

January 2009

MCCPTA Safety Committee Report

Chair: Laurie Halverson

Visitor Management System: On December 5, Laurie Halverson, Kay Romero and Merry Eisner visited Westland Middle School and met with Bob Hellmuth, Director of Safety and Security to learn about the new Visitor Management System and CCTV system. A report of the meeting can be found on the Safety Committee page of the MCCPTA website.

Bullying: Steve Zagami, Special Ed and Student Services Director was the guest speaker at our December committee meeting to help us understand the bullying policies at MCPS. Mandated by the Safe Schools and Reporting Act, MCPS has a form that can be completed to report a bullying incident. It is called the "[Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form #230-35](#)." A student, parent, close relative or staff member can complete the form. MCPS only received about 65 to 70 forms last year. MCPS informs parents about the form through Quick Notes, TV programs on the MCPS cable channel on the program "Take Ten," and through notification by Principals at the local schools (at Back to School Night or school newsletter.) The process of handling the bullying forms is directed by each principal who may delegate the role to another staff member, such as the school counselor. There is no set timeframe on completing the feedback form, called the "[Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Incident School Investigation Form #230-36](#)." MCPS does not keep track of these forms on a school by school basis so schools are not rated in the number of bullying incidents that occur. MCPS Bullying policy currently has embedded language in several areas such as JFARA and HRA. Much of the language is included in the "Students Rights and Responsibilities." New legislation passed last year requires all county school systems to have a separate policy for prevention of bullying. MSDE has already developed a model draft of the new policy and has submitted it to relevant MCPS personnel to review and provide feedback. Typically parents are involved in policy changes and it is likely parents will be included as a stakeholder in the development of the new policy.

There is a law that a report must be filed in the case of child abuse or neglect. However, there is no such requirement in completing the bullying form. If your child is being bullied, parents should be communicating with the principal and should expect the problem to become resolved. Questions to ask: What are you doing to make my child feel safer? What can I do at home to support that? All stakeholders should be aware. If the problem is not being resolved at the local school level, then parents can take it up the ladder to the community superintendent and the Director of the Office of School Performance, Steve Bedford. Parents can suggest goals for bullying prevention in the School Improvement Plan. Steve Zagami handles issues such as intervention strategies with bullying. Steve Bedford is responsible for accountability and policy issues related to bullying. All committee members agreed that most parents do not know about bullying forms and most principals are not communicating the availability of the forms. The Safety Committee is forming a subcommittee that will work with MCPS and MSDE to try to get a stakeholder place in the process of the development of this new policy and to communicate what parents perceive is working or not working currently.

Safety and Security at a Glance - This report has 6 sections that report information from various sources. It can be found at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/regulatoryaccountability/SafetyGlance/> and is also on each school's website along with the student and parent satisfaction surveys. While this is a comprehensive report from different sources, it does nothing to help separate bullying incidents from other incidents, plus these are "serious incidents" so minor bullying incidents are not reported on this report. The only way to gauge bullying incidents is through the bullying report which isn't providing an accurate picture of the true number of bullying incidents if only 60-75 reports are completed county wide each year. It is notable that the questions about bullying and teasing (which for many schools show a clear problem) are not included on this report.

Safety of School Buildings: The Safety Committee will discuss and possibly vote on a proposed resolution about the safety of portables when they are moved from one location to another. As noted in previous reports, there were problems last summer when portables were moved to schools within MCPS.