

# POLICY

## BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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**Related Entries:** ABA, ABC, ACA, AFA-RA, EGI-RA, IGS, IKA-RA, ILA-RA, JOA-RA, KBA-RA, KLA, KLA-RA

**Responsible Office:** Chief of Staff

### Policy on Public Information

#### A. PURPOSE

1. To set forth a vision for public understanding of, support for, and confidence in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) through effective communication across a variety of media and communication channels appropriate to the purposes, needs, opportunities, and obligations of the school district and the community
2. To establish the Montgomery County Board of Education's expectations for communicating appropriate information to the public in a timely and complete manner, while striving to confirm the accuracy of such information and to provide clear, concise, and publicly accessible explanatory context where possible

#### B. POSITION

1. The Board seeks to promote effective communication with members of the Montgomery County community, and encourage respect, trust, confidence, and a unified understanding of the educational program and operations of MCPS by—
  - a) providing parents/guardians, students, staff and other community stakeholders with information in a timely and complete manner that allows them to understand, with appropriate explanatory context, the goals, programs, and policies of the school district,
  - b) providing appropriate information for stakeholders to actively engage in decision-making processes and advocate on behalf of students, and their concerns and viewpoints, and

- c) enriching the school community through the active involvement of community members, organizations and businesses.
2. The Board provides numerous and varied channels of communication to invite and encourage meaningful two-way communication among a broad spectrum of our diverse community, as set forth in Board Policy ABA, *Community Involvement*. Collaborative and productive communication among a broad spectrum of our diverse community is integral to the processes of developing and revising Board policies, strategic planning, budget development, and the implementation of school district initiatives.
3. The business of the school district is conducted in compliance with public information and open meetings laws, and MCPS's obligations as a custodian of public records.
  - a) The Board is committed to full compliance with the terms, conditions, and expectations of the Public Information Act of Maryland (MPIA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). MCPS responds to public record requests as custodian of public records in a reasonable and timely manner. As a custodian of such public records, MCPS provides access to all qualifying records, unless the requested records fall within one of the exceptions in the MPIA, FERPA, or other applicable law
  - b) To achieve its educational mission, MCPS must build and maintain open and honest lines of communication with students and families. To do that, students and families must trust MCPS to protect the privacy and confidentiality of education records, consistent with applicable law. In addition, MCPS requires its staff, contractors, vendors and partners, as well as external researchers, to comply with all applicable laws and regulations regarding data collection, privacy, and security, including but not limited to the requirements of FERPA, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, the Maryland Student Privacy Act of 2015, and the MPIA.
4. MCPS provides effective and timely communications about school district operations, to include, but not limited to, emergency information of interest to parents/guardians, students, and staff, and operational information for those engaged, or seeking to engage, as partners, vendors, or providers of programs, goods, and/or services to support MCPS educational programs and operations.
5. MCPS affirms the value students, staff, parents/guardians, and other members of the community place on privacy, and adheres to all legal obligations regarding the

protection, and appropriate disclosure, of student and employee information, in accordance with federal and state law.

- a) The superintendent of schools shall direct staff to develop privacy protocols to protect student and staff information, and terms of use for MCPS websites.
  - b) The Board expects all stakeholders who have access to sensitive or confidential information to adhere to appropriate protocols and access, use, and/or disclose such information only to the degree they are authorized to do so.
  - c) Staff are appropriately sensitive to the complex privacy implications of student and employee records and sufficiently trained to maintain the confidentiality of student and employee information, as required by law.
6. MCPS utilizes multiple channels of communication to inform the public regarding the mission, goals, programs, achievements, interests and needs of the school district.
- a) To promote accessibility of public information to the broadest community possible, MCPS –
    - (1) adheres to accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and
    - (2) provides interpretation and translation services, and affirmatively translates key school district resources into those languages for which translation and interpretation services are most frequently requested by parents/guardians of MCPS students.
  - b) MCPS shall adopt and utilize emerging communication technologies, as appropriate, and provide guidance to students and staff for their effective, ethical, and responsible use.
  - c) MCPS maintains websites and online services to inform the community about, and to engage it in, our joint mission to provide a quality education to all students.
    - (1) MCPS uses its websites and online services to provide the community information about MCPS and to enhance two-way communication between the district and the community.

- (2) The Board understands that many of our parents/guardians, students, staff, and other community stakeholders rely on MCPS websites and online services as important resources, so MCPS takes precautions to administer these resources effectively, efficiently, and reliably.
  - (3) MCPS encourages all stakeholders to engage in responsible use of its websites and services.
7. The Board values the critical role played by responsible media in a democratic society to seek, analyze, and report information to the public about the educational programs and administration of MCPS. The superintendent of schools shall designate appropriate protocols for prompt, effective, and responsive interactions between MCPS and representatives of the media.

### C. DESIRED OUTCOMES

MCPS will develop public understanding of, support for, and confidence in MCPS through effective communication across a variety of media appropriate to the purposes, needs, opportunities, and obligations of MCPS and the community. All appropriate information shall be communicated to the public in a timely and complete manner, while striving to confirm the accuracy of such information and to provide clear, concise, and publicly accessible explanatory context where possible.

### D. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The superintendent of schools will develop regulations to implement this policy.

### E. REVIEW AND REPORTING

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

**Related Sources:** *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*, 20 U.S.C §1232g; Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), 20 U.S.C. §1232h, 34 CFR Part 98, (2000 and Supp. IV 2004); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 U.S.C. Sec. 794; *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA), 42 U.S.C. 12131 et seq.; *Children’s Internet Protection Act* (CIPA), 47 U.S.C. §254(h)(5)(B)-(C), 254(l); *Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA)*, 15 U.S.C.6501-6505, 16 CFR Part 312; *Public Information Act of Maryland*, Ann. Code of Maryland, General Provisions Article §§4-101 through 4-601; *Maryland Student Data Privacy Act of 2015*, Ann. Code of Maryland, Education Article, §4-131.

***Policy History:*** Resolution No. 24-68, January 9, 1968; amended by Resolution No. 310-19 on May 14, 2019.

**Note:** Tenets of Board policy KBB, *Release of Data*, were incorporated into Resolution No. 310-19 amendments to this policy, and was rescinded upon adoption of amended Board Policy KBA on May 14, 2019.