Montgomery County Public Schools

Community of Practice

Community of Practice for Wednesday, January 24, 2024.

Supports for Staff DRAFT Recommendations

<u>Community Members</u>

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<u>Charge</u>

The Supports for Staff purpose is to identify prevalent or recurring items that the MCPS community interacts with and influence a resolution process that will support near, mid, and long-term solutions.

<u>Areas of Concern</u>

- Experiencing Lack of Value

- Experiencing Lack of Transparency
- Experiencing Lack of Communication / Collaboration
- Experiencing Increased Stress
- Experiencing Lack of Training / Unsupported Onboarding Mechanism
- Experiencing *Safety - (equating to the fear of reprisal when bringing up issues / absence of Psychological Safety)

The areas of concern have been highlighted and elevated by the Supports for Staff Community of Practice. They are not all encompassing or all inclusive. They are thematic of issues experienced on a significant or recurring basis. These findings have been isolated as issues experienced by those who engage support mechanisms within MCPS.

Lack of Value:

Associating value within MCPS is correlated with compensation, appreciation of skillsets and investing in the quality and timeliness of communication.

Manifestation:

The lack of Value experienced by MCPS employees is embodied by and absence of faculty and staff opinion in legislation and policy, absence of appreciation for the time required for task completion, and the lack of clarity codified in the job preparation and readiness process.

Suggestion:

- Have MCPS executives shadow faculty positions to get an in-depth understanding of scope and responsibilities, challenges, and the constraints of each position.

  -With reference to Paraeducators, establish and support a teacher / paraeducator support mechanism whereby para educators are afforded time with instructors to develop curriculum lesson plans and support mechanisms for student

Experiencing Lack of Transparency:

Transparency was experienced on a continuum of input through impact.

Manifestation:

The lack of transparency is said to be experienced by both policy and budget. Common shared experiences have been inadequate, lacking and or untimely opportunities to contribute to, support, or influence the policy and budgetary processes.

Suggestion:

- MCPS Executives should confer with respective Union representatives prior to the development, implementation, and ratification of policy and budget related items in a ***reasonable and timely manner*.

    ***Standards for reasonable and timeliness are such that the matters being proposed are comprehensible, available to inquiry and response prior to being implemented.

- Clearly identify how the policy or budget item will impact the MCPS community.

Experiencing Lack of Communication / Collaboration:

Communication and collaboration were identified as an area of concern given that some MCPS community members have experienced the impact of decision making without having input in the decision-making process.

Suggestion:

- MCPS Executives should confer with respective Union representatives prior to the development, implementation, and ratification of policy and budget related items in a ***reasonable and timely manner*.

    ***Standards for reasonable and timeliness are such that the matters being proposed are comprehensible and available to inquiry and response prior to being executed.

- The MCPS Community would appreciate a partial information dissemination in lieu of all-encompassing sharing efforts.

- Consider that the timeliness of communication and collaboration disseminations provides MCPS faculty and staff opportunities to mitigate whereas an alternative lends to reactionary and less effective methods.

Experiencing Increased Stress

Stress was identified as the prevailing discomfort associated with being a MCPS staff or faculty members.

Manifestation:

Stress was symptomatic of an environment where staffing issues contributed to an imbalance where too few personnel exist to execute an increasing number of tasks. Also, an unappreciation for a lack of wellness benefits exists to include denial and an unhealthy culture regarding leave and employment without health benefits, and lastly "no work / no pay" compensation packages. Also, there is anxiety relating to being accountable to work outputs that faculty and staff may not be adequately trained for.

Suggestion:

- Invest in a culture of leave as a benefit of wellbeing.

- Bolstering employee wellness programs.

- Establish or reinvest in centralized advocacy groups such as the Joint Labor
- Management Commitee and the Culture of Respect.

- Invest in professional growth opportunities and /or expound upon or broaden awareness of existing opportunities.

Experiencing Lack of Training / Unsupported Onboarding Mechanism:

MCPS faculty and staff are ardently committed to the quality of instruction provided for MCPS students. Given that, there is a desire for training to effectively and efficiently instruct the MCPS students.

Reduction of the onboarding process from 5 days to its current state.

Suggestions:

- Derive input for what each position is responsible for to strengthen awareness at the executive level.

- Create a training liaison at each school to ensure consistency within MCPS.

- Compensate training via professional training days which training is protected and not used as supplemental duty opportunities.

- Create an online training catalog whereby virtual scenario support common responsibility within a MCPS occupational series.

Experiencing the Lack of *Safety

Safety in this context equates to lack of psychological safety relative to reprisal or bullying.

Manifestation:

A cultural outcome of with "doing more with less" can be imbalance. A reported experience is that when resources are requested to account for the imbalance, MCPS faculty and Staff can experience reprisal.

Suggestion:

- Develop, invest, and support a culture of psychological safety which encourages request evaluation over request criticism.
- Elevate the Bullying prevention portion sexual harassment prevention training.