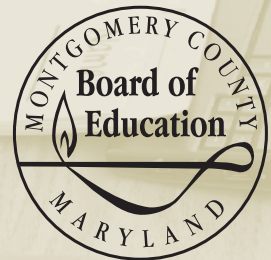


MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Legislative Platform

2017 Session of the
Maryland General Assembly





VISION

We inspire learning by providing the greatest public education to each and every student.

MISSION

Every student will have the academic, creative problem solving, and social emotional skills to be successful in college and career.

CORE PURPOSE

Prepare all students to thrive in their future.

CORE VALUES

*Learning
Relationships
Respect
Excellence
Equity*

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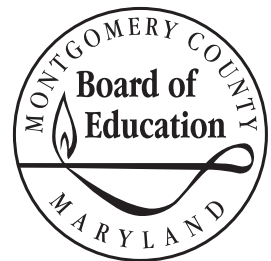
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

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LOCAL CONTROL

The Maryland State Board of Education establishes, through regulations, broad statewide policies and mandates, with local boards of education responsible for establishing policies and procedures for the public schools within their jurisdiction. By retaining decision-making authority at the local level, a board of education can best balance educational practices, by using available resources, appropriate public input, and measures of accountability. Such authority includes, but is not limited to, school calendars, curriculum, testing, staffing, and procurement issues.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes executive, legislative, and agency actions and proposals which would reduce or circumscribe local board authority, or create unfunded mandates.

■ INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION BELIEVES that today's investments in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) are crucial to a prosperous economy, strong business growth, and students' ability to compete for good jobs in a global, high-tech economy. School systems must be adequately funded to prepare our youth to support future economic health. We urge the entire Maryland General Assembly to remain vigilant against the potential negative impacts of unfunded mandates. These include significant additional workload burdens with no accompanying source of revenue as well as unintended consequences of well-intentioned legislation. We look forward to a successful 2017 Legislative Session in which children's welfare continues to be paramount.

Long-range Planning and Capacity Issues

For the 2016–2017 school year, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is experiencing its ninth straight year of significant enrollment growth. Preliminary enrollment on September 30, 2016, was 159,242 students, with a one-year increase of nearly 2,800 students. Since the 2007–2008 school year, enrollment has increased by 21,724 students, with most of the increase at the elementary

school level. At the same time, we are severely challenged by limited capacity in our school facilities and will have to make significant expenditures in the capital and operating budgets to accommodate these student enrollment increases. State construction dollars are critical. Providing adequate school capacity will not be possible given the existing state school construction funding stream. Over the years, MCPS has sought to balance the fiscal difficulties facing the county with the need to address our overcrowded schools and aging facilities and infrastructure. We are committed to working with our local county government and our local state delegation to address our tremendous needs in the most responsible way possible, while continuing to provide our students with high-quality learning environments.

Adequacy of Education Funding

The passage of the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Education Act of 2002 (BTE)* resulted in a dramatic change to education funding in Maryland. Even during challenging fiscal times, the Maryland General Assembly has held the line on education funding. Maryland's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement, along with the BTE funding paradigm, provides assurance that the goals of adequacy, equity, and excellence are met. To keep pace with rising standards for student performance, state aid must be sustained. Additional funding is also necessary to implement Maryland's prekindergarten for all children initiative and should be on a per-pupil basis, without any off-setting reduction in compensatory education funding.

Common Core State Standards

By unanimous vote in June 2010, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in mathematics and English/language arts (ELA) and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. These research and evidence-based standards are internationally benchmarked and reflect the knowledge and skills most valued by employers and higher education. The CCSS serve as the foundation for curriculum development and instructional practices, which are designed to ensure all students are prepared for college and careers. This initiative provides a clear understanding and aligns expectations for what each student should know and be able to do at each grade level. The resulting curriculum continues to be a local responsibility (or state-led, where appropriate). MCPS adopted the CCSS and continues to align and refine curriculum across all grade levels. As these standards are being implemented across Maryland and within our school district, we must ensure that this is not an unfunded mandate and that resources are available to continue the work to provide students with opportunities to achieve the underlying goals and objectives.

■ CAPITAL BUDGET/SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

State construction funds continue to be inadequate to meet the substantial needs of our burgeoning student enrollment. The total Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 state capital budget for school construction was \$368.4 million. Montgomery County Public Schools requested \$149.96 million and received \$50.13 million—\$38.4 million from the annual state aid allocation and \$11.7 million through the approved Capital Grant Program for Local School Systems with Significant Enrollment Growth or Relocatable Classrooms legislation approved by the Maryland General Assembly in April 2015 and amended in April 2016. Limited state funding has forced Montgomery County to forward-fund critical capital projects and then await state reimbursement, which sometimes is not made until years after project completion.

For the 2016–2017 school year, MCPS is experiencing its ninth straight year of significant enrollment growth. Preliminary enrollment on September 30, 2016, was 159,242 students, with a one-year increase of nearly 2,800 students. Since the 2007–2008 school year, enrollment has increased by 21,724 students, with most of the increase at the elementary school level. Since 2007, approximately 14,000 more seats have been added to increase school capacities through new school openings and expansion of existing schools; however, our school system continues to be significantly behind in meeting elementary school space needs.

For the 2016–2017 school year, 385 relocatable classrooms are in use at schools to address enrollment that exceeds capacity, with more anticipated in the coming years. Without adequate school construction funding, MCPS will be forced into an overreliance on relocatable classrooms while increasingly aging and less-than-adequate facilities will become the norm.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- A robust and innovative statewide school construction and renovation funding plan for FY 2018 to address school facility needs.



FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Additional legislative action targeted to increase state school construction funding for systems with extreme enrollment growth.
- Expanding the state's bonding capacity to meet Maryland's growing school facility needs.
- Revising current standards for the Interagency Committee square footage allowances for new and revitalized/expanded schools to eliminate the penalty for building additional classrooms intended to reduce class size in support of student achievement.
- Developing a mechanism to ensure that locally forward-funded projects remain eligible for state funding, even after the project has been completed.
- Changing the state funding process from a project-by-project allocation to a "block grant" allocation to allow Local Education Agencies (LEA) flexibility in funding local capital projects.
- Changing the Public School Construction Program to address inequities in funding needs related to the size and location of an LEA.
- Establishing incentives for green and energy-efficient school construction.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- Any reduction in the state and local cost-share percentage.
- Any initiatives or mandates that do not include additional state allocations.

■ STATE EDUCATION FUNDING

Maryland's public schools are ranked among the best in the nation. *The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 (BTE)* represents the resources invested to support this achievement. Full funding of the BTE, including the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) and the annual inflation factor, is needed to sustain successful programs and services for our students.

To keep pace with rising standards for student performance, including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), adequate and equitable state aid must be sustained. The BTE, conceived to ensure adequacy and equity in education funding, has led to increased student performance in Maryland. The CCSS initiative, agreed to by the state of Maryland, has significant budgetary impacts, which are yet to be accounted for. Since 2008, the BTE targeted funding level has been maintained. However, the inflation factor, while reinstated in FY 2013 and capped at 1 percent, expired in FY 2015. Currently, schools are back to the 5 percent cap. The language now reads that the target per-pupil foundation amount for the prior fiscal year increases by the same percentage as the lesser of—

- the increase in the implicit price deflator for state and local government expenditures for the second prior fiscal year;

continued . . .

■ STATE EDUCATION FUNDING (CONT.)

- the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan area, or any successor index, for the second prior fiscal year; or
- 5 percent.

If there is no increase in the implicit price deflator for state and local government expenditures for the second prior fiscal year or in the CPI-U for the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan area, or any successor index, for the second prior fiscal year, the amount is the target per-pupil foundation amount for the prior fiscal year. In FY 2016, the inflation adjustment was 1.37 percent.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- Full-commitment to BTE funding, including the GCEI, compensatory education, and student transportation.
- Mandating full GCEI funding as the Maryland General Assembly did starting in FY 2017.
- Annual inflation adjustment.
- Additional funding through state technology grants for schools with technology deficits that may cause extended testing schedules.
- Exempting school buses that are used to transport public school students from any toll or fee charged for traveling on state roads.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- Any retreat from funding identified in BTE.
- Additional state mandates, unless accompanied by sufficient and ongoing state funding.

In addition, meeting the needs of our rapidly expanding diverse student population requires recognition of the additional resources needed to meet educational needs and fulfill mandated monitoring and reporting requirements.

The Montgomery County Board of Education also supports—

- Additional funding to support English for Speakers of Other Languages.
- Reimbursement for students placed by state agencies at the John L. Gildner Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents (RICA).
- Additional funding necessary to implement Maryland's prekindergarten for all children initiative to ensure it is not an unfunded mandate.
- Altering the definition of full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment used to determine Maryland state education aid to public schools by including children enrolled in half-day prekindergarten (multiplied by 0.5) and in full-day prekindergarten.
- Additional funding to support programs for unaccompanied minors.

■ SPECIAL EDUCATION NONPUBLIC TUITION

Montgomery County Public Schools and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) share the costs for providing services for special education students who are served in nonpublic schools. The program requires local school systems to pay 300 percent of the average per-pupil cost and, since 2010, 30 percent, rather than 20 percent, of any amount in excess; MSDE is required to fund the remaining 70 percent, rather than 80 percent. The Nonpublic Tuition Assistance Program has been beneficial in supporting our obligation to provide appropriate services to students who require intensive special education services.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- Restoring the 80/20 cost-sharing formula of the Nonpublic Tuition Assistance Program.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- Any attempts to increase the local share of tuition for special education students served in nonpublic schools.

■ PUBLIC FUNDING FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Nonpublic schools are neither subject to state accountability measures nor to the same legal requirements as public schools, such as those set out in special education laws and teacher certification regulations. With the increasing unmet needs in public schools, state funds must be targeted to address the needs of public school students in Montgomery County and throughout the state.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- Strong accountability for all public dollars spent on education.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- Appropriation of public funds for private and parochial schools.
- Direct aid to private and parochial students.
- Tuition tax credits, vouchers, or tax credits as a means of reimbursing parents who choose to send their children to private or parochial schools.
- Continuation or expansion of providing textbooks to private schools.



■ CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS

In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the Maryland General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for development of content standards, curriculum, and assessments. The State Board establishes standards and the local boards adopt and implement locally developed programs with local funding to ensure that these standards are met and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements. The state and local boards of education can best balance educational practices and available resources to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable for their work.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- Maintaining the authority of local boards of education to determine educational policy, curriculum, graduation requirements, and administration.
- The elimination of the Government High School Assessment as a graduation requirement or that the assessment be provided as an option to local school systems.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- Any efforts by the Maryland General Assembly to legislate curriculum or assessments, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board.

■ CHARTER SCHOOLS

In 2003, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation that created a charter school program. While the *Maryland Public Charter School Act* establishes an alternative means within a public school system to provide teaching and learning, there remains the need for a strong accountability system to ensure that public charter school funds are appropriately spent.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- Reaffirming that the sole authority for establishing public charter schools is vested in local boards of education, with an appropriate procedure for appeals of local decisions.
- Increased flexibility for charter schools regarding terms and conditions of employment.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- Efforts to expand charter school authority beyond local school boards.
- Efforts to weaken academic or fiscal accountability requirements.
- Any attempt to deprive charter school employees of the rights and responsibilities of other public employees.

■ SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Maintaining local board authority on educational policies and administration is essential to the success of our public schools. MCPS firmly believes that local boards of education are best positioned to assess operational needs and develop implementation plans that best balance educational practices, academic needs of students, available resources, and community interests.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- Maintaining local decision making around school calendars.
- Maintaining local decision making around school start times.
- Maintaining local decision making around school staffing.
- Maintaining local decision making around school sizes.
- Increased flexibility when determining the school calendar.
- An automatic waiver of the requirement to make up instructional time for emergency school closures that occur during a “State of Emergency” declared by the governor of Maryland, if a county falls below the state-required 180-instructional-day minimum due to these and other emergency school closures.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- Mandating all public school systems begin the school year after the Labor Day holiday.
- Mandating school start times for public schools.
- Mandating staffing ratios.



■ EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

MCPS believes that investments in early childhood education are both essential and wise to ensure success for every student. A longitudinal study by the National Institutes of Health concluded that investing in early childhood education can yield impressive economic benefits, including an 18 percent return on investment in improving educational attainment and reducing dependency on social services. MCPS is a significant partner in Montgomery County's Early Childhood efforts, which ensures that family-focused programs and services for young children are neighborhood-based, effective, responsive to cultural diversity, make a measurable and positive difference in children's well-being, and help prepare them for success in school.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- State fiscal support for universal prekindergarten services.
- Statewide initiatives fostering school readiness through the provision of high-quality early childhood programs, including child care.
- Efforts that encourage the provision of an array of services by a variety of agencies.
- Efforts to ensure affordable child care co-payments for parents.
- Efforts that protect the safety, health, and well-being of children in child care.

■ NUTRITION

Thousands of low-income children in Maryland depend on school meals for the nutrition they need to learn and grow. The Maryland Meals for Achievement program provides funding for schools with high concentrations of poverty to provide breakfast to all students, regardless of family income. Of the 86 MCPS schools that are eligible to participate in this program, 79 have been selected to participate in the 2016–2017 school year. The MCPS Summer Food Service Program ensures that children in lower-income areas continue to receive nutritious meals during the summer months when school breakfasts and lunches are not available. This summer, more than 400,000 meals were served to children in 129 locations throughout Montgomery County.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- Expansion of the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program as an entitlement to include all eligible schools that choose to apply.
- Efforts to increase federal funding for the Summer Food Service Program.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- Limiting the number of eligible schools from participation in the Maryland Meals for Achievement program.

■ MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

MCPS recognizes that the social and emotional well-being of a student is crucial to academic success in the classroom; the school district's Strategic Planning Framework envisions a classroom where students are equipped to make constructive and healthy decisions that promote hope, personal well-being, and social behavior.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- Additional funding to expand training and support for students showing symptoms of mental health illnesses and issues.
- Additional funding for substance abuse programs.
- Creation of state coalitions, including work groups, to combat suicide through the assessment of prevention policy.

The continued promotion of an atmosphere of respect and nondiscrimination for all students and staff members, regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, intellectual ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical characteristics, or disability.



■ SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety in public schools has become increasingly important as threats to national and community security have taken on new meaning. The prevention of disruption and violence always has been a key component of long-term effective school safety strategies. The pursuit of a safe environment must be tempered by a balanced emphasis on the protection of individual student rights.

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports—

- Innovative initiatives and funding that speak to strategies that ensure a safe and secure learning and working environment for students and staff, including those that address gang prevention and involvement and promote targeted interventions to reduce gang activity.
- A mandated \$250 fine for drivers who illegally pass stopped school buses.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- A statewide approach that limits a school system's ability to respond to unique and unusual circumstances pertaining to the safety and security of students.

■ HOMESCHOOLING

Maryland law recognizes home instruction as an alternative to public school enrollment and as a means for students to receive regular, thorough instruction. Currently, homeschooled students are expressly authorized to participate in public school standardized testing.

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes—

- Any requirement that homeschooled students be allowed to participate in public school athletics or other extracurricular activities.





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