,561 students? Also noted that over half are Hispanic.

A (Dr. Smith): System is determined to find them all by the end of October.

Based on enrollment numbers, it is most likely that the 1,561 are in grades preK-5<sup>th</sup>.

### **Item 9: Item of Discussion/Action**

2020-21 Instructional School Year Calendar: calendar was adjusted to move the early release days on 11/11 and 11/12 to 11/23 and 11/24. Conferences will now be held on 11/23 and 11/24 to allow for less uninterrupted weeks (week of 11/23 is already disrupted by early release on 11/25 and days off on 11/26 and 11/27 for Thanksgiving). An additional professional day for teachers was added on 11/4 to allow for teacher planning.

**R**. Smondrowski wanted to know if teacher feedback was solicited on this change and whether feedback was sought from parents. Sarah Sirgo shared that the adjustment came after results of survey of a representative group of more than 500 participants including teachers, administrators and recovery team members.