The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

MCCPTA Testimony to the Board of Education about the Principal Handbook on July14, 2009

July 14, 2009

Good morning, President Brandman, Members of the Board and Dr. Weast.

Ever wonder how schools operate? Each school has a Principal Handbook that outlines school operations and is updated each school year. The 2008-09 Principal Handbook had close to 600 pages of informational items and served as a quick reference handbook for principals.
(**See Below**)

In the past, parents were able to review the principal handbook at any school or in the Board of Education office. This year parents will be told they will no longer have access to a printed version. The handbook will be password and ID protected and only available online to authorized users. Parents will not be an authorized user.

From looking at the attached table of contents from 2008-09, one can see that all items should be readily accessible to parents. Has the school system added something in the principal handbook that they do not want parents to see? Questions similar to that will be asked due to the abrupt change in access.

For years, MCCPTA has advocated for parents to review the Principal Handbook and become familiar with its contents. I have now filed a Maryland Public Information Act request to obtain a printed copy for MCCPTA for the 2009-10 school year. Will it now be up to a parent organization to make it available to other parents? Why? The school system can print at least one copy to have on hand at Carver for review, if not at any other school.

Some of the harshest criticisms the school system receives are about the lack of transparency and making items available to parents or community. When access to MCPS documents is slowly chipped away, then the school system should take stock of where all this is leading. It gives the appearance of a school system not being transparent. When the school system asks parents to partner with them, then parents must be treated with the utmost respect as partners. Parents should not be forced to file public information act requests for routine documents and handbooks.

Thank You,

Kay Romero

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

Please see below for the index contents for 2008-09 from the MCPS Principal Handbook

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