

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

December 19, 2018

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Fine Arts Funding; School Safety and Academic Performance; and PARCC Assessments (10-29-18-01-A-B-C-D)

Board members requested the following information regarding the testimony provided during Public Comments:

Question A

What is the funding source for schools' arts supply budgets? Is there a range of funding provided to schools?

Response

Instructional materials funds are allocated to schools in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) for their students. Allocations are based on a per-pupil amount. Decisions at the school level determine purchases of classroom materials.

Question B

Is there a difference in the per pupil funding arts expenditures by school? How are we ensuring equity throughout the district?

Response

As noted, per pupil funding for instructional materials is the same for each MCPS school. Elementary schools are allocated art and general music teacher positions based on the estimated number of classroom teacher stations, which includes regular classroom sections, kindergarten sections, prekindergarten sections, and self-contained special education sections. Secondary schools are allocated classroom teachers based on projected enrollment. Sectioning of arts and music classes are based on the number of students who register to take classes and school priorities.

Elementary schools are allocated instrumental music teacher positions based on the participation in instrumental music programs in Grades 4–5. In addition, in Fiscal Year 2019, 10 highly impacted elementary schools received additional instrumental music teacher allocations through the Arts Expansion initiative.

Question C

How do we make sure that PTA-sponsored art funding is equitably balanced throughout the district?

Response

Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in Montgomery County operate independently of MCPS. MCPS does not direct PTAs as to how to fund school activities. The school principal works directly with his/her respective PTA. PTAs vary cross Montgomery County in the amount of funds they can generate to support their schools. If the PTA donates funds to a school, those funds would be deposited into the school's Independent Activity Fund. Board of Education policies and MCPS regulations govern how PTAs provide funding to schools. None of these policies and regulations deal with the issue of equity. The policies and regulations include:

- [Policy CND](#), *School-Related Fund-Raising*
- [Regulation DIA-RA](#), *Accounting for Financial Operations/Independent Activity Funds*
- [Regulation DIA-RB](#), *Payments for Services and Reimbursements for Expenses from School Independent Activity Funds*
- [Regulation DJA-RB](#), *Purchases of Materials and Equipment Using Nonappropriated Funds and Acceptance of Donated Items*

Question D

Please provide a response to the concerns raised by Ms. Olga Velasquez and Ms. Elida Morinigo in their testimonies. (See attached testimonies)

Response

Certainly, we concur with Ms. Velasquez' comments that students must feel safe and secure in their learning environment to thrive and we are doing everything we can do to ensure that occurs. With respect to Ms. Velasquez' testimony, she referenced the 2016–2017 *Safety and Security at a Glance* report. Material in the report describes the fire and emergency drills that Stedwick Elementary School completed, as well as other school safety programs such as Character Counts!, counseling programs and groups, DeBug, mentoring programs, and the Visitor Management System. Stedwick Elementary School also employs the Access

Control System to control visitors coming to the school. It is important to note that Stedwick Elementary School has a vestibule, which helps to guide visitors into the main office.

A representative in the Department of School Safety and Security (DSSS) recently met with Dr. Margaret Pastor, principal, Stedwick Elementary School, to review the school's emergency preparedness procedures and discuss safety and security concerns. Dr. Pastor believes the security of the school is paramount and schedules periodic meetings with the school cluster security coordinator to ensure the expectations of the Board and DSSS are met.

In response to Ms. Morinigo's testimony, she raised concerns about how students are graded on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, the relationship between student results on PARCC and student reading levels, and how MCPS' report cards reflect actual student performance.

PARCC cannot be compared with other assessments. PARCC provides a snapshot of student academic performance in reading, writing, and math, at a specific point in time based on the learning standards expressed by the Common Core State Standards for Grades 3–8 and high school. The results of PARCC assess where students are, help guide daily instruction, and determine additional supports needed to ensure student success and academic progress. School districts and schools use PARCC as one measure to inform resource allocation including budgeting for staffing, instructional programming, facilities, and materials.

MCPS uses multiple assessments to gather a full picture of a student's academic progress during the year and readiness for the next grade level. The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) (Math and Reading) are administered in fall, winter, and spring to measure student growth over time. Teachers and grade level teams use the data from these assessments and other district and teacher-developed assessments to identify student needs and individualize instruction and support, including small group instruction and guided reading. For students receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services, ESOL teachers also collect data to indicate student progress in English language proficiency that is coupled with student performance in guided reading and MAP to obtain a clear picture of these students' learning needs. Reports from these assessments are provided to parents/guardians throughout the year.

MCPS report cards provide parents/guardians with information on the student's current level of performance and progress toward meeting grade level expectations, based on district and classroom measures. All elementary report cards indicate the grade-level expectations and topics by subject. A key provided on the report card indicates the student's academic progress and instructional reading levels based on grade-level expectations. This informs parents/guardians whether students have met or exceeded, are in progress, or have not yet met the grade-level expectations.

If there are any additional questions or concerns about an individual student's performance, parents/guardians always are welcome and encouraged to reach out to their student's classroom teacher or school administrator to learn more about their child's needs and programming.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Maria V. Navarro, chief academic officer, at 240-740-3040; Dr. Andrew M. Zuckerman, at 240-740-3050; or Ms. Nicola Diamond, chief financial officer, at 240-740-3160.

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Copy to:

Dr. Navarro
Dr. Zuckerman
Ms. Diamond
Ms. Webb