

# POLICY

## BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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**Related Entries:** ABA, ABA-RA, ADA, AEB, GEG, GEG-RA, ISA, ISB-RA, ISB-EA, JEA-RA

### **Framework and Structure of High School Education**

#### **A. PURPOSE**

To provide guidelines and directions to staff and community for establishing school programs that meet the educational and social-emotional needs of all adolescents in keeping with the Montgomery County Goals of Education and the *Annotated Code of Maryland*

This policy provides a framework for staff and community participation in the organization of schools and the delivery of instructional programs. Policies and regulations on such specific matters as grading and reporting student progress, attendance, and homework provide more detailed direction.

#### **B. PROCESS AND CONTENT**

The senior high school has responsibility for educating and guiding students in the developmental stage from adolescence to young adulthood. This responsibility is shared with the students, their families, and the community. The principal and staff of each high school, with the involvement of the local community and area and central office staff, will develop and carry out programs responsive to the particular needs and concerns of these students.

##### **1. School Climate**

The nature of the learning environment is a critical factor in the intellectual, physical, and social-emotional development of each student. A caring climate needs to be created in each school that is responsive to the changing developmental and educational needs of every student and provides equal access to educational opportunity. Each student needs to be encouraged to develop personal integrity, respect for differences, and social responsibility, as well as the desire, the confidence, and the capacity to strive for excellence.

To develop a climate that fosters student growth, schools should:

- a) Ensure that students are expected, encouraged, and given opportunities to learn and succeed in an inviting, stimulating, and supportive environment
- b) Establish high expectations for achievement and success of all students
- c) Create a safe and orderly environment
- d) Support appreciation for all cultures and foster sensitivity toward all those with special needs
- e) Provide for the integration of handicapped students in the total school program
- f) Establish opportunities for students to participate in making decisions that affect their lives
- g) Value and foster risk taking to encourage intellectual inquiry and develop self-confidence
- h) Promote harmonious and effective human relations
- i) View discipline as a means of helping students develop citizenship skills and responsibility for self, not just as a system of rules and consequences for infractions
- j) Develop cocurricular activities as an integral part of the total educational program
- k) Acknowledge and recognize student, staff, and community achievements
- l) Facilitate effective communications within the school and with the community
- m) Foster a partnership between the school and the parents/guardians of each child
- n) Work to ensure that the diversity of the total school population is reflected in all school activities

- o) Develop an attendance plan that:
  - (1) Complies with the requirements of state law and MCPS policies and regulations
  - (2) Provides for accurate and timely recording of school and class attendance
  - (3) Emphasizes the importance of regular school and class attendance and recognizes students who meet this requirement
  - (4) Establishes procedures for enforcing regular school and class attendance and for working affirmatively with students and parents to resolve attendance issues

## 2. Parent/Community Involvement

Individual parents and community members, as well as civic organizations, businesses, and other agencies, should share in the responsibility for the social and intellectual development of students. Parent and community involvement should include:

- a) Communication networks that enable school personnel, parents, and community members to take a direct and active role in the education of students. These networks should establish and include:
  - (1) School outreach efforts to individual parents and community members
  - (2) Programs to enable parents to help their children succeed in school
  - (3) Strong and continuing partnerships between the schools, the parent-teacher associations, and other community advisory and support groups
- b) Supportive relationships with local businesses, community organizations, and institutions of higher learning
- c) Active volunteer programs in each school

### 3. Staff Development

Staff development should include regular and systematic opportunities for all staff to improve skills and adapt to the changing needs of society. In order to establish effective and appropriate staff development activities, the school system should:

- a) Require ongoing training for all instructional staff on new and revised curriculum
- b) Allow reasonable autonomy for schools to identify and plan staff development activities that meet the needs of individual staff members, staff teams, or entire school staffs
- c) Allocate resources and support to schools for in-service training
- d) Provide time for teachers, supervisors, and administrators to support staff development activities
- e) Provide opportunities for staff to assume leadership roles within their buildings
- f) Establish student-teacher centers for preservice training of prospective teachers
- g) Support beginning teachers by providing intensive training and supervision
- h) Ensure systemwide coordination of all staff training, including collaborative efforts with colleges and universities

### 4. Planning

a) Systemwide and school planning should consider demographic and social changes and trends, analysis of the data related to change, and the integration of that analysis into long-range plans. Educational research, future labor needs, funding sources, and technological developments are important elements to be reviewed in the planning process. To ensure effective planning, the school system should provide:

- (1) Time for individual and group planning
- (2) Current and relevant data
- (3) Technical and clerical support

- (4) Channels and processes to ensure effective coordination with school, area, and central offices
- b) A major result of school planning should be the development of long-range (3-5 years) and annual goals that identify areas of the school program needing improvement and/or further development. The process of setting long-range and annual goals should result in annual management plans that are based on objective data on student progress and the assessments of school staff.
- c) School annual management plans should:
  - (1) Identify objectives for emphasis and improvement
  - (2) Contain action plans for the attainment of the specified objectives
  - (3) Provide for periodic assessment and reporting of progress
  - (4) Be consistent among schools and areas

## 5. Instructional Practices

Instructional practices should help prepare students to become productive and informed adults through the on-going application of academic and higher order intellectual skills. Continued emphasis should be placed on the development of fundamental learning and study skills. Instructional practices should incorporate a variety of activities and strategies that encourage students to be active and engaged learners. These practices should provide for the wide range of achievement and energy levels and the rapidly changing intellectual, physical, and emotional development of adolescents. Instructional practices should:

- a) Relate instruction to prior knowledge, to the broader world, and to the needs and interests of students
- b) Facilitate the integration of curriculum objectives
- c) Communicate high expectations for student achievement and success
- d) Offer students a variety of learning experiences, including group and independent study, peer learning, tutoring, field trips, field study, and outside resource persons
- e) Use allocated instructional time efficiently and effectively

- f) View homework as an extension of learning opportunities and an integral part of the teaching and learning process
- g) Minimize fragmentation of the student's day
- h) Utilize, in both the planning and the implementation of instruction, the special skills of all regular, alternative, and special education staff members
- i) Support leadership opportunities for students
- j) Develop articulation plans to facilitate student placement and program continuity at each level
- k) Help students develop thinking and independent learning skills that prepare them as learners able to meet the challenges of a changing world
- l) Provide remediation and support for students who have not mastered basic skills

6. Curriculum

- a) The curriculum is the framework for the instructional program. It should enable all students to master learning skills and provide opportunities for further study and enrichment. The curriculum should reflect changing societal needs and the rapid growth of knowledge and technology. A major purpose of the curriculum should be to give students the strategies necessary for learning how to learn.
- b) The curriculum should be implemented to achieve the MCPS Goals of Education through a sequence of learning objectives and related opportunities supported by appropriate human and material resources.
- c) The curriculum must provide the programs, courses, and learning experiences needed to meet Maryland graduation requirements.
- d) The MCPS Program of Studies and accompanying instructional guides should be revised regularly to reflect changing societal needs and the rapid growth of knowledge and technology. Course revisions should include the consideration of replacement and elimination of content.

- e) In addition to specifying the subject content to be taught, the teaching of the curriculum should:
- (1) Accommodate differing interests, backgrounds, learning needs, and styles
  - (2) Provide opportunities for students to explore ethical and value issues
  - (3) Help students develop aesthetic awareness and expression by exploring their creative capacities and talents to the highest possible level as well as learning about the various art forms
  - (4) Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the mastery of subject content and related skills
  - (5) Include career education objectives that help students make appropriate program and course decisions
  - (6) Consider students' social and emotional development
  - (7) Address the needs of all students, including those with special needs
  - (8) Emphasize the cultural diversity of society
  - (9) Encourage a sense of social responsibility through the performance of citizenship duties and community service
  - (10) Offer each student a comprehensive program of instruction and include a common core of course offerings in every high school
  - (11) Stress the teaching of critical and analytical thinking skills in every course
  - (12) Emphasize lifelong learning skills
  - (13) Incorporate interdisciplinary topics, whenever possible, that complement and support each other across content areas

## 7. Organization and Staffing

- a) The Grade 9 through 12 comprehensive high school shall be the basic organizational design for Montgomery County Public Schools. A comprehensive high school program includes the following areas: academic skills, intellectual development, physical development, the role of the individual and society, scientific understanding, aesthetic development, and career development, including fostering positive attitudes toward work. Specialized centers for vocational, aesthetic, and academic programs shall be established to meet the needs of particular populations, further racial integration, and/or improve socio-economic balance.
- b) Organizational and staffing decisions should promote a nurturing environment that facilitates the integration of cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development.
- c) Local school staff and community input should be considered in developing and implementing a school's organizational plan.
- d) Each school should have reasonable autonomy to determine its organizational structure and implementation plan.
- e) Each school's staffing allocation and organization should:
  - (1) Reflect a balance that provides positive racial, gender, ethnic, and cultural role models
  - (2) Promote organizational arrangements that reflect student needs and the nature of the facility
  - (3) Allow reasonable flexibility in the assignment and utilization of staff members
  - (4) Provide guidance and counseling services so that each student can receive appropriate counseling
  - (5) Provide appropriate educational programs for students with special needs, including honors and basic skills
  - (6) Encourage and support programs in the least restrictive environment for students with special needs

- (7) Provide time for teachers to plan together
- (8) Afford opportunities for enrichment through before-school and after-school curricular and cocurricular activities
- (9) Allow a variety of organizational patterns such as interdisciplinary teams, grades or multilevel classes, subject matter classes, and self-contained classes

**C. REVIEW AND REPORTING**

1. The superintendent will report to the Board of Education biennially on the implementation and monitoring of this policy. As part of the management planning process, local schools and area and central offices will assess their programs to determine the degree to which they are in compliance with the policy. The associate superintendents will report progress to the superintendent, who will use this information as the basis for reporting to the Board.
2. This policy will be reviewed every three years in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

*Policy History:* Adopted by Resolution No. 348-88, June 27, 1988.

**Note.** Prior to Resolution No. 348-88, this topic was governed by the following: High School 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 458-86, August 12, 1986; rescinded by Resolution No. 348-88, June 27, 1988.