

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

April 19, 2023

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education  
From: Monifa B. McKnight, Superintendent of School  
Subject: Composting and Supply Chain (02-07-2023-01-A, -B)

During *Public Comments*, Board members requested the following information:

**Question A**

Ms. Wolff requested information regarding the \$60,000 funding request for the composting project proposed. Is there a way to fund this request?

**Response A**

Board of Education (Board) Policy ECA, *Sustainability*, focuses Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS) efforts on greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction, reducing waste generation (including food waste), increasing use of renewable energy, and identifying strategies for our community to withstand the impacts of climate change. The major sources of GHG in MCPS facilities, comprising 98 percent of total GHG emissions, are (1) building energy use (electricity and natural gas); and (2) transportation (school bus and fleet). Overall, "waste" is a very small contributor to the GHG that our school system produces.

When examining waste streams for opportunities for improvement, our primary measures must be to reduce the volume of waste that is generated. Secondly, unused food should be used to feed hungry people. It is not until the fifth tier of possible actions that can be taken where composting should be considered as a solution to the problem.

Although the composting efforts have been a significant area of interest by MCPS students, these programs have underlined the importance of a food recovery program and also highlighted a significant way that we actually can help resolve food insecurity every day in our schools. Many more schools have engaged in this much less expensive and immediately beneficial initiative for both the school community and GHG reduction efforts. Schools that have started food waste diversion are understanding that there is even less waste to be composted. We must prioritize our efforts on GHG reduction and remain focused on equity and waste reduction. These post-consumer composting programs can continue to be funded using grants, as available.

We also are developing a Student Climate Action Council that will accept and review student proposals for sustainability projects. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency Food Recovery Hierarchy, there are other actions students could consider should they be interested in engaging in community projects for food recovery, with continued staff and budget focused on recruiting schools to engage in all types of behavior modification to reduce energy and natural resource consumption, reduce waste, and increase raw material recycling.

We have reached out to [Feed the Fridge](#), a Montgomery County based nonprofit that connects local restaurants and food establishments with schools and communities to provide fresh meals and food to students and families in need. Currently, Feed the Fridge provides meals to students and families through their Gaithersburg High School refrigerator, and we hope to expand the program to additional sites throughout the county.

### **Question B**

Ms. Harris requested information regarding the issues raised in Faith Nah's testimony. Are the issues raised connected to supply chain issues or is this maintenance/staffing issue? Please follow-up with the student and the Board regarding the issues raised in the testimony.

### **Response B**

According to the school business administrator at Poolesville High School, supplies have been on back order (supply chain issues), but currently are fully stocked. The school administration also is in transition with a new building service manager, and they are developing a schedule to ensure the dispensers are regularly stocked.

As a follow-up with the students who testified regarding sustainability at the February 7, 2023, Board business meeting, staff from the Department of Facilities Management facilitated a virtual meeting on February 22, 2023, with Board Member Lynne Harris and the students were invited to attend. Board Member Lynne Harris and staff from the Office of the Chief Operating Officer, the Department of Facilities Management, and the Division of Sustainability and Compliance, have formed a Student Climate Action Council which will include students from middle and high schools across the county to create and implement sustainability initiatives across the school district at local schools.

If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Dana E. Edwards, chief of district operations, or Mr. Seth P. Adams, director of facilities management, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, via email.

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Copy to:

Executive Staff

Mr. Adams

Ms. Webb