

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

November 18, 2020

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Counselor Access and Afterschool Program Information
(10-06-20-02, -A, -B)

During the *Opening Schools in Recovery of Education—Update* discussion, Ms. Dixon requested the following information:

Question A

Please provide information regarding how high school students are able to gain access to counselors for assistance with college applications and recommendations, as well as regarding social-emotional assistance.

Response

High school students are able to gain access to school counselors for assistance with college applications and letters of recommendation through a variety of ways. While each school developed its own method for communicating with students, there are several universal practices. At this point in the year, the high school counseling departments already have held senior meetings. It also is important to note that College and Career Information Coordinators (CCICs) are key in this work. The work began in spring 2020, when students received lessons utilizing Naviance to discuss the process. During summer 2020, CCICs and school counselors held student workshops and forums on college and career readiness that were open to all Grades 9–12 students. Topics included how to attend a virtual college visit, application deadlines, and additional key areas of the college search process.

Early in the first quarter of the 2020–2021 school year, the Class of 2021 was provided with letters from their counselors indicating their progress toward graduation and outstanding coursework, testing, and student service learning hours needed. The letters included the school’s individualized plan for connecting with the counselor and/or CCICs. Naviance remains the platform for the college planning and application process. November 1 also was a historically important deadline; counselors worked diligently to ensure all students were prepared to submit the full application by that day.

Social-emotional support is at the forefront of the work by all K–12 school counselors. School counselors have office hours and work as a team to ensure that the virtual office always has a counselor available. For example, at John F. Kennedy High School, if a student would like to speak with a counselor (outside of a scheduled appointment time), the student may join the counseling office Zoom link. The counseling secretary then will add the student to the appropriate counselor’s private breakout room. If the counselor is unavailable, the secretary will encourage the student to meet with an available counselor. This process ensures both access to a counselor and confidentiality.

School counselors actively work with their students by performing individual check-ins, conducting social-emotional classroom guidance lessons, and collaborating with staff if concerns arise. As active members of the student well-being teams, counselors use that time to determine the needs of students and how they may provide appropriate interventions. They also are continuing to meet with parents/guardians via online meetings or telephone calls, using Google Voice. All school counselors continue to receive professional development on how to support all students in a virtual setting through the Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement trainings and American School Counselor Association webinars.

Question B

Please provide information regarding the availability of afterschool programs for elementary and middle school students. Please include information regarding the status of those offerings, if any.

Response

Staff in the Student Leadership and Extracurricular Activities Unit has provided guidance for schools about planning and preparing school-based extracurricular activity offerings in a virtual setting. A new Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) web page for student engagement through leadership, service, and extracurricular activities has been created to provide students, families, and school communities a location to connect to the opportunities offered at schools and across the district, as well as provide students with experiences they may access independently at a time and location convenient for them. The [web page](#) may be accessed on the MCPS website .

Currently, approximately 1,600 extracurricular opportunities have been published on the student engagement web page and additional offerings are being created and published each day. The diverse choices range from academic supports to co-curricular and extracurricular experiences. Students and families may select their school level (elementary, middle, high) and school name to find a roster of offerings at that school, meeting information, and the sponsor that organizes each activity. Every middle school has published their offerings and hosts them virtually during lunch, on Wednesdays, and after school. Many elementary schools are updating

their offerings and publishing them as they continue to add new programs. They have been working to adapt traditional programs, such as safety patrol; staff in the Student Leadership and Extracurricular Activities Unit has developed a safety patrol training to help sponsors consider ways to modify the program and host the program virtually.

The Extracurricular Activity Think Tank Team will evaluate the current state of the virtual extracurricular programs and collect and review data for student participation as students work to earn the MCPS Certificate of Student Engagement. This team also will continue to plan for the potential return of some extracurricular programs as appropriate.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Ruschelle Reuben, associate superintendent of student and family support and engagement, Office of Teaching, Learning, and Schools, via e-mail.

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Copy to:

Executive Staff

Ms. Webb