

Committee Report, December 2006

Safety Committee: Pam Mommau, Chair, Pammoomau@comcast.net

Building security

The Safety Committee introduced the following resolution at the November Delegates' Assembly, to be voted on in the January 23 Delegates' Assembly:

“WHEREAS recent incidents involving violence and threats of violence from intruders in schools both nationally and in Montgomery County have revealed the vulnerability of many Montgomery County school buildings to potential intruders; and
WHEREAS the potential for threats from intruders varies from school to school depending on the configuration of each school, its site, and its location; and,
WHEREAS all students and staff in Montgomery County Public Schools should be assured that everything that is reasonably possible is being done to enhance school security; and
WHEREAS portable classrooms pose the following security hazards relating to

- Movement of students and staff between portables and the main building,
- Isolation of students and staff, often without visual contact between the portable doorway and the main school building; and
- Lack of access to building facilities such as bathrooms and water in the event of lockdown situations;

now therefore be it

RESOLVED that Montgomery County Public Schools conduct a security inventory of their school facilities, including soliciting input from staff and parents associated with each facility;

RESOLVED that MCPS provide resources as may be required to ensure that access to the school is adequately limited during the school day;

RESOLVED that MCPS amend the portable siting specifications to include consideration of security-related criteria; and

RESOLVED that MCPS investigate ways to improve access to bathroom facilities for students in portables, particularly during lockdown situations.”

MCPS safety and emergency communications policy

In response to concerns expressed by parents about inadequate communications from MCPS during several recent incidents with MCPS, the Safety Committee sent a letter to Dr. Weast, cc'ing members of the Board of Education, requesting information “about any regulations or other guidelines Montgomery County Public Schools uses to guide both central office and local school staff on providing information to parents and the community about potential emergency situations and other security concerns affecting students.” We hope that the response to this letter will enable us to help parents stay informed about events in their schools, as well as to identify any areas where parents might wish to see procedural changes. We'll keep you informed.

Safety in the operating budget

As you prepare your testimony for the MCPS operating budget, please be sure to remember categories in the operating budget that might be affecting safety and security at your schools. Operating budget issues that have been mentioned repeatedly to the safety committee include bullying prevention, recess aides, and building and portable maintenance and security. Individual school anecdotes are always effective testimony tools. The MCCPTA Operating Budget Compact and operating budget resolution include safety and security as priorities for the operating budget.

Local School Involvement Critical to Safety

The MCCPTA Safety Committee urges each local PT(S)A to form its own Safety Committee to monitor and advocate for safety within your own school. **Watch for notice of the next MCCPTA Safety Committee meeting on January 18.**