



The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

## **Testimony before the Montgomery County Council**

### **On the Proposed Operating Budget for FY 2011**

**April 5, 2010**

Good Evening. I am Kay Romero, President of the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA). On behalf of our more than 50,000 members, I urge you to continue to invest in the future of Montgomery County through adequate funding of our public school system. I am providing, along with this testimony, copies of several resolutions adopted by MCCPTA regarding school funding priorities.

We would first like to recognize the tradition of strong support that Montgomery County has provided for our public school system. We frequently hear the phrase “world class school system” applied to MCPS. As the county has grown and our population has become more diverse, maintaining this standard has become increasingly challenging.

With the support of the citizens of Montgomery County, MCPS has been able to address this challenge. MCPS was recently named one of five finalists for the Broad Prize for Urban Education award, for “making the greatest progress in America in raising student achievement.” This honor is in recognition of our progress in narrowing the gap between minority and majority achievement while keeping overall high standards for all our students.

But the job is not yet complete. The gap has not been completely closed; in fact, it has been widening for graduation rates. And the need for continuous improvement for all students remains. Each cohort of students in Montgomery County deserves the best we can offer. The budget submitted to you by the Board of Education represented a Maintenance of Effort level of funding. As a general rule, we believe that MOE is the bare minimum standard of funding. We supported the Board of Education’s request for a full MOE budget. However, we recognize that current economic conditions are not the general rule. We understand that revenues are significantly less than during boom times, and therefore that school funding may fall short of the desired level. We request that you make MCPS a top priority. We cannot afford to lose the ground we have gained.

The County Executive’s proposed budget for MCPS requires that all MCPS employees make significant sacrifices. Even with these adjustments, it would further require an increase in class size, and some additional savings measures. We cannot afford cuts in other programs that provide needed supports for both our struggling students and those who require extra challenge to keep them engaged and their education progressing.

Nor can we afford cuts in the services that keep our school buildings clean, safe, and secure both within the MCPS budget and in other areas of county funding. In this regard, we are particularly concerned about proposed reductions in Educational Facilities Officers and the reduced hours for school health room aides.

While the County Executive's budget proposes a slightly smaller share of cuts for MCPS than for the rest of the County government for fiscal year 2011, we experienced a larger share of the cuts made in fiscal year 2010. We view the County Executive's budget as somewhat below the bare minimum needed to maintain our current educational standards.

We stand ready to work with you as you work through these fiscal challenges. Children are our future. We must all stand in support of their educational funding.

Thank you....

Kay Romero, President  
Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA)

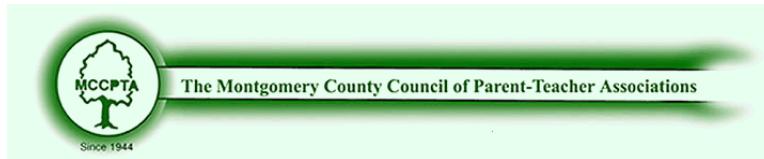
Attachments:

Resolution on FY2011 Operating Budget Priorities, October 27, 2009

MCCPTA FY2011 OPERATING BUDGET COMPACT, October 27, 2009

Resolution on Crossing Guards & Educational Facilities Officers, November 27, 2007

Resolution on Health Technicians, September 26, 2006



**Resolution on FY2011 Operating Budget Priorities  
Approved at the October 27, 2009 Delegates Assembly**

Whereas, MCCPTA's mission is to speak for children and without question our highest budget priority is education;

Be it resolved that the MCCPTA Delegates approve the following operating budget priorities for the organization to concentrate on this budget year, each item to be given due consideration in relation to the others.

Minimum possible class sizes,

Well-maintained, safe, secure, mold-free school facilities,

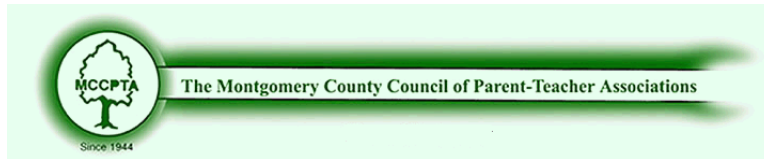
Empirically based, developmentally appropriate, fully supported curriculum implementation,

Adequate and effective staffing for special education students,

Focus on adequate school-home as well as home-school communication,

And

Academic support for all students including those needing assistance and/or enrichment.



## **MCCPTA FY2011 OPERATING BUDGET COMPACT** **Approved at the October 27, 2009 Delegates Assembly**

The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations (MCCPTA) believes that an Operating Budget for the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) must provide funding to make progress towards the fundamental requirements described in this budget compact. This compact will provide the basis for testimony before the Board of Education and the County Council and in other forums concerning the MCPS Operating Budget for FY 2011. MCCPTA will not support any budget, MCPS Strategic Plan, or other planning or policy document, that does not make progress towards the requirements of this compact.

Goal 1 of the MCPS Strategic Plan: Ensure Success for Every Student.

MCPS must focus on raising academic performance of all students so that all may reach their full potential. There is a need for uniformly high expectations that all students, including Special Education, ESOL, and Gifted/Talented students, will succeed and will have their needs met. There must be sufficient funding for programs to raise the performance of under-performing students. There must also be adequate funding to enhance the performance of students who have attained satisfactory levels of performance but who can do better, and to challenge students who exceed satisfactory levels of performance but are able to perform at even higher levels. In order to further these goals, MCCPTA supports the following initiatives from the former years and encourages continued support for these initiatives:

- Reduced class sizes throughout the County
- Reduction in the use of substitute teachers in the classroom for teacher training
- Math content coaches
- Educational facilities officers and other security measures

In addition, the budget should provide for the following:

- Certification in the appropriate content areas for middle school teachers teaching high school courses and specialty courses offered in signature programs
- More staffing for art, music, and physical education
- Academic intervention/support such as summer learning opportunities for all students based on needs of the students throughout the County, not limited to Title I schools
- Adequate and equitable allocation of elementary school resources and staffing based on school enrollment

Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan: Provide an Adequate Instructional Program

As adequate educational staffing is achieved, it will become even more important to provide staff with the tools necessary to assure success. In order to further this goal, MCCPTA supports the following staff initiatives from the past several years and encourages continued support for these initiatives:

- Reform of the middle school curriculum to increase rigor and ensure instruction appropriate for each student.
- Expansion of accelerated and enriched programs into more secondary schools

- Improvements to technology and support for improved technology use
  - Implementation of on-line achievement and reporting systems in all secondary schools
  - Move toward hours based staffing for special education students in order to ensure the success of a move toward promoting education in the least restrictive environment
- In addition, priority should be given to providing for the following academic and developmental supports for students
- Increased support for high school literacy
  - More emphasis on providing a well-rounded curriculum including a rich science, social studies, and arts curriculum
  - Improved staffing ratios for LAD
  - Increased academic intervention/support resources, including:
    - Specific action/intervention plans for students not meeting standards under the grading and reporting policy
    - Specific action/intervention plans for students not meeting extracurricular activity eligibility requirements.
    - Consistent funding and implementation of special programs across the county
  - Timely provision of new materials and textbooks when new curricula are introduced
  - Improved vertical articulation to ensure students receive the foundation for future curriculum options.

Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan: Strengthen productive partnerships for education.

In a system with sufficient teaching resources in adequate buildings, other supports will still be needed to ensure a quality education for all children. We support continuation of the following former initiatives:

- Enhanced translation services
- Expanded study circles
- Parent access to on-line achievement and reporting systems in all secondary schools

However, there is a desperate need for enhanced communication and outreach at the local school level, especially in light of the growing number of families with limited knowledge of English. There is also a need for more general support for students and families. Therefore, we request more support for the following:

- Local school based resources for communications, especially with non-English speaking parents, and increased translation services
- Additional guidance counselors, pupil personnel workers, and other staff to address social/emotional/developmental needs at all levels
- Comprehensive countywide plan to grow the school volunteer base

Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan: Create a Positive Work Environment in a Self-Renewing Organization Development, retention, and recruitment of talented educational, administrative, and support staff are fundamental to maintaining a high quality of education in Montgomery County.

The following initiatives are needed:

- Reduction in high turnover rate for staff from Principals to building services staff
- Increased diversity in hiring
- Focus on providing timely teacher training BEFORE the roll-out of new curricula
- Adequate training for all staff, including supporting services.

Goal 5 of the Strategic Plan: Provide high quality business services that are essential to the educational success of students.

MCCPTA recognizes that the supporting services, including maintenance, plant operations, transportation, and other central office functions play a key role in student achievement. Outcome measurement should be used to rigorously evaluate programs for effectiveness and efficiency. It is imperative that the business model for delivering all MCPS services include accountability to parents. We support the following initiatives in prior and current plans:

- New budget document: *Superintendent's Recommended Operating Budget in Brief*
- Program to improve school building security through increased surveillance in secondary schools and around elementary school entrances

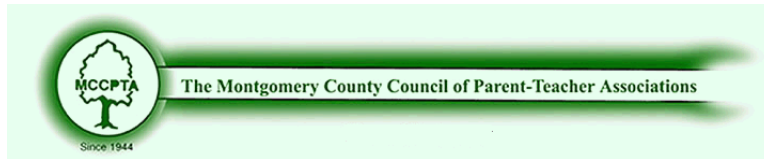
We urge attention to the following:

- Assessment of new programs and curricula before and after implementation, to ensure that sufficient course materials, guidebooks, and implementation documents are available
- Evaluation of the use of new technology to ensure that it is the most cost-effective way to increase student performance
- Improved nutritional value for school lunch and a la carte menu selections

Finally, the setting in which education takes place should not be neglected. For optimal learning our schools, including portable classrooms, must provide an environment where the children feel safe and their health is protected. The following issues need to be addressed:

- Increased recess supervision
- More attention to addressing discipline problems, especially at the middle school level, including the problem of gangs, bullying and risk to student safety
- Adoption by MCPS of objective standards for portable conditions and installation, routine building systems maintenance, and prompt response to unanticipated repair and maintenance needs
- Revision of salary structures or increased outside contracting for positions that are persistently vacant, such as HVAC mechanics and speech and language therapists
- More maintenance and repair personnel, particularly HVAC mechanics
- Expanded indoor air quality staff, with training in building envelope issues
- Increased staffing of building services
- Reassessment and adjustment of traffic patterns around schools to promote pedestrian safety
- Reassessment of bus stop placement to promote safety
- More activity buses to promote participation in after school programming as well as a safe return home from after-school programs
- BMPs (Building Maintenance Plans) for all new schools and increased implementation of BMPs for all other aging MCPS schools

The MCCPTA recognizes that an Operating Budget that satisfies all of these requirements will necessitate a continued strong commitment to education by Montgomery County. Such a commitment and investment, however, is more than justified by the benefits a well-resourced educational system provides to the community.



**Resolution on Crossing Guards & Educational Facilities Officers  
Passed at the November 27, 2007 MCCPTA Delegate Assembly**

*Whereas* crossing guards and Educational Facilities Officers (EFOs) provide vital safety and security functions at MCPS schools; and

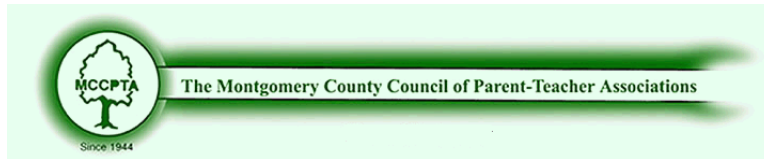
*Whereas* crossing guards are provided only for most elementary schools and some middle schools, but not for high schools; and

*Whereas* there is a need for additional crossing guards or extended crossing guard services at MCPS schools, including high schools, as well as enhanced security and EFO services; and

*Whereas* MCPS schools lack adequate pedestrian protection and crossing guard staffing and services for special events at MCPS schools, including “Back to School Nights”; and

*Whereas* EFOs currently are assigned to multiple schools, and some schools require a dedicated EFO;

*Now, therefore, be it resolved* that MCCPTA supports and will advocate for increased crossing guard and EFO support across MCPS schools to include re-introduction of EFOs at elementary schools and expansion to all middle schools, and for improved coordination between EFOs and MCPS Security at local schools, in order to provide the safe, secure learning environment to which Montgomery County schoolchildren and staff are entitled.



**Resolution on Health Technicians  
Adopted September 9, 2006**

*Whereas* most MCPS Schools have Health Room Aides for between 5 and 6 hours;

*Whereas* MCC PTA believes that 5 or 6 hours of Health Room Aide coverage is insufficient to meet the needs of our children; it is

*Resolved* that MCC PTA supports and will advocate for increased Health Room Aide services so that a Nurse or Health Room Aide will be on duty at every school from ½ hour before the start of the school day to ½ hour after the end of the school day.