

March 4, 2008

Dr. Jerry Weast, Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Dr. Weast:

As you know parents have a great interest in high school graduation as it represents the culmination of many years of hard work by students and parents. Consequently, MCCPTA has a great interest in ensuring that students and parents are active participants in the decisions regarding graduation venues, both at the county level and at the local school level.

The current process uses spring enrollment projections to determine who is eligible to graduate at the Comcast site, and local level graduation venue decisions take place during the summer when it is difficult to involve students and parents as full stakeholders. In response to our questions as to why MCPS does not/cannot use fall enrollment data, we were told that waiting until fall enrollment data is available on September 30 would mean that venues could not be announced until January due to the difficulty of coordinating the schedules of the six community superintendents. We were also informed that while it might be possible for the DAR schedule to be available sooner than January, MCPS would likely not release that information until all graduations were scheduled.

On February 7, 2008, the MCCPTA Board of Directors voted on the following motion in regards to senior class calculations as it relates to graduation venue:

The MCCPTA Board of Directors would like MCPS to use current-year September enrollment data instead of prior-year March enrollment data to establish which schools should use the largest graduation venue. The BOD strongly urges Community Superintendents to look at their schedules sooner to help finalize graduation dates as soon as possible. Lastly, the BOD would like MCPS to publish graduation dates for schools not using the largest venue as soon as they are available.

The Board felt that although dates will be pushed back somewhat due to using the September data, that using this data is the fairest way of determining schools' eligibility for use of Comcast Center. We also believe that school communities can be more involved in the graduation venue decision if it takes place in early October rather than over the summer. Since graduations take place during a window that changes little from year to year, it seems feasible that community superintendents and other individuals who are assigned to attend individual school graduations could be asked to provide their availability before September 30 to facilitate scheduling purposes.

We also urge MCPS to release graduation dates as soon as they are finalized, even if in a piecemeal fashion, in order that families may make travel arrangements as early as possible.

Please let MCCPTA know when MCPS begins to look at this issue for next year and what methodology is to be used to determine senior class enrollment.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Jane de Winter
President

cc. Ms Nancy Navarro, President, Montgomery Board of Education
Ms Cathy Pevey, Office of School Performance
Ms Sharon St.Pierre, Chair, MCCPTA High School Committee