

Health and Safety Committee Report February 2010

Chair: Laurie Halverson

Next Meeting is changed to February 18

The MCCPTA Health/Safety Committee's next meeting date has been rescheduled to Thursday, February 18 at 7:00 p.m. in room 223 at Carver Educational Services Center, 850 Hungerford Dr. Rockville. All PTA members are welcome to attend. Topics on the agenda will include discussion on a Resolution about the "Safety and Security at a Glance Report." We will also ask for feedback and discuss the Visitor Management System and CCTV cameras which are being installed in our schools.

Anti Bullying Policy

The Board of Education Policy Committee has reviewed *Policy JHF-Bullying and Harassment and Intimidation* and has incorporated changes from public comments received. On March 9, the BOE is including this policy on their agenda and will consider adopting the policy. The next step will be for MCPS to form a work group to develop regulations which will govern the policy. Kay Romero has testified to the Board of Education, asking for MCCPTA involvement in this process.

Other steps that MCPS will take will be to provide training to staff and students to implement the policy. Parents will be informed of the bully policy and reporting forms at the beginning of each school year. A student, parent or staff member can file a bully report. There should be a 2 day window for investigating a bullying incident.

School Safety and Security at a Glance Report

The Montgomery County Council Education Committee held a meeting on January 14 to discuss the *School Safety and Security at a Glance Report* in its second year of existence. Newly appointed Frank Stetson, Acting Director of the Office of the School of Performance and Bob Hellmuth, MCPS Director of Safety and Security were there to answer questions. Concerns that were brought up were:

- the reports just show each school's results and there are no system-wide comparisons.
- hardly any schools have a bullying incident listed
- there is a perception that MCPS is "hiding things under the rug" since there seems to be an underreporting of actual incidents.

Dr. Stetson and Mr. Hellmuth explained that only incidents that qualify under the definition of "serious incidents" as defined in MCPS regulation COB-RA are included in this report, so most bullying incidents would not show in the report, however they are reported to the state through the *Safe Schools and Reporting Act of 2005*.

Sharing the same concerns brought forth at the County Council committee meeting, Laurie Halverson introduced the following proposed resolution at the January MCCPTA Delegate's meeting which will be voted on at the February 23 Delegate's meeting. This resolution will also be brought to the Health/Safety Committee for discussion at the committee meeting on February 18.

Proposed Resolution to Propose Changes to the definition of "Serious Incidents" in Regulation COB-RA

WHEREAS on November 13, 2007, the Board of Education adopted Resolution #548-07 to support the district's goal of improving school safety and security. This resolution provided for useful data on "serious incidents," suspensions, and other pertinent school data.

WHEREAS MCPS Regulation COB-RA defines "serious incidents" for purposes of reporting to an appropriate MCPS office. A compilation of "serious incidents" is the data that is provided for each school in the School

Safety and Security at a Glance publication.

WHEREAS the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005 requires MCPS to report to the Maryland State Department of Education incidents of harassment and bullying as defined by a new state mandated policy.

WHEREAS most incidents of harassment and bullying are not shown in the School Safety and Security at a Glance report unless an incident qualifies as a “serious incident” under Regulation COB-RA. This does not reflect an accurate picture of bullying and harassment incidents in a school, nor does it indicate the bullying and harassment incidents that are reported to the Maryland State Department of Education.

BE IT RESOLVED that MCCPTA requests that MCPS reevaluate it’s definition of “serious incident” under COB-RA and modify the School Safety and Security at a Glance Report to include all incidents of bullying and harassment as defined by Policy JHF.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that MCCPTA requests that data on the following statement be added to the School Safety and Security at a Glance Report: “In this school, students bullying other students is a problem.” This statement is currently reflected in the Student Survey of the School Environment but is not shown with the other two safety related questions in the School Safety and Security at a Glance” Report.

Safe and Drug Free Schools Symposium- “Enhancing School Climate Through Connectedness/ Bullying Policy and Bullying Prevention

Laurie Halverson attended an all day symposium on January 29. Speakers included:

- Dr. Sameer Hindja, Co-Director, Cyberbullying Research Center
- Kevin Jennings, Assistant Deputy Secretary of Education Office of Drug-Free Schools
- Stephen Zagami, MCPS Director of Student Services
- Dr. Jorge Srabstein, Psychiatrist, Children’s Medical Center
- Ellen R. Schmidt, MS, OT, Assistant Director, National Partners
- Robin Holstein Glass, Project Change.

Key Messages of the Day

- It is most important for schools to establish a safe and secure school climate. Kids cannot learn if they don’t feel safe, period.

Cyberbullying:

- Rapidly changing and evolving
- Yahoo Messenger, Facebook, Yahoo Chat, AIM, Youtube, My Space all have contact information for reporting cyberbullying.
- Peaks in middle school years
- Messages in cyberspace can always be tracked. What you say stays there forever.
- Zero tolerance is not the best way to go because it implies inflexibility and cyberbullying should be handled on a case by case basis.
- Schools should respond by establishing codes of conduct and they have a responsibility to educate students, teachers, parents. Schools should also track incidents, even minor ones. Schools can conduct surveys on bullying, and can create opportunities for students to report inappropriate behavior through drop box, anonymous reporting, online form, email reporting, etc. It is a community effort.
- Civil suits can be filed if it does not fall under “bullying.” For example, if a teacher is being harassed on a website, but no death threats or disruption of school results, the teacher can still sue a family for “defamation of character” or other civil suit.
- Can find more information on www.cyberbullying.us.
- Dr. Hinduja wrote a book, *Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Identifying, Preventing, and Responding to Cyberbullying* which can be ordered through his website.

Safe and Drug Free Schools:

- 50% of drop outs come from only 2,000 schools in the U.S.
- Everyone in a school (including janitors and cafeteria staff) is a teacher and should learn about bullying.
- Schools should have policies, procedures and practices for controlling bullying and a safe environment.
- School suspensions should be made meaningful-there should be interventions. Kicking a child out of school is not the answer.
- Schools should have surveys about the school environment for staff, students and parents.
- The goal at the federal level should not be to punish schools for being honest with accurate reporting. Instead, assistance should be given to those schools in need.
- As a result of stimulus funds, Safe and Drug Free Schools will receive substantial increases this year.

What to do if you are bullied:

- Stop, do not fight back. Go and get help from an adult.
- Parents should get help from an administrator and should not go to the parent of the bully.
- Don't tell your child that bullying is a part of life.
- Reporting an incident is not getting a child in trouble, not being a snitch. It is every person's responsibility.

H1N1 - The Center for Disease Control still recommends vaccinations for the H1N1 virus.

From the CDC website: [Flu activity](#) in the United States for the week of January 17-23, 2010 remained about the same as during the previous week as reported in FluView. Flu activity is relatively low at this time. Most flu continues to be caused by 2009 H1N1 viruses, with very little seasonal flu spreading so far. Flu activity, caused by either 2009 H1N1 or [seasonal flu](#) viruses, may rise and fall, but it is expected to continue for several more months.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services plans to offer the H1N1 (swine) flu nasal spray vaccine to 150 elementary students in each of the 135 MCPS elementary and special schools during after-school clinics to be held February 9 through March 25. Parents will be receiving information from their child's school. For information about H1N1 (swine) flu clinics in Montgomery County, **[check the county's website](#)** or call the county flu hotline at 240-777-4200.