

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

October 16, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Data Collection on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual (SPC-06-27-19-07)

Question

Ms. Silvestre requested more information regarding the data collection on LGBTQIA.

Response

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has been considering effective ways to collect data to measure student attitudes, behaviors, and demographics. Currently, the primary data collection tool that is used biennially is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Since at least 2013, the YRBS has asked students to indicate their sexual preferences. In 2016, high school students also were asked if they were transgender. Montgomery County YRBS data from 2016 indicated that 83.3 percent of students identified as heterosexual; 2.6 percent identified as gay or lesbian; and 8.7 percent identified as bisexual. Also in 2016, 1.3 percent of high school students identified as transgender. Data from the 2018 YRBS will be available from the CDC and the Maryland State Department of Education in 2020.

MCPS is consulting with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) on the Fairfax County Youth Survey developed by FCPS staff in collaboration with the members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. This survey is administered to all FCPS students in identified grade levels and the data locally analyzed, allowing for more timely data collection that may be used to inform programming. In addition, MCPS is reviewing the Maryland State Survey to identify elements that may be used to develop a MCPS *Be Well 365* student survey.

MCPS recognizes the importance of Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) in schools to support both Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ+) students and allies. During summer 2019, secondary school administrators were asked if their school had an active GSA. All comprehensive high schools and 18 middle schools have GSAs. Administrators at three middle schools are considering forming a GSA during the 2019–2020 school year. Staff in the Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement (OSFSE) is working with schools to mobilize

grassroots efforts to support the formation of GSAs in all middle schools. In addition, staff in OSFSE is supporting schools with existing GSAs to elevate student voice, incorporate their work into all student and leadership groups, and ensure that they are active and strong.

OSFSE staff met with one high school GSA to learn about issues and concerns important to LGBTQ+ students and allies. Students stated that it was important to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and that comprehensive health education classes include information specific to LGBTQ individuals. In fall 2019, students also have expressed an interest in developing a County board to support LGBTQ interests and needs of MCPS students. Currently, OSFSE staff is exploring this interest in collaboration with student leadership groups.

MCPS actively is working to support student and staff participation in the Human Rights Campaign's annual Time to THRIVE conference scheduled for February 14 through 16, 2020, in Washington, D.C. The Time to THRIVE conference includes specific programming for youth groups. The Human Rights Campaign's initiative, Welcoming Schools, supports elementary schools' efforts to embrace family diversity, end bullying, and avoid gender stereotyping. In addition, the second annual LGBTQ+ Forum will provide an opportunity to build, support, and advocate for a more inclusive school community.

If you have questions, please contact Ms. Ruschelle Reuben, associate superintendent for student and family support and engagement, Office of the Chief Academic Officer, at 240-740-5624.

JRS:MVN:RR:ear

Copy to:

Executive Staff

Ms. Webb