

HOW TO RUN A STUDENT EDUCATIONAL THINK TANK

HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD

TOOL KIT

UPDATED APRIL 2013 STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

STUDENT THINK TANK

BEFORE WE START...

YOU NEED:

- A DIVERSE GROUP OF STUDENTS
- AN OPEN MINDSET
- MARKERS
- CHART PAPER
- A COMPUTER/LAPTOP (FOR NOTE-TAKING) AND SOMEONE TO TAKE NOTES
- AN ADULT ADVISOR/CHAPERONE
- GOOD IDEAS

CONTACT INFORMATION:

STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

<https://www.facebook.com/smob365?fref=ts>

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/studentaffairs/smob/>

MONTGOMERY COUNTY REGIONAL SGA

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/MCR-SGA/135235423153982>

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/studentaffairs/sga/mcr/>

MONTGOMERY COUNTY JUNIOR COUNCILS

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/studentaffairs/sga/mcjc/>

STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICE

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/studentaffairs/>

KAREN CRAWFORD, COORDINATOR

Karen_L_Crawford@mcpsmd.org

MOCO STUDENT

HAVE AN ISSUE THAT YOU WANT US TO COVER?

mocostudent.org

SPRING INTO ACTION.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING IS TO BRING A DIVERSE GROUP OF STUDENTS TOGETHER TO CREATE REAL SOLUTIONS TO THE REAL PROBLEMS THAT THEY FACE IN SCHOOL.

TOGETHER, YOU WILL DISCUSS AREAS THAT NEED IMPROVEMENT IN OUR SCHOOLS

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GET INVOLVED:

By channeling your discussion to the Board of Education, you are creating real solutions by recognizing real problems faced in your school. The goal of this meeting is to bring students closer to policy-making bodies, such as the Board of Education, by sharing information of the issues that are faced at school with them. This is done by sending your notes directly to the Board of Education.

In Montgomery County, there are so many ways to gain leadership positions as a youth leader. Whether that be attending a Board of Education Operating Budget hearing, OR discussing prominent issues with your school-wide student leaders.

STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

WORK DIRECTLY WITH YOUR STUDENT MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION (SMOB). MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL HELP THE SMOB GAIN A GREATER PERSPECTIVE. POSITIONS RANGE FROM STRATEGIC PLANNING TO DIRECTOR OF EVENTS.

APPLICATIONS COME OUT IN AUGUST VIA THE MCPS STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICE

MONTGOMERY COUNTY REGIONAL SGA

ENCOURAGE YOUR SCHOOL TO BECOME A MEMBER SCHOOL OF MCR TO ATTEND MONTHLY GENERAL ASSEMBLIES TO CONNECT WITH STUDENT LEADERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY.

YOU CAN ALSO ATTEND AND VOTE AT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS AS A SCHOOL LIAISON

MONTGOMERY COUNTY JUNIOR COUNCILS

IF YOU'RE AN INTERESTED MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT, ENCOURAGE THE SGA ADVISOR OF YOUR SCHOOL TO BECOME A MEMBER SCHOOL OF MCJC TO ATTEND MONTHLY GENERAL ASSEMBLIES TO CONNECT WITH STUDENT LEADERS AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL.

OTHER WAYS:

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD IN OTHER WAYS, TOO.

- JOIN YOUR SCHOOL PT(S)A OR INSTRUCTIONAL COUNCIL
- ATTEND THE SUPERINTENDENT'S STUDENT TOWN HALL
- GET INFORMED BY READING MOCO STUDENT, THE COUNTY-WIDE STUDENT NEWSPAPER

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I WANT TO TESTIFY:

PUT YOUR PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS TO THE TEST BY VOICING YOUR OPINION TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION DURING THE “PUBLIC COMMENTS” AT A BUSINESS MEETING.

CALL 301-279-3617 TO RESERVE A SLOT TO TESTIFY

HEARINGS ARE HELD AT:

850 HUNGERFORD DRIVE, ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

TIPS FOR TESTIFYING:

- **PREPARE YOUR TESTIMONY FOUR TO FIVE DAYS BEFOREHAND.**
- **REHEARSE YOUR TESTIMONY BEFORE A FRIEND (OR MIRROR).**
- **PROVIDE SPECIFIC DETAILS TO PROVE YOUR POINT.**
- **SPEAK WITH CONVICTION AND CLARITY.**

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How well do you know your rights as a student? Provided is a summary of the most crucial student's rights *and* responsibilities that each MCPS student should know.

HOW TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR EDUCATION:

You have the ability to influence how materials are taught in your classes. You are responsible for participating and following classroom rules.

Did you know that you can work with school staff to suggest relevant classroom activities or short studies in topics?

Policy JFA: *Student's Rights and Responsibilities*

Regulation JFA-RA: *Student's Rights and Responsibilities*

THE FIVE: DID YOU KNOW?

A group of students cannot be punished for the actions of **one** student.

You will be marked as present for a half day if you are at school for **two** hours

Students must bring a note from his/her guardian within **three** school days. The absence will be marked as unexcused if no note is received.

Five **legit** reasons for missing school

- 1) The hail is the size of baseballs
- 2) The school bus didn't come
- 3) You have a college visit**
- 4) You have a short-term, fulltime job**
- 5) You have a job interview**

must get approval from principal



GRADES

Work turned in **after the due date and before the deadline** cannot be lowered by more than 10% in grade.

Work turned in **after the deadline** will be given a zero.

However, due dates and deadlines cannot be the same date.

OUR VOICE

We are **guaranteed** a **voice** in the decisions that our school makes.

- 1) Student Governments may make recommendations to school administration. Administration must reply within five days.
- 2) Petitions may be circulated, as long as they have a **clear purpose** that won't disrupt instruction.
- 3) We are encouraged to work collaboratively with staff to plan programs and review policies on the school and county level.
- 4) Ways to get involved:
 - o Annual Student Leader's Meeting with the Board of Education
 - o Montgomery County Regional SGA/ Montgomery County Junior Councils -Contact: Karen_L_Crawford@mcpsmd.org
 - o Contact your Student Member of the Board of Education at: Justin_Kim@mcpsmd.org
 - o Join your school's PTSA or instructional Council

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LET'S BE HONEST...

Emergency procedures are important, yet are probably the most forgotten amidst piles of homework and extra-curriculars. That's why it's up to you to familiarize yourself with the LES procedure:

Lockdown— Dangerous conditions outside of school building. All students must be supervised by adults.

Evacuate— An emergency has occurred inside of the school building. All students and staff must exit the building.

Shelter— An emergency has happened outside, near an MCPS building. All students must be under adult supervision within the school building.

Have an emergency?

Montgomery County Public Schools Safe Schools Hotline: [3015175995](tel:3015175995)

Montgomery County Police:

Non-emergency: [3012798000](tel:3012798000)

Drug Tip Hotline: [2407738477](tel:2407738477)

Gang Tip Hotline: [2407738477](tel:2407738477)

Regulation EKA-RA: *Emergency and Disaster Preparedness*

Regulation EKC-RA: *Bomb Threats/Explosive Devices*

Regulation JFA-RA: *Student Rights and Responsibilities*

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

Authorized personnel conducting a search of the student's personal space must make a reasonable effort to inform the student before the search.

RINGING IN ON YOUR CELLPHONE RESPONSIBILITIES

Technology is becoming a bigger and bigger part of our world. You can have your cellphone on hand during the school day, but remember to keep it off and out of sight during instructional time (take the battery out if you need to). You have the responsibility to be respectful to your teachers! High schoolers can have their phones out during lunch.

Elementary schoolers are not allowed to have portable communication devices during the school day unless a parent writes a request to the principal and receives approval.

"Instructional time" applies to high school plus and Saturday school.

Regulation COG-RA: *Portable Communication Devices*

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR RIGHTS? TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH OUR JEOPARDY GAME.

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INSTRUCTIONS

1. GATHER A LIST OF THE NAMES OF 5-25 INTERESTED, DIVERSE STUDENTS
2. PLAN A DATE WITH AN ADULT ADVISOR
3. DISTRIBUTE PAGES 1-6 AND 7-13 TO ALL ATTENDEES
4. MEET WITH THE GROUP OF STUDENTS AND ADVISOR TO DISCUSS RELEVANT SCHOOL-WIDE ISSUES
5. SEND NOTES TAKEN FROM THE MEETING TO:

School related issues: your principal
countywide issues: boe@mcpsmd.org

6. SEND EVALUATION TO: Carmen_Huynh@mcpsmd.org

NOTE: THIS PACKET ONLY SERVES TO ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION AND AS A REFERENCE TO STUDENTS. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE CERTAIN ISSUES THAT HAVE BEEN CONTINUALLY DISCUSSED AT THE COUNTY LEVEL. FEEL FREE TO SPEAK ABOUT OTHER SPECIFIC ISSUES THAT YOU SEE AT YOUR SCHOOL.

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ICEBREAKER

Split into groups of 5 to 6 students. In each group, come up with a list of five areas that need improvement in your school.

This is a period of brainstorming, be open to all ideas.

What could be made/done better in your school?

How do these issues affect you and your friends?

Why is important that these issues are resolved?

DISCUSSION

Each group should share their list of issues. You should see common issues between each group; these are the issues that you should focus your discussion on.

Take notes.

How can these issues be resolved?

Why do you think these issues are reoccurring? What significance does this have?

What does it mean to your educational community to resolve these issues?

CONCLUSION

at this stage, a list of possible solutions should be taken note of.

Take notes.

Can the group relate on why this issue is significant?

Does anybody have any personal experience with these issues?

SEND COMPLETED NOTES TO: boe@mcpsmd.org and your principal

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LISTED BELOW ARE COMMON ISSUES. HOW DO THESE ISSUES APPLY TO YOU AT THE SCHOOL-WIDE LEVEL? USE THE QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR DISCUSSIONS (BE SURE TO TAKE NOTES ON YOUR RESPONSES)

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○ **BULLYING**

Maryland is one of the seven states to enact a comprehensive anti-bullying law that protects all students from bullying and harassment, with hopes of creating safer learning environments. The law gained momentum within the Maryland legislature.

However, “Cyberbullying” makes it harder to track the bully than it would be with physically bullying on the school playground. The recent popularity of Twitter “Confessions” pages, where specific students are targeted, is an example of this. School districts are learning about need for cooperation between local authorities and school administrations to prevent social media from turning into a tool that can lead to intimidation, school conflicts, and although not as common, but far more serious: suicides.

Montgomery County takes cyber safety seriously. For more information visit:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/cybersafety/>

Even with all these laws, is bullying still a problem at your school? Which do you see/hear more of, physical and verbal bullying or cyberbullying?

What intervention plans would you like to see take place to solve this issue?

Did you know that you can report acts of bullying, harassment, or intimidation by filing a simple form on the MCPS website?

CARING IS THE BEST POLICY

There are multiple ways to reduce bullying in a school community. Start a school-wide campaign with other students and teachers! There is always strength in numbers. Encourage

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your peers to be more comfortable with their guidance counselors.

○ SCHOOL LUNCH QUALITY

MCPS is one of the few counties with a multi-million dollar budget designed to produce thousands of school lunches every week. MCPS lunches are processed at the Central Production Facility, a 30,000 square foot plant. One of the most recent successes in the renovation of our school lunches is the addition of whole wheat bread to all the sandwiches and lunches in an effort to make them healthier and more nutritious. This seemingly small change has come at the cost of \$300,000.

Montgomery County Public Schools is renowned for its excellent school lunch program, but it does have its shortcomings.

What do you like and dislike about our school lunches?

What do you think can be done to make them better?

If you could change one thing in the school lunch program, what would you change?

Is it worth it to reinvent school lunches?

ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION GUIDELINE

Our County has faced many different and controversial attendance policies. The recently denounced LC policy that made students lose credit for their classes if they reached 5 unexcused absences. However, at the moment there are still many policies established by individual school that are unfair towards students. We believe that there is the possibility to create a balanced system that strongly discourages absences but does not violate the rights and needs of students.

You can help us reach that balance.

Have you had any personal issues with attendance?

What are your ideas as to what the ideal attendance system should be? Are there any realistic improvements you think you can achieve for your school's attendance policy? What are they?

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Take action! Talk to your principal or the SMOB to see what can be done.

○ SMOB COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Student Member of the Board of Education is the direct link between students in the county and the Board. Representing 140,000+ students, it's important that the community is engaged and informed on the SMOB's decisions. The SMOB usually outreaches to the student body through social media outlets—such as Facebook and Twitter pages. He/she also runs Student Town Halls with Superintendent Starr.

Check it out:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/superintendent/student-townhall/>

Yet with all these modes of involvement available it's still a challenge to engage students and community members from all social circles and regions of the county. As a result of MCPS being such a large school system, it can be difficult for one student to reach all communities of students.

How much have you heard about what the SMOB has done?

What modes of communication would you prefer to use to access information from the SMOB?

○ TEACHER EVALUATIONS

Have you ever seen other teachers, administrators, or staff walk into your class with a clipboard taking notes? In MCPS, teacher evaluations are partially conducted by teachers evaluating each other. Do you think this is a good idea?

Student growth is another factor in evaluations, but how do you measure growth? Should it be purely based on test scores? Maryland is one of the few states that does not participate in the federal government's Race To The Top program, which awards funds to states for satisfying certain educational policies, such as performance-based standards for teachers and principals, or fitting certain

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standards.

Maryland legislatures believe that learning just to pass a test is not real learning at all and that teachers that do this should not be rewarded.

Who should have a say in evaluating teachers? Students? Other teachers?

What other ways can teachers and principals be evaluated that is fair, reasonable, and practical?

How open are you with your teachers on their teaching styles?

How receptive are your teachers to your opinions on their teaching style?

SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

2012-- Flora M. Singer ES Opens for instruction as MCPS' first new school in three years

2012-- Newly-renovated Paint Branch High School re-opens for instruction.

2015-- Newly-renovated Wheaton High School scheduled to re-open for instruction.

2017-- Newly-renovated Thomas Edison High School scheduled to re-open for instruction

As of September 11th, 2012, the Board of Education has approved \$120 million to construct two new facilities to provide future Wheaton and Edison students with a state-of-the-art education. Poolesville High School, Seneca Valley High School, and Thomas S. Wootton High School will also be renovated in the near future.

"As we plan for new facilities, we should also be designing an educational program that will serve the needs of the students at Wheaton and Edison as well as prepare them for successes in college and workplace," says Superintendent Dr. Joshua Starr at the September 11th Board of Education meeting.

Do you want to express your voice about pressing concerns to modernize your school?

The Board of Education generally holds two hearings for every Capital Improvements Program of each fiscal year. Community leaders, just like you, are

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given the chance to express their pressing concerns within their communities regarding the Capital Improvements Program.

Renovations are exciting for the community! Generally, community leaders will hold roundtable discussions and meetings preceding renovations. It is a great chance for community members to express their ideas and address issues concerning the educational community.

○ IMPLEMENTATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN CLASSROOMS

The use of Edline will be discontinued. MCPS seeks to make school documents more accessible to us by adopting a new web portal (MyMCPS) to closer link students to their teachers and peers. In 2012, each school was equipped with its own WiFi. Student access to the wireless connection hasn't been granted yet in order to maintain security of these networks.

Feeling Board?

In 2012, MCPS approves Dr. Starr's proposal to provide \$14.5 million in funds over 5 years to provide more tech upgrades to the county. The plan would include the provision of a promethean board to every elementary school in MCPS.

\$8.95 million would buy 2,000 Promethean boards so that every elementary classroom has one and \$5.6 million would go to purchasing new or upgraded wireless networking equipment, software and services for all schools.

How do you feel about promethean boards and other tech upgrades, such as "mobile labs"?

Do you feel that they improve your learning? How so?

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BELL TIMES!

THE PROS AND CONS OF STARTING SCHOOL LATER: WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In the fall of 2012, a MCPS parent raised concerns that students were not getting enough sleep. The Bell Times Work Group then got together to study and discuss the issue around school starting and ending times and continued to do so for 9 months. Recently the Work Group released their report and after reviewing the information, Superintendent Dr. Joshua Starr has made the recommendation below to accommodate the sleep needs of us teens!

More info: www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/belltimesworkgroup/index.aspx



HOW WOULD THIS CHANGE AFFECT...

- SLEEP SCHEDULE?
- FAMILY LIFE?
- AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES?
- WORK?

#CURRENTLY

Level	Time	Length of Day
High School	7:25 a.m.–2:10 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Middle School	7:55 a.m. –2:40 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Elementary School Tier 1	8:50 a.m. –3:05 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	9:15 a.m. –3:30 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes

MCPS will offer the community multiple opportunities over the next several months to provide feedback on proposed changes to school starting and ending times. This will include three community forums, focus groups, surveys, and self-guided discussions called 'Neighbor to Neighbor Conversations'. Check them out to make sure your opinion is heard loud and clear!

- Monday, January 6: Seneca Valley High School, 19401 Crystal Rock Drive in Germantown
- Monday, February 10: Montgomery Blair High School, 51 University Blvd., East, in Silver Spring

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ISSUES

SIGNIFICANCE

HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

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ISSUES

SIGNIFICANCE

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ISSUES

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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ISSUES

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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Interested in receiving updates on what is going on in the county?

NAME	EMAIL

INCLUDE ALL NAMES IN NOTES TO BE SUBMITTED TO:

**boe@mcpsmd.org and your school
principal**

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CHECKLIST:

DID YOU.....

TAKE EXTENSIVE NOTES OF THE MEETING?

DISCUSS RELEVANT ISSUES?

BRAINSTORM POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THESE ISSUES?

RECOGNIZE YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A STUDENT?

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

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HOLD YOUR HORSES: **EVALUATE**

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR PARTICIPATING IN OUR EDUCATIONAL THINK TANK. YOUR PRINCIPAL AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION LOOKS FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR IDEAS. DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING WITH YOUR GROUP AND INCLUDE ALL OF THE COMMENTS IN THE NOTES.

HOW INFORMATIVE WAS THE INFORMATIONAL GUIDE?

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE RECOGNIZED ISSUES WITHIN YOUR SCHOOL AFTER DISCUSSION?

IF YOU WERE TO PROVIDE ONE CHANGE TO THE FORMAT OF YOUR THINK TANK, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

DO YOU FEEL MORE COMPELLED TO GET INVOLVED IN STUDENT ADVOCACY ON THE COUNTY-WIDE LEVEL?

HAVE YOU INCREASED YOUR KNOWLEDGE ON STUDENT'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES?

SEND EVALUATIONS TO: **Carmen_Huynh@mcpsmd.org**, **MCR-SGA President**