

POLICY

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

- Related Entries:** ACA, ACF, ACF-RA, ACH, ACH-RA, COB-RA, COC-RA, COE-RA, COF-RA, COG-RA, EBA-RA, EBJ-RA, EBK-RA, ECC-RA, EEA-RA, EKA-RA, GKA-RA, IGN, IGO-RA, JFA, JFA-RA, JGA, JGA-RA, JGA-RB, JGA-RC, JGB-RA, JHC, JHC-RA, JHF, JHF-RA, JHG-RA, JPD, JPD-RB, Negotiated Agreements
- Responsible Offices:** Chief Academic Officer
Chief Operating Officer
Chief of School Support and Improvement

Student Well-being and School Safety

A. PURPOSE

The Montgomery County Board of Education is committed to providing for the safety of all persons on Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) property and to creating and maintaining safe, peaceful schools and workplaces where students and staff can do their best work, achieve, and thrive.

Each and every MCPS employee, regardless of the employee's position or location, is accountable within the employee's respective spheres of influence for promoting school safety by contributing to the creation of a safe, supportive, and inclusive school climate for all students and staff. MCPS staff shall be trained to recognize, prevent, and respond to matters relating to safety and security.

Preparation and open communication with school communities and local agencies and resources are key factors in promoting school safety. As such, the Board values MCPS' relationships with its community partners including the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), other agencies that provide and support mental health services, law enforcement and other public safety responders, and other community service organizations and stakeholders who contribute to the creation and maintenance of safe and welcoming learning environments and workplaces for all students and staff.

B. ISSUE

All children deserve a safe and nurturing school environment that supports their physical, social, and psychological well-being. Such safe and nurturing environments are essential prerequisites for promoting all students' opportunity to learn. Research shows that safe and nurturing school environments are built on a foundation consistent with the Board's core values of learning, relationships, respect, excellence, and equity, that ensures all students have positive relationships with at least one responsible adult; all students, parents/guardians, faculty, and staff are treated with respect; the diversity of the school community is fully embraced; and all students' families and the broader community are engaged in supporting student success.

Responsibility for achieving these goals extends well into the community at large, including every level of government, public safety agencies, community service organizations, private agencies, families, and students.

C. POSITION

1. Promoting Positive School Climate

- a) In alignment with Board Policy JPG, *Wellness: Physical and Nutritional Health*, MCPS is committed to creating a school culture that promotes and protects children's health and well-being. Every MCPS school shall strive to create a culture that provides not only an optimal learning environment but also serves to promote –
 - (1) culturally responsive relationship building;
 - (2) mental and emotional health of students and staff;
 - (3) trauma informed practices;
 - (4) restorative practices;
 - (5) physical health and wellness; and
 - (6) positive character development and empathy.
- b) MCPS shall develop and implement effective prevention and early intervention programs in schools throughout the district, which are age appropriate and vary based on a student's circumstances.

- c) School staff shall –
 - (1) initiate a continuum of instructional strategies and disciplinary responses that supports teaching and learning, fosters positive behaviors, and reflects a restorative discipline philosophy consistent with Board Policy JGA, *Student Discipline*, and
 - (2) implement effective classroom management strategies to create a positive classroom culture.
- d) MCPS shall employ a continuum of behavior interventions, including the use of appropriate de-escalation strategies and techniques designed to maintain a positive environment that is conducive to learning and supports academic achievement. Creating a positive school culture, responding appropriately to student behavior and providing appropriate adult supervision must be an equally important priority outside the classroom, especially during lunch periods, when students transition between classes, when they use bathrooms and other enclosed spaces that are not as frequently visited, on school buses, and in school sponsored activities on and off school property, before and after school, as well.
- e) The MCPS curriculum shall include safety and injury prevention units, supplemented by other districtwide and local school programs related to school safety and students' physical, social, and psychological well-being.

2. Accountability

- a) MCPS shall assess existing prevention and early intervention programs related to school safety and students' social and emotional well-being to ensure their efficacy, using a variety of metrics, including student, staff, and community feedback.
- b) MCPS shall establish an incident reporting management system to report health, safety, and security incidents and written procedures to address system responses to such events. Robust systems shall be used for monitoring school climate data as well as critical safety data such as arrests, bullying and harassment¹, fights, gang incidents, truancy and chronic absenteeism, and school discipline.

¹ In accordance with Board Policy JHF, *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation*, the Board is committed to an environment that is free of bullying, harassment, or intimidation, as such can adversely affect student academic achievement, emotional well-being, and school climate.

- c) Each principal is responsible for ensuring that the school has an on-site crisis team that is available to support all students and staff and is comprised of staff members who are trained in de-escalation, physical intervention skills, and compliance with Board policies and MCPS regulations.
- d) In alignment with Board Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*, school safety measures should not reinforce biases against, or rely on the profiling of, students based on their actual or perceived personal characteristics.

3. Behavior Threat Assessment

- a) The Model Policy for Behavior Threat Assessment developed by the [Subcabinet of the Maryland Center for School Safety](#), in collaboration with school district staff and other stakeholders, builds upon recognized standards of practice regarding the use of threat assessment and threat management in schools. Established research validates the use of fact-based threat assessment processes relying primarily on an appraisal of behaviors, rather than traits, as the basis for determining the nature and degree of any safety concerns.
- b) MCPS shall establish and maintain a behavior threat assessment process, based on an appraisal of behaviors, that provides appropriate preventive or corrective measures to maintain safe and secure school environments and workplaces, to protect and support potential victims, and to provide assistance, as needed, to the individual being assessed. The goal is to help individuals access positive interventions and supports and provide wraparound services including school and community resources.
- c) The process will include behavior threat assessment teams that will operate at the school-level and districtwide, and a process for identification, assessment, and intervention of students, staff, and other individuals including non-affiliated persons whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of the school or to an individual attending, visiting, or working on MCPS property.
- d) To promote the effective functioning of the threat assessment process, all MCPS staff, students, volunteers, and contractors shall report immediately to the principal/designee any expression of intent to harm another person, concerning communications, or concerning behaviors that suggest the

likelihood of a threatening situation or that any individual may intend to commit an act of targeted violence.

- e) The fact that students have a disability diagnosis, a history of receiving services for a disability, or an individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan that addresses disability-related behaviors does not mean the students are a potential threat to their school community.

4. Facilities, Security Staff, Technology

Effective safety strategies for all school buildings and facilities require the dedication of resources, the development of infrastructure, and committed personnel. The Board supports safety strategies and resources that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) Appropriate allocation, utilization, and management of safety and security personnel and other staff including –
 - (1) clearly defined staffing model options for security in schools and facilities; and,
 - (2) effective hiring practices, strong onboarding and training programs for new hires, as well as training opportunities for veteran staff.
- b) Districtwide security-related technology components and facility enhancements that enable the prompt and reliable communication between staff in schools, among schools, on school buses, and with public safety responders, including resources to –
 - (1) monitor schools, facilities, buses, and grounds in a manner that ensures that data collected is not misused and is maintained in compliance with all privacy laws;
 - (2) manage access to schools and facilities and limit or monitor access to more isolated areas of school buildings and grounds; and
 - (3) manage visitors to schools and facilities.
- c) Resources to ensure the security of all elements of MCPS systems, technology, and data.

5. Collaboration with county partners including health, law enforcement agencies, and other public safety agencies.
 - a) MCPS collaborates with public agencies, such as DHHS and the Montgomery County Crisis Center, as well as other community organizations, to enhance student access to mental and behavioral health services which are critical to ensuring safe and nurturing school environments. In addition, MCPS provides for the colocation of various community programs in our schools, such as Linkages to Learning and school-based wellness centers, to further promote these critical goals.
 - b) MCPS shall continue to collaborate with the Interagency Coordinating Board for the Community Use of Public Facilities to support the safety of students, staff, and visitors for non-MCPS sponsored events held in MCPS schools and limit the areas where those using a school after hours may access.
 - c) MCPS shall collaborate with Montgomery County Law Enforcement agencies, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service, and the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office to establish emergency response protocols; respond proactively to safety concerns; and, provide training opportunities for MCPS security staff.

6. Emergency Planning and Preparedness

MCPS works to establish and maintain a safe and healthful learning and working environment for students, staff, contractors, and visitors by providing oversight and development of employee and student safety and health programs with guidance, direction, training, and support to schools, departments, and offices complying with all federal and state requirements for emergency planning and preparedness, including creating and maintaining the following:

- a) The MCPS districtwide Emergency Response Plan (ERP), required by Maryland regulation, which details how MCPS addresses prevention, mitigation, protection, response, and recovery to an emergency that impacts the district;
- b) School Emergency Plans (SEPs), required by Maryland regulation, which detail how each MCPS local school addresses prevention, mitigation, protection, response, and recovery to an emergency;

- c) Emergency action plans and fire prevention plans required by Maryland Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH), which must include, but are not limited to, procedures for emergency evacuation, procedures to be followed by employees who remain to operate critical plant operations before they evacuate, and procedures to be followed by employees performing rescue or medical duties; and
- d) An annual schedule of drills for each school.

D. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The superintendent of schools (superintendent) shall –

1. review and update as necessary MCPS regulations, rules, and procedures, that support this policy;
2. appoint the chief safety officer to serve as the MCPS school safety coordinator and a liaison between local law enforcement agencies, other public safety agencies, and the Maryland Center for School Safety in accordance with the Maryland Safe to Learn Act;
3. identify a mental health services coordinator to coordinate mental health services within MCPS and collaborate with the local entities that provide mental health services;
4. inform the community of options for accessing the Safe Schools Maryland anonymous reporting system which receives reports of threats to the safety and/or well-being of students as well as individuals visiting or working in a public school;
5. in collaboration with local law enforcement and Montgomery County DHHS, as appropriate, provide resources for the district to monitor and assess information received from the Safe Schools Maryland anonymous reporting system, and further develop and implement procedures for communicating with the community regarding matters pertaining to school safety and security;
6. develop and implement a plan to address the physical, social, and psychological well-being of MCPS students and communicate supports and available resources to promote their well-being and safety at school;
7. develop and implement an incident management system for reporting and recording health, safety, and security incidents that occur on MCPS property or at MCPS sponsored activities;

8. develop regulations to establish the structure of behavior threat assessment teams for each school and create a districtwide oversight team to oversee and provide support for school-based behavior threat assessment teams;
9. develop and implement regulations and guidelines regarding inappropriate behavior on school property that is contrary to the tenets of a safe and nurturing school environment including but not limited to regulations that prohibit trespassing on MCPS property and regulations that address the possession and use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs as well as cigarette use including vaping or other devices that simulate smoking of any kind, on MCPS property;
10. regularly conduct and update safety evaluations of each school and review the Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with county agencies to –
 - a) identify and, if necessary, develop solutions for physical safety concerns, including issues with building security, and
 - b) identify and evaluate any patterns of safety concerns on MCPS property including school-sponsored events, as well as before and after school events and programs;
11. make periodic reports to the Board regarding the status of school safety and security including but not limited to school-level behavioral threat assessment data; and
12. establish a Memorandum of Understanding with Montgomery County law enforcement agencies regarding the school resource officer program and gang prevention and intervention.

E. DESIRED OUTCOME

In collaboration with community partners and stakeholders, MCPS provides, for all students and staff, safe, peaceful, and welcoming learning and working environments.

MCPS encourages relationships and engages in practices and programs that recognize and support the physical, social, and psychological needs of all students.

Related Sources: Md. Code Ann., Ed. Art Sec. 7-410; Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018, Maryland’s Model Policy for Behavior Threat Assessment, Md. Code Ann., Educ. §7-1507; *Code of Maryland Regulations*, 13A.02.02.01-.04; Maryland State Department of Education, *Emergency Planning Guidelines*

for Local School Systems and Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools, Emergency Response and Management Manual for Schools; Memorandum of Understanding Between the Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery County Department of Police and Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and Rockville City Police Department and Gaithersburg City Police Department and Takoma Park Police Department and Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office: School Resource Officer Program and Other Law Enforcement Responses to School.-Based Incidents

Policy History: Adopted by Resolution No 388-19, June 24, 2019.

Note: A Board Policy indexed as COA, *Visitors to School During the School Day*, was rescinded by the Board on November 13, 2007.