

# POLICY

## BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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**Related Entries:** DIE-RC, DJA, DJA-RA, ECF-RB, ECF-RC, EEA, EEA-RA, EEB-RA, ISB-RA, JPG, JPG-RA, KGA-RA

**Responsible Office:** Office of the Chief of District Operations

### Sustainability

#### A. PURPOSE

To affirm the Montgomery County Board of Education's commitment to sustainability practices, including energy conservation and efficiency

To establish a framework and decision-making priorities for environmentally sustainable practices in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)

To promote effective educational opportunities that allow students and staff to understand the consequences of human-induced environmental change on individual and collective health and well-being and consider the environmental impact and costs of decision making at all levels

To set the expectation for environmentally sustainable practices, equitably deployed across the MCPS system to promote the health and wellness of students and staff

#### B. ISSUE

MCPS is among the largest school systems in the country, and is the largest in the state of Maryland, in terms of enrollment. MCPS serves a county that encompasses approximately 500 square miles, spanning from rural to urban settings, and whose tributaries feed into the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Due to the number of facilities needed to support our educational mission, MCPS is one of the largest consumers of energy and other natural resources in the county.

MCPS must intentionally, equitably, and progressively reduce its environmental impact and costs, while improving health and wellness, and provide effective environmental and sustainability education.

A comprehensive approach to sustainability and environmental stewardship acknowledges the consequences of human-induced environmental change and the need for local actions

that protect, sustain, and restore the environment. It requires practices that demonstrate responsible use of public funds by prioritizing investments that maximize adaptation, resilience, and mitigation of the effects of climate change as well as efficient, sustainable use of land and resources.

A key component of a sustainable environmental footprint is reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions wherever possible, both to benefit the environment and reduce energy expenses.

The Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) collaborates with federal, state, and local partners and seeks active participation of local school communities in comprehensive efforts to solve regional problems and achieve optimal learning environments and functionality of essential education programs and operations, using effectively and equitably employed sustainability practices and technology.

### C. POSITION

1. MCPS will incorporate sustainability priorities into decision-making processes, based on the equitable and strategic deployment of resources to address climate-based impacts on health, safety, and wellness and to achieve more energy-efficient and cost-effective school operations. MCPS supports and will be an active participant in achieving Montgomery County's goal to cut GHG emissions 80 percent by 2027 and 100 percent by 2035, compared with 2005 levels.
2. The Board is committed to innovative and systemwide sustainability to include –
  - a) reducing the generation of GHG;
  - b) reducing systemwide energy use intensity<sup>1</sup> and reliance on nonrenewable resources;
  - c) increasing the generation and production of solar energy and use of other renewable energy sources;
  - d) identifying strategies that equip MCPS with the resources and infrastructure necessary to withstand the impacts of climate change;

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<sup>1</sup> The most recent complete data available for MCPS energy use at the time this policy was adopted are from FY 2019–2020, prior to facility shutdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In FY 2019–2020, the school system's Energy Use Intensity (EUI) was 55.4 thousand British thermal units use, per square foot (kBtu/sf). Historically, MCPS had an EUI of 55.5 kBtu/sf in FY 2018–2019, and 57.1 kBtu/sf in FY 2017–2018.

- e) using waste reduction and GHG emissions as criteria in decisions related to purchasing, including, but not limited to, energy, transportation, food services, and other operational areas; and
  - f) improving the quality of MCPS operations and school environments to positively impact building-occupant health and building-system performance.
3. MCPS will comply fully with Maryland State Department of Education requirements for a comprehensive, multidisciplinary environmental literacy program, infused within current curricular offerings and aligned with the Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards that provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for students to investigate environmental issues in order to develop and implement local actions that protect, sustain, and restore the natural environment and understand the environmental impact of human activity; the consequences of environmental change; and individual, collective, and societal responses to environmental change.

**D. DESIRED OUTCOMES**

- 1. In alignment with its core educational purpose to prepare all students to thrive in the future, MCPS makes sustainability a priority for present-day decisions that impact students' lives.
- 2. MCPS minimizes its environmental impact and operational costs.
- 3. MCPS operational practices meet the immediate needs of the school system without compromising or burdening present and future generations.
- 4. Staff and students are knowledgeable about the consequences of human-induced environmental change and individual, collective, and societal responses to environmental change.
- 5. Staff and students consider the environmental impact and costs of decision making at all levels.
- 6. MCPS creates and maintains healthy and comfortable learning environments that achieve maximum energy efficiency, with a consistent focus on sustainability.
- 7. MCPS implements operational practices and programs that achieve measurable reductions in GHG and waste that align with the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan's GHG reduction targets.
- 8. MCPS optimizes limited funding to achieve a sound, resilient, and sustainable

educational facilities portfolio that accounts for variations in age, site conditions, and geographic distribution.

#### **E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

1. The superintendent of schools/designee will maintain and enhance procedures to promote environmental sustainability at all levels of the school system, which shall include the following practices:
  - a) Develop processes to establish and foster an organizational culture and operational procedures that foster creativity, collaboration, and innovation across departments and at the local school level to implement systemic climate solutions.
  - b) Infuse sustainability concepts across school curricula and professional development to allow students and staff to gain an understanding of individual, collective, and societal responses to human-induced environmental change.
  - c) Provide opportunities for students and staff to engage in actions that contribute to climate solutions, preparedness/adaptation responses, and environmentally sustainable practices, and explore related career paths.
  
2. The superintendent of schools/designee will identify actions that can be taken immediately and in the longer term to reduce the generation of GHG and consumption of nonrenewable resources and increase efficiency, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - a) Actively manage energy and water consumption by using technology that can be viewed and monitored by building occupants and responsible operational personnel.
  - b) Use a wholesale managed approach for utility procurement and participate in coordinated efforts with federal, state, and local government agencies to establish appropriate resource conservation plans.
  - c) Develop and implement behavior-based sustainability programs at local schools, including strategies to support and increase the number of Maryland-certified Green Schools and other programs.
  - d) Replace MCPS diesel and gasoline vehicles, as appropriate, with electric, hybrid, or other more efficient or cleaner-fuel vehicles.

- e) Promote design strategies and retrofits to make new and existing buildings more sustainable and resilient by designing every construction project to maximize solar production potential and minimize energy-use intensity, considering a balanced facilities and infrastructure portfolio across the system.
- f) Pursue energy-saving infrastructure improvement projects in existing buildings through the use of public-private partnerships and available grants and tax credits.
- g) Where possible, seek to collocate schools to facilitate compact growth, efficient use of public infrastructure, and adjacency to public services and amenities.
- h) Implement other measures to address resiliency and awareness, such as increasing the tree canopy and outdoor educational spaces on MCPS properties and mitigating storm water runoff.
- i) Establish minimum sustainability requirements in MCPS procurement guidelines for –
  - (a) locally sourced products;
  - (b) maximized waste reduction; and
  - (c) reusable or recyclable products and content, where available, at scale, at a fair and reasonable price, across all areas of operations.

**F. REVIEW AND REPORTING**

1. MCPS will update the inventory of GHG emissions for its facilities at regular intervals, using updates aligned with local reporting requirements.
2. MCPS will develop periodic systemwide reports that outline goals, objectives, and results of sustainability efforts, in alignment with all federal, state, and local requirements.
3. The Board will receive information about sustainability features in construction project updates, and MCPS will implement methods of sharing sustainability features of the MCPS facility portfolio with the public, such as websites and/or local signage.

4. This policy and related documents will be updated and shared in alignment with federal, state, and local requirements.
5. This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, in accordance with the Board's policy review process.

**Related Sources:** Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §75-312.1, *School district energy policies*; Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-117, *Increasing the number of green schools in the state*; Code of Maryland Regulations, 13A.04.17.01, Environmental Literacy Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten–12; Montgomery County Executive Regulation 15-1: Solid Waste and Recycling; Montgomery County Climate Action Plan of 2021; 10-year Solid Waste Management Plan for Montgomery County, MD (2020–2029); Montgomery County Executive Regulation 12-20 Adoption of the 2018 International Green Construction Code

**Policy History:** Adopted by Resolution No. 654-73, November 13, 1973; amended by Resolution No. 285-97, May 13, 1997; reviewed April 19, 2002; amended by Resolution No. 323-22, June 28, 2022.