

# mcps montgomery county public schools

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MARYLAND

March 26, 2008

Dr. Jane de Winter, President  
Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations  
2096 Gaither Road, Suite 204  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Dr. de Winter:

I appreciate your interest and concern about the decision to postpone the administration of the Survey of School Environment (SSE) and the Survey of Supporting Services (SSS) until Spring 2009 as a cost saving measure in response to the current fiscal situation. As you know, previously, these surveys have been administered annually by the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Department of Shared Accountability (DSA). However due to budget restrictions and a commitment to preserve classroom positions, cost savings measures have been instituted in all offices and departments. As a result, DSA will administer these surveys biannually beginning with the 2007-2008 school year. The annual cost of administering these surveys is approximately \$184,000. The biannual data collection schedule is more cost effective and better utilizes resources.

The SSE is administered to all school staff, and both the SSE and SSS are administered to all students and parents. These surveys collect information from MCPS staff, students, and parents about their perceptions of the school learning environment, and the findings are used to monitor continuous school improvements efforts and goals. Some considerations in support of this decision to administer the surveys biannually are as follows:

Survey results generally produce little change from year-to-year; therefore, schools can reliably use trend data from prior years to guide discussions about the key areas where school improvement is needed.

School improvement plans that incorporate information from the SSE and SSS would have time to be implemented and monitored before new data are collected.

DSA staff who are responsible for these surveys will work with school and central services staff to analyze the relationships of school environment with student achievement and to identify improvements that would help schools better meet strategic plan goals.

The historically low parent survey response rate (about 25 percent) is expected to improve when the "survey fatigue" factor that results from annual data collection is reduced.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

Larry A. Bowers  
Chief Operating Officer

LAB:bsr

Copy to:

Dr. Weast  
Members of the Board of Education  
Executive Staff