

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

August 7, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Identification of Inappropriate Behavior (07-11-19-01-A-B)

During the Board meeting on Thursday, July 11, 2019, discussions with participants and the members of the Board brought forward two inquiries about topics of interest and concern related to the identification of inappropriate behavior. Responses to these inquiries are attached.

JRS:slh

Copy to:  
Executive Staff  
Mr. Edmundson  
Ms. Webb

## **Identification of Inappropriate Behavior**

### **Board Meeting of July 11, 2019**

During Public Comments, Board members requested the following information:

#### **Question A**

Information regarding the training of bus drivers/all employees in general to identify sexually inappropriate behavior/harassment situations. (Matthew Wade testimony)

#### **Response**

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is committed to providing a safe and welcoming learning and working environment for students and staff. To fulfill this commitment, all staff members are required to complete the annual Districtwide Compliance Training for the 2019–2020 school year. This training is designed to ensure that every employee has the necessary information to establish and maintain a positive, safe, healthy, and lawful climate and culture. The mandated training includes extensive teaching modules, specific to the topic of identifying sexually inappropriate behaviors: *Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*, and *Sexual Harassment and Intimidation*.

The training focuses on three key areas:

1. Recognizing signs of child abuse/neglect, and sexual harassment;
2. Reviewing Board of Education policies, MCPS regulations, federal and state laws for reporting suspicion of abuse/neglect, and sexual harassment; including consequences for failing to adhere to the policies and regulations; and
3. Identifying actions for staff to take.

For Fiscal Year 2020, MCPS continuously improved the modules based on a multi-disciplinary team of government agencies including the Montgomery County Police Special Victims Investigation Division, the State's Attorney's Office, and Child Welfare Services. The training modules are interactive, engaging, and assess the staff member's mastery of the critical content. All MCPS staff are mandated to take the Districtwide Compliance Training prior to working with students.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Henry R. Johnson, Jr., chief of staff, at 240-740-3015 or Mr. Gregory S. Edmundson, director, Student Welfare and Compliance, at 240-740-3215.

#### **Question B**

Mrs. O'Neill requested information regarding what MCPS is doing in early education to teach students how to identify sexually inappropriate behavior/sexual harassment situations. (Matthew Wade testimony)

## Response

Personal Body Safety Lessons, taught in prekindergarten through Grade 12, were developed in consultation with and reviewed by county, state, and federal subject matter experts. These lessons were designed to teach students how to recognize and report cases of abuse, their main purpose was to empower students to understand that their bodies belonged to them and that they have the right to say, “No,” if someone says or does something to them that makes them feel uncomfortable. This applies to actions from an adult and also from peers. For example, in kindergarten, students are taught how to identify uncomfortable touches (as opposed to “bad,” which can be less subjective), how to refuse uncomfortable touches, and feel empowered to tell a trusted adult about any touch that makes them feel uncomfortable. In Grade 5, students learn about personal rights and “listening to their feelings” to help them identify what makes them uncomfortable and what may distinguish between safe and dangerous situations. Throughout their educational experience, students are reminded that it is their right to feel comfortable and that they should tell a trusted adult when situations make them uncomfortable, whether abuse or neglect from an adult or bullying or harassment from a peer.

In addition, the Comprehensive Health Education curriculum includes age-appropriate information at each grade level to help students learn about and expect healthy relationships that are free from bullying, harassment, or intimidation. This is one component of the Maryland State Curriculum Content Standards (i.e., safety and injury prevention) and National Health Education Standard. Teenagers also are invited to participate in the annual Choose Respect Montgomery conference that promotes awareness to help students learn about healthy teen relationships, teen dating violence prevention, and where and how to get help.

Montgomery County Board of Education [Policy ACF, \*Sexual Harassment\*](#), defines what constitutes sexual harassment and expressly states that it is prohibited, whether by students or staff members. Board Policy ACF is operationalized in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) [Regulation ACF-RA, \*Sexual Harassment\*](#), which describes the procedures by which students may seek guidance and support when addressing sexual harassment, and how to file a complaint to school staff members, either verbally or in writing. This complaint will be investigated by school administrators. Students who violate Board Policy ACF will be subject to disciplinary actions.

All MCPS staff members receive annual training on Board policies and MCPS regulations related to bullying, in general, and sexual harassment, specifically. Schools must implement strategies to teach and reinforce prosocial behavior to create safe learning environments and staff members are taught to recognize signs of harassment or bullying and to intervene if they are a witness to such events.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Maria V. Navarro, chief academic officer, at 240-740-3040.