

# POLICY

## BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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**Related Entries:** ABA, ABA-RA, ABC, ABC-RA, ACA, ACA-RA, AEB, GEG-RA, IFA, IFA-RA, IKA, IKA-RA, IOA, IOA-RA, IOB, IOD, IOD-RA, ISA, ISB-RA, JEA-RA

**Responsible Office:** Deputy Superintendent of Schools

### **Framework and Structure of Early Childhood and Elementary Education**

#### **A. PURPOSE**

To affirm the Board of Education's commitment to producing a challenging and comprehensive educational program for eligible students in early childhood and students in elementary programs that will promote intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth and development of students in their early learning years to prepare them for middle and high school.

To emphasize, in partnership with parents, families, and community stakeholders, the importance of building a solid foundation for a lifetime of academic and personal achievements.

#### **B. ISSUE**

Montgomery County is a diverse community with an equally diverse early childhood and elementary school population that presents a variety of educational needs. To address some of these needs, prekindergarten programs are provided to families who meet eligibility criteria, pursuant to state and federal laws. In accordance with the Montgomery County early childhood initiative, *Children's Agenda*, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) collaborates with public and private agencies such as the Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families and its affiliated agencies.

To ensure success for every student in MCPS, an early childhood and elementary school program must include a comprehensive curriculum and related assessments; a rigorous, differentiated instructional program; highly qualified and committed staff and leadership; a collaborative yet flexible organizational structure; and, a fully engaged parental and stakeholder community.

**C. POSITION**

The unique developmental stages and characteristics of early childhood and elementary students must guide the implementation of the programs for them. The following elements are necessary for establishing and maintaining a rigorous instructional program that meets the needs of early childhood and elementary students:

**1. School Culture**

To develop a culture that promotes intellectual development; personal integrity; self-confidence; social responsibility; mutual respect among all students; as well as motivation, and an eagerness to learn and excel, schools will do the following:

- a) Provide an inviting, stimulating, and supportive environment that encourages all students to actively engage in learning and pursue intellectual challenges.
- b) Maintain a well-managed, safe, and nurturing environment that encourages positive relationships among students and between adults and students.
- c) In alignment with Policy ACA, *Human Relations*, foster mutual understanding, respect, and cultural competence among students and staff with regard to individual differences such as race, color, gender, religion, ancestry, national origin, marital status, age, disability, or sexual orientation.
- d) Provide a system of standards and expectations that promote personal responsibility, integrity, and citizenship.
- e) Facilitate communication in the languages spoken in the community, whenever feasible.
- f) Engage parents in meaningful ways that support the child's development and academic achievement and emphasize the necessity of long-range educational planning.
- g) Work to ensure that school programs and activities reflect the diversity of the school population and provide equitable access to all academic programs and school activities.

**2. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

MCPS's approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment will ensure a high level of challenge for all students and meet the unique needs of the young learner. Technology will be integrated into the curriculum as well as instruction and

assessment to build or strengthen students' interest and skills in the use of technology.

- a) Student achievement depends on the implementation and provision of a consistent curriculum that addresses the needs of the whole child. The early childhood/elementary school approach to curriculum will be consistent with Policy IFA, *Curriculum*, and Regulation IFA-RA, *Curriculum*, and will include the following:
- (1) The written curriculum, as presented in the curriculum framework and in the curriculum guides.
  - (2) The taught curriculum, including reading/language arts, math, social studies, science, art, music, and physical education, as implemented by teachers with students.
  - (3) The learned curriculum, as demonstrated by assessments of student performance.
  - (4) The ongoing professional development needed to ensure consistent implementation, monitoring, and supervision.
  - (5) The monitoring of curriculum implementation by teachers, administrators, and central services staff.
- b) Instructional practices will incorporate a variety of methods, strategies, and resources, such as technology, that encourage students to be active and engaged learners. Such practices will align with relevant MCPS policies and regulations, such as IKA, *Grading and Reporting*; IOA, *Gifted and Talented Education*; IOD, *Education of English Language Learners*; and IOB, *Education of Students with Disabilities*, and IHB-RA, *School Academic Grouping Practices*.
- (1) Programmatic and instructional decisions will be based on the analysis of student performance data in relation to established standards.
  - (2) Differentiated instructional practices will include acceleration, supports for improving student performance, enrichment, and other strategies as needed to help each child to meet his or her academic potential. Such practices will address learning styles as well as physical, social, and emotional differences among students.

- (3) In both the planning and implementation of instruction, early childhood and elementary schools will utilize the unique skills of all general education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), special education, and other staff members.
- (4) Instructional practices should provide leadership opportunities for students and promote interaction and oral language development between and among students.

c) Assessment

As explained in Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, assessment practices are an important aspect of the instructional cycle.

- (1) Teachers use pre-assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments to communicate achievement to parents and students; plan and deliver instruction to meet learning goals; provide prompt appropriate interventions; provide timely feedback to students on their performance; and offer additional opportunities for students to learn and demonstrate learning.
- (2) A comprehensive assessment program, which is aligned with county, state, and national standards, includes the following:
  - (a) Representation of a student's performance on a variety of measures over time.
  - (b) An opportunity for students to demonstrate proficiency through a variety of methods.
  - (c) Meaningful feedback on student achievement to students and parents.
  - (d) Clear and timely communication to parents and students as to the grading criteria.
  - (e) Consistency within and among schools.
- (3) Reteaching and reassessment enhances student learning and provides focused instruction to meet individual student needs.

### 3. Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of a high-achieving early childhood or elementary school program will optimize time for learning and facilitate opportunities to build positive relationships among students, staff, parents, and community members. Organizational structures should facilitate student transition, placement, and program continuity at each level. Effective, flexible, and collaborative organizational structures shall include the following:

- a) Opportunities for teachers to collaborate across grade-level teams and subject areas.
- b) Opportunities for staff to meet with parents to discuss student progress.
- c) Effective intervention and enrichment programs.
- d) Adequate time for instruction in all curricular areas.
- e) A comprehensive education program that prepares students to progress through elementary school.

### 4. Leadership and Professional Development

The MCPS professional growth systems include regular and systematic opportunities for all administrators, teachers, and support services staff to increase their knowledge, skills, and capacity to continuously improve the teaching and learning process. At the school level, there must be processes in place for the following:

- a) Monitoring and communicating the school or classroom's vision, mission, goals, and action plans.
- b) Working with stakeholders to help create a vision and implement strategies that will support a high-performing organization focused on continuous improvement.
- c) Identifying potential leaders to participate in professional growth opportunities designed to enhance the teaching and learning process.
- d) Building internal capacities that strengthen the school staff's ability to meet its vision, goals, and action plans and to establish high expectations for all learners.

- e) Providing professional development for school staff to deepen their knowledge of content, skills, the use of technology, differentiation and the delivery of instruction.
- f) Providing professional development for school staff on effective strategies for communicating with and engaging all parents to promote increased student achievement.

## 5. Parent and Community Engagement and Communication

Consistent with Policy ABA, *Community Involvement*; Policy ABC, *Parental Involvement*; and Regulation ABC-RA, *Parental Involvement*, parents and community members are critical partners in the social and intellectual development of students. This partnership promotes the following:

- a) Opportunities for parents and families to increase their children's ability to succeed in school and in life.
- b) Frequent two-way communication between families and schools to provide information and solicit feedback regarding an individual child's progress, as well as local school and systemwide policies, regulations, programs and practices.
- c) Collaboration with stakeholders within the community such as local businesses, community organizations, institutions of higher education, and other agencies such as libraries to support early academic achievement.
- d) Varied opportunities for families and community members to be involved in student and school programs, projects, activities, and events.

## 6. Human Resources

It is critical that early childhood and elementary school staff possess the knowledge, skills, and content expertise required to meet the needs of all students. Practices to recruit, attract, and retain highly qualified teachers must be implemented to address academic performance and the individual needs of schools. Such needs may include, but are not limited to, Free and Reduced-Price Meals System participation, mobility, students with disabilities, and English language learners. At each early childhood and elementary school, staff will do the following:

- a) Be highly qualified in core academic subjects and able to balance content with instructional methods.

- b) Communicate high expectations for all students.
- c) Create opportunities for professional learning communities to improve teaching and learning.
- d) Be knowledgeable about the developmental characteristics of early childhood and elementary students, with an emphasis on literacy, and committed to the concept that all students can learn and succeed.
- e) Develop relationships with students that will engage them in the learning process.
- f) Reflect, to the extent possible, the diversity of the MCPS student population.

**D. DESIRED OUTCOMES**

A high-quality early childhood program and a comprehensive elementary school program that thoroughly prepares all students to succeed in middle and high school.

**E. REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

*Policy History:* Adopted by Resolution No. 345-88, June 27, 1988; amended by Resolution No. 284-07, May 21, 2007.

*Note.* Prior to Resolution No. 345-88, this topic was governed by the following: K-8 Policy, adopted by Resolution No. 161-80, February 12, 1980; amended by Resolution No. 912b-83, November 8, 1983; reformatted in accordance with Resolution No. 333-86, June 12, 1986, and Resolution No. 458-86, August 12, 1986; rescinded by Resolution No. 345-88, June 27, 1988.