

Montgomery County Public Schools

PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

October 6, 2008

6:30–8:30 p.m.

Carver Educational Services Center Auditorium

Attendees

Parents: Vicmarie Arocho, Bonnie Arze, Wanda Coates, Subhasis Datta, Hugo Escobar, Kelley Eiskant, David Griffith, Holly Searl Hurst, Sandeep Khanna, Chris McDermott, Juliet Mellow, Sharon Mosley-Ramsey, Tori O’Neal-McElrath, Alma Orellana, Jill Ortman-Fouse, Katrina Sharpe, Richard Sieber, Damika Somasundaram, Doug Sunshine

Department of Communications and Family Outreach Staff: Eric Davis, Denise Stultz, Marcia Vogel

Desired Outcomes

By the end of this meeting, participants will have:

- Reviewed the charge and responsibilities of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
- Heard a brief overview of the Department of Family and Community Partnerships (DFCP)
- Discussed ways to improve family involvement that is linked to student learning and academic achievement
- Learned about the Montgomery County Board of Education Policy ABC, *Parental Involvement*, and revision process
- Clarified next steps to gather feedback that will be considered for the revised Policy ABC, *Parental Involvement*
- Evaluated the meeting

Welcome

Aggie Alvez, director of the Office of Communications and Family Outreach, welcomed participants to the first meeting of the 2008–2009 MCPS Parent Advisory Council. She noted how critical it is for parents to have the information they need to be able to advocate for their children and be genuine partners in their children’s education. The PAC plays an important role in letting the school system know what is working well and what needs to be improved in terms of communication with the parent community.

Review of Charge and Responsibilities

Eric Davis, acting director, Department of Family and Community Partnerships, reviewed the desired outcomes of the meeting, the ground rules, and the charge and responsibilities of the Council:

- **Charge:** The PAC is proactive and innovative in identifying ways to enhance the school system’s communication and parent engagement efforts.
- **Responsibilities:** Providing feedback on current methods of two-way communication and making suggestions for improvements; communicating with and getting feedback from

other parents in the community; examining various multimedia products and services developed by the school system to communicate with parents; providing input on the Parent Academy and other programs designed to support parents as partners in their children's education; and providing feedback to the Board of Education and MCPS offices and work groups on specific programs, activities, resources, and materials.

Overview of DFCP

The Department of Family and Community Partnerships focuses on building partnerships between home and school. Eric Davis briefly reviewed the programs and services offered by DFCP, which include the ASK MCPS outreach initiative, Parent Academy, Study Circles, support to schools in planning and implementing parent involvement programs, volunteer recruitment and training, and support to individual families. Council members noted that they receive information about MCPS programs and services through a variety of media, including QuickNotes e-mail news service, the MCPS website, PTA listserves, and the *Parent Connection* newsletter.

Strengthening Family Involvement

Council members provided input on ways the school system can strengthen family involvement in an activity focused on the Six National Standards for Family–School Partnerships. Council members offered the following comments:

Standard 1: Welcoming All Families into the School Community

- Send emails to parents regarding key events
- Enlist parent volunteers to act as new family sponsors/buddies
- Consider physical environment of school
- Meet parents where they live and work
- Be aware of cultural differences
- Hold school/parent activities on different days and at different times
- Host parent meetings based on grade level
- Provide basic information on school system structure, operations, jargon
- Hold welcome “seminar” for parents new to the school

Standard 2: Communicating Effectively

- Keep school websites updated
- Offer Edline for elementary schools
- Provide access to computers/technology/websites/Edline
- Hold more Open Houses
- Offer principal coffees/meetings
- Conduct surveys for feedback
- Offer translation and interpretation services

Standard 3: Supporting Student Success

- Encourage school staff to develop relationships with parents through phone calls, notes home, e-mail, casual engagements
- Provide greater outreach to non-English-speaking families
- Ensure students understand homework because parents may not be able to assist

- Provide easier access to educational resources based on school curriculum for parents; provide these resources by grade level at local libraries
- Promote outside programs/resources such as George B. Thomas Learning Academy Saturday School
- Offer curriculum nights for parents
- Offer seminars for parents about the importance of getting involved in their children's education

Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child

- Empower parents—customize communications/information based on clusters, demographics, etc
- Outline opportunities to advocate
- Cultivate commitment to entire county and not to one's cluster
- Provide tips for parents on how to advocate for children
- Encourage goal setting between parents and teacher at the start of the year for each student (individual awareness, goals, progress, expectations)

Standard 5: Sharing Power

- Provide follow-up after parent input given and decisions made (justification, rationale, summary of comments)
- Provide common standards/checklist for sharing power, agreed upon by parents and staff
- Share agenda and minutes of leadership meeting of parents and staff
- Send school climate survey to all parents
- Provide opportunities for parent participation in school improvement process

Standard 6: Collaborating with Community

- Solicit participation of community groups in school functions
- Encourage school staff/administration to interact with civic and neighborhood associations
- Bring local groups and businesses into school committees/groups
- Solicit information from students/parents on their neighborhood associations and points of contact
- Participate in community clean-up events, stream clean-ups
- Connect with local sports teams, swim teams, etc.
- Hold food drive in local community
- Have invested departments/partners speak to each other and be on the same page

Policy ABC, Parental Involvement

Eric Davis briefly reviewed the revision process for Board of Education Policy ABC, *Parental Involvement*, and invited Council members to collect and submit feedback on suggested revisions.

Next Meeting

December 3, 2008

Action Items

Action	Who	By When
Send electronic feedback shell for Policy ABC to Council members	Eric Davis	October 7, 2008
Send electronic form for bios (100 words) to Council members	Eric Davis	October 7, 2008
Post notes of October 6, 2008, PAC meeting on DFCP website	Eric Davis	October 7, 2008
Return bios to Eric Davis	Council members	October 15, 2008
Post Council member bios and email addresses on DFCP website	Eric Davis	October 22, 2008
Submit feedback on Policy ABC revisions to Eric Davis	Council members	November 14, 2008
Submit any agenda items for consideration for December 3, 2008, meeting	Council members	November 19, 2008