



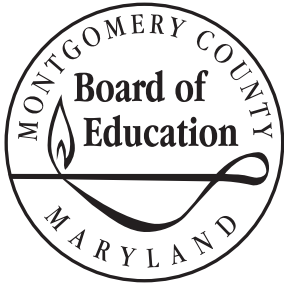
Maryland General Assembly Session

2025 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION





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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Montgomery County Public Schools

Thomas W. Taylor, Ed.D., M.B.A.
Superintendent of Schools

15 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

CHAMPIONING THE INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS is fundamental to our joint responsibility. When our schools are strong, our communities thrive.

Our purpose is to provide every student with the highest quality public education, empowering them to succeed. We are guided by Montgomery County Public Schools' Strategic Plan which prioritizes academic excellence, student wellbeing and family engagement, and professional and operational excellence. It is through this lens we present the Montgomery County Board of Education's 2025 Legislative Platform.

The legislative priorities focus on providing access and opportunity to every student, recognizing diverse paths to success, and the inherent right of every student to learn in safe schools.

Public education is a collective responsibility which yields collective benefits. Your support impacts the lives of more than 160,000 students in Montgomery County and even more throughout the state of Maryland. Thank you for your continued support and partnership.



Karla Silvestre
President, Board of Education



Thomas Taylor, Ed.D. M.B.A.
Superintendent

Priority Issues

- ▶ GRADUATION Credit Review
- ▶ FUNDING for Safety Upgrades in Schools
- ▶ BLUEPRINT-REQUIRED Funding for Dual Enrollment and AP/IB Exams
- ▶ GED EXAM Accessibility
- ▶ STATEWIDE Virtual Learning

Ongoing Interests

- ▶ PRESERVING Local Autonomy
- ▶ ADEQUATE School Funding
- ▶ IMPLEMENTING the Blueprint for Maryland's Future
- ▶ RECRUITMENT and Retention
- ▶ COLLEGE, CAREER, and Community Readiness
- ▶ SAFE AND SECURE Learning and Working Environments for All

Priority Issue #1: Graduation Credit Review

IN 2018, AT THE REQUEST OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, a Graduation Task Force convened to review and make recommendations with regard to credit and program requirements for graduation, assessment requirements for graduation, and options for awarding high school diplomas. Two years later, recommendations were presented to the State Board of Education including adjusted graduation requirements.

The State Board of Education approved various updates to the graduation requirements that went into effect for students entering ninth grade in the fall of 2021. Seniors graduating in 2025 are the first class to which the new standards apply. The new requirements include:

- ▶ 22 credits needed for graduation (Increased from 21),
- ▶ 4 mathematics credits (Increased from 3),
- ▶ 1 required health credit (Increased from ½ credit),
- ▶ Technology education credit transferred to a computer science credit,
- ▶ Advanced technology credit option eliminated, and
- ▶ 2.5 elective credits (Reduced from 3).

It has been more than six years since graduation requirements were reviewed. During that time, a global pandemic changed the landscape of public education. And, Maryland adopted the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint), a transformative piece of legislation that impacts every aspect of education in Maryland.

Considering these substantial shifts and continued feedback from students that the current, updated graduation credit requirements remain outdated and irrelevant, **the Montgomery County Board of Education believes it is necessary to once again revisit the graduation requirements applicable to Maryland high school students so they are better prepared for their futures.**



Priority Issue #2:

Funding for Safety Upgrades in Schools

STUDENT AND STAFF SAFETY AND SECURITY IS A TOP PRIORITY for the Montgomery County Board of Education. Given the various financial constraints school boards experience, particularly with the requirements associated with the Blueprint, it is imperative that we maximize grant funds that are available to improve school safety.

The Safe School Fund Grant was established in the *Maryland Safe to Learn Act* of 2018. The fund allows school systems to enhance school safety through training, conducting school safety evaluations, and outreach to the broader school community regarding availability of existing mental health and other services, among other things.

During the 2018 legislative session the Maryland General Assembly also passed the *21st Century School Facilities Act*. This act established, among other things, the School Safety Grant Program. This grant program is geared toward making physical improvements to school buildings to enhance security. These improvements include installing secure and lockable classroom and exterior doors, creating an area of safe refuge in each classroom, and installing or upgrading surveillance and other security technology in school buildings.

These two grants combine to improve safety in schools through education and physical upgrades. In order to provide schools with greater flexibility to address safety and security, **the Montgomery County Board of Education supports expanding the permissible use of Safe School Fund Grant monies to include the physical improvements permitted by School Safety Grant Program funds.**



Priority Issue #3:

Blueprint-Required Funding for Dual Enrollment and AP/IB Exams

LAST YEAR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSED LEGISLATION giving the State Board of Education authority to limit the number of dual enrollment credits a student could pursue using school funds. The State Board voted to implement such a limitation.

In the 2023–2024 school year, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) spent more than \$5.2 million on dual enrollment for 2,198 students who enrolled in 10,118 courses (or approximately 4.6 courses per student). Approximately 30% of the students who participated in the dual enrollment program in FYF2023 were Free And Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS) eligible (FY24 FARMS data is not available at the time of publication).

The Blueprint also requires school systems to cover the costs of Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams. In 2024, the AP exam fee was \$89 per exam, the AP Capstone exam was \$137 per exam, and the IB exam was \$119 per exam. In FY24 MCPS spent more than \$4.4 million on AP and IB exams. Of that, \$236,480 was spent on exams that were not taken by students who either canceled or simply failed to show up for the exam.

Understanding the need for access to these programs, and also the financial disparity in our county, **the Montgomery County Board of Education is interested in exploring ways to curtail costs associated with dual enrollment and AP/IB exams in a way that our families with the greatest need can access these programs for free, while other families would pay a portion or all of the costs depending on income.**



Priority Issue #4: GED Exam Accessibility

CURRENTLY, MARYLAND IS THE ONLY STATE that requires individuals taking the General Educational Development (GED) exam to complete the Reasoning Through Language Arts section in English, if any other section is taken in a foreign language. The stated reason is so the test taker can demonstrate English proficiency; however, English proficiency is not an explicit requirement of the GED exam. In the 2023-2024 school year, only three MCPS CREA (Career Readiness Education Academy) students, who are all Emergent Multilingual Learners, earned their GED credential.

The pass rates for the various parts of the GED exam are informative. For the social studies and science portions of the exam, the pass rate was about 40% (social studies—131 attempts, 52 passed; science—114 attempts, 45 passed). It was a little lower for math, at about 33% (96 attempts, 32 passed). The pass rate for Reasoning Through Language Arts was just 10% (66 attempts, 7 passed).

MCPS staff and CREA students identified the language requirement as a barrier to passing the exam. Further, while test takers need to pass all four sections of the GED exam, the Reasoning Through Language Arts section, taken in English, is the single biggest obstacle to earning the GED credential. Without this added requirement it is likely that the pass rate for CREA students would increase.

The Montgomery County Board of Education understands the importance of the stated rationale for the language requirement—English proficiency is an important skill for speakers of foreign languages to succeed in this country. However, Maryland is the only state that imposes the added requirement that the language arts section of the GED exam be taken in English. This creates an artificial and substantial barrier for an individual who is otherwise able to pass the GED exam, especially when language development can and will continue to occur once the individual is able to enter the workforce. This restriction is unwarranted and prohibits otherwise qualified individuals from gaining employment because they lack a high school diploma. In order to eliminate this hurdle, **the Montgomery County Board of Education supports removing the requirement that a portion of the GED exam be taken in English.**

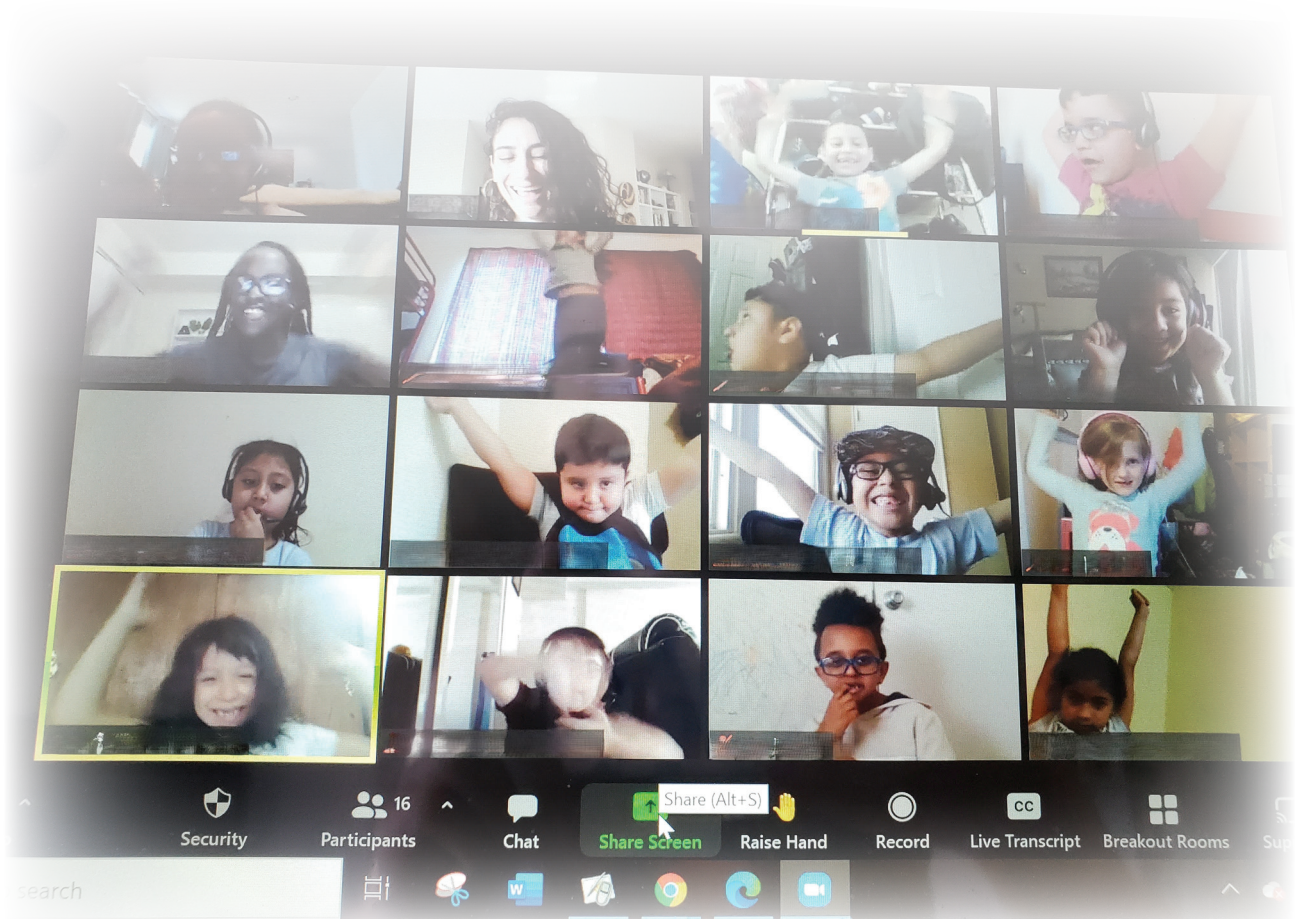


Priority Issue #5: Statewide Virtual Learning

DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN, public schools across the country swiftly transitioned to a virtual instruction model to provide students with the opportunity to continue learning in what was, based on public health recommendations at the time, the safest environment. When returning to in-person learning, many schools, including MCPS, continued to offer a virtual education option. By and large, these virtual programs were funded by COVID-era grant funds that have since ended. As a result, many school systems have been forced to eliminate, or significantly reduce, virtual learning offerings for students.

While MCPS intended to maintain the Montgomery Virtual Academy (MVA) as a virtual learning option, the program was ultimately discontinued due to budgetary constraints.

Eliminating the MVA impacted students and families in our school system, and students across the state have experienced the same negative impact of virtual programming. There is an undeniable need for virtual learning offerings in the State of Maryland. As a result, **the Montgomery County Board of Education urges the Maryland State Board of Education to develop a statewide virtual learning option that all Maryland public school students can access and utilize.**



Ongoing Interest: Preserving Local Autonomy

THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ESTABLISHES broad statewide policies and mandates through regulations.

Local boards of education are responsible for establishing policies and procedures for the public schools within their jurisdiction. Such authority includes, but is not limited to, school calendars, curriculum, testing, staffing, and procurement issues.

The powers and mandatory duties of the local board of education are defined in the [Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland](#) (Art. § 4-101 through § 4-108). The Board's primary responsibilities, aligned to support the strategic plan of the school system, include but are not limited to, making decisions on educational, budgetary, facility, and financial matters. As stated in the law, "each county board shall seek in every way to promote the interests of the schools under its jurisdiction."

By retaining decision-making authority at the local level, a board of education can effectively balance educational practices through the use of available resources, incorporating public input, and implementing accountability measures.

The Montgomery County Board of Education **SUPPORTS**

- ▶ Preserving local autonomy over education including school calendars, school start times, curriculum, testing, procurement, and operational decision-making.

The Montgomery County Board of Education **OPPOSES**

- ▶ Executive, legislative, and/or agency actions and proposals that would reduce or circumscribe local board authority or create unfunded mandates.



Ongoing Interest: Adequate School Funding

Investing in our Children's Future

The Montgomery County Board of Education believes that making necessary investments in MCPS leads to a prosperous economy, strong business growth, and increases students' ability to compete for good jobs in a global, high-tech economy. We urge the Maryland General Assembly to remain aware of the negative impact of unfunded mandates. Unfunded mandates often result in significant additional workload burdens with no accompanying source of revenue and can, at times, divert funds that should be used for student learning; an unintended consequence of well-intentioned legislation.

Adequacy of Education Funding

The Montgomery County Board of Education believes in the aspirations expressed by the Maryland Blueprint, which can serve as a model for the country.

It is imperative that local school systems receive adequate funding to implement this law fully and faithfully. While the Blueprint mandates significant state funding to help local school systems meet the requirements of the law, the state funding increases alone are not sufficient to fund all of the programs and reforms contemplated by the Blueprint. Increases in local funding are also necessary to ensure school systems are able to fund Blueprint reforms as well as provide other necessary services to students and staff. Even after receiving approximately \$159 million over maintenance of effort in its FY25 budget, MCPS was still forced to cut valuable services and programs that would have provided a benefit to our school community.



Capital Budget/School Construction

While adequate operating budget funds are needed to enact the requirements of the Blueprint and provide an exceptional learning experience for all MCPS students, capital funds are needed to enable the school system to provide safe and secure learning environments. This includes maintaining current buildings and systems, performing updates and renovations where needed, and engaging in new construction where required. Meeting the pre-kindergarten expansion dictates of the Blueprint may also present capital funding shortfalls as capital funding is not included in the Blueprint funding formula.

The Montgomery County Board of Education **S U P P O R T S**

- ▶ Full commitment to funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
- ▶ Annual inflation adjustment.
- ▶ Additional funding through state technology grants for schools with technology deficits.
- ▶ Investing in early childhood education – including funding for the expansion of pre-K and availability of high-quality, affordable childcare.
- ▶ Funding to support the social and emotional needs of students and staff.
- ▶ Funding to expand co-curricular activities and adequately fund special education programs and services.
- ▶ Funding to meet the needs of Emergent Multilingual Learners and their families.
- ▶ Funding for the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program and other nutritional programs.
- ▶ Retaining public funds to be used for public education.
- ▶ A robust and innovative statewide school construction and renovation funding plan to address school facility needs.
- ▶ Additional legislative action targeted to increase state school-construction funding.
- ▶ Establishing incentives for green and energy-efficient school construction.

The Montgomery County Board of Education **O P P O S E S**

- ▶ Any reduction in the state cost-share percentage.
- ▶ Any initiatives or mandates that do not include additional state allocations.
- ▶ Any attempts to increase the local share of tuition for special education students served in nonpublic schools.
- ▶ Any attempts to cut funding for Emergent Multilingual Learners.
- ▶ 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.

Ongoing Interest:

Implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION SUPPORTS the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and is leading the state in its implementation. Even so, approaching deadlines, particularly pre-kindergarten expansion and implementation of the career ladder, are proving to be very difficult to achieve. While MCPS will continue to work diligently to abide by the deadlines as they currently stand, consideration of an extension of these, and other impending deadlines, would be beneficial.

Additionally, as implementation of the Blueprint continues, and sufficient funding lags, direction from the Maryland State Department of Education and the Blueprint Accountability and Implementation Board regarding the manner in which school systems should prioritize compliance and spending would be valuable.

The Montgomery County Board of Education SUPPORTS

- ▶ Delaying impending Blueprint deadlines until state guidance documents are prepared and publicized.
- ▶ Adjusting the current implementation timeline so that necessary community partners can be on-boarded and negotiations can be finalized.
- ▶ A prioritization of Blueprint initiatives and clarification around the order and manner in which the State recommends local school systems implement the current, and upcoming, requirements.

Ongoing Interest:

Recruitment and Retention

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATORS and staff is vitally important to the success of our public school system. This is especially true when record numbers of experienced educators are leaving the education field and comparatively few are pursuing teaching careers. The Montgomery County Board of Education values diversity in our classrooms and strives for our student population to see itself reflected in the teachers and staff with whom they interact with on a daily basis.

The Montgomery County Board of Education SUPPORTS

- ▶ Grow Your Own programs to increase the pipeline of new teachers entering the workforce.
- ▶ Financial incentives that make a career in teaching more desirable and sustainable.
- ▶ Programs that make housing more affordable to enable teachers to live in the communities where they work.
- ▶ Programs geared at recruiting high-quality and diverse candidates, including alternative pathways to teacher certification and increased salaries.
- ▶ Resources to offer tailored and differentiated professional development opportunities to build cultural responsiveness and address implicit bias.

Ongoing Interest:

College, Career, and Community Readiness

THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ESTABLISHES STANDARDS and local boards adopt and implement locally developed programs with local funding to ensure that these standards are met and students are prepared to meet State Board of Education-determined 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.

MCPS believes in building a strong foundation for all students, including a focus on developing students' critical and creative thinking skills, as well as essential academic success skills. MCPS engages in a curriculum selection process that enables the school system to select the most up-to-date instructional materials to support learning. Upgrades to the existing MCPS curriculum are made as needed, so that students and teachers are better engaged and able to dedicate more learning time to subjects such as the arts, information literacy, science, social studies, and physical education.

MCPS strives to create opportunities and pathways for all students. In addition to offering a comprehensive high school program, a number of high schools have created signature programs that integrate a specific focus or distinguishing theme with the skills, concepts, and instructional strategies of some portion of a school's curriculum. The theme or focus becomes the vehicle for teaching the traditional high school curriculum in a fresh, interesting, and challenging way.

The Montgomery County Board of Education understands the value of alternative methods of instruction and supports technological improvements that may increase access to instructional programs for students throughout the system, including the availability of a virtual school option.

The Montgomery County Board of Education **S U P P O R T S**

- ▶ Preparing all students to be college, career, and community ready.
- ▶ Maintaining the authority of local boards of education to determine educational policy, curriculum, additional graduation requirements, and administration.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Additional and incentive funding for coding and computer science classes throughout the pre-k to 12 educational continuum.
- ▶ Additional funding for expanding Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs.
- ▶ Funding to provide equitable access to programs of academic rigor.
- ▶ Funding to improve technology that can increase access to instructional programming for students across the school system.

The Montgomery County Board of Education **O P P O S E S**

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Efforts to expand charter school authority beyond local school boards.
- ▶ Efforts to weaken academic or fiscal accountability requirements.

Ongoing Interest:

Safe and Secure Learning and Working Environments for All

ENSURING SAFETY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS is becoming increasingly crucial as the threats they face grow more severe and frequent. The pursuit of a safe environment must be tempered by a balanced emphasis on the protection of individual student rights.

MCPS recognizes that a safe school environment cannot be achieved without addressing students' social and emotional health and well-being. These issues are essential for creating opportunities to learn and fostering academic success in the classroom. Cultivating learning environments where all students develop the skills to make constructive and healthy decisions, which support hope, personal well-being, and positive social behavior, aligns with the MCPS core values of learning, relationships, respect, excellence, and equity.

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.
- ▶ Funding for, and increased access to, mental health services in school and in the community.
- ▶ Flexibility to collaborate with community partners to provide necessary services to students, including the ability to share relevant student information.
- ▶ Creating and funding a comprehensive suicide-awareness, prevention, intervention, and postvention model to support students and reinforce effective coping and help-seeking strategies.
- ▶ Additional funding to expand training of staff members and support for students showing signs and symptoms of mental health illnesses and concerns.
- ▶ Additional funding to expand training for staff members on trauma-informed schools and care.
- ▶ Additional funding to expand restorative justice supports to promote and support culture and climate in school, and address the disproportionate suspension of Black or African American and Hispanic/Latino students and students receiving special education services.
- ▶ The continued promotion of an atmosphere of respect and nondiscrimination for all students and staff members, with a focus on supporting the physical, social, and psychological well-being of all.
- ▶ Funding for universal response systems that help coordinate emergency responses across schools and departments.

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.

MCPS NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) prohibits illegal discrimination based on race, ethnicity, color, ancestry, national origin, nationality, religion, immigration status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family structure/parental status, marital status, age, ability (cognitive, social/emotional, and physical), poverty and socioeconomic status, language, or other legally or constitutionally protected attributes or affiliations. Discrimination undermines our community's long-standing efforts to create, foster, and promote equity, inclusion, and acceptance for all. The Board prohibits the use of language and/or the display of images and symbols that promote hate and can be reasonably expected to cause substantial disruption to school or district operations or activities. For more information, please review Montgomery County Board of Education Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*. This Policy affirms the Board's belief that each and every student matters, and in particular, that educational outcomes should never be predictable by any individual's actual or perceived personal characteristics. The Policy also recognizes that equity requires proactive steps to identify and redress implicit biases, practices that have an unjustified disparate impact, and structural and institutional barriers that impede equality of educational or employment opportunities. MCPS also provides equal access to the Boy/Girl Scouts and other designated youth groups.*

It is the policy of the state of Maryland that all public and publicly funded schools and school programs operate in compliance with:

- (1) Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964; and
- (2) Title 26, Subtitle 7 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, which states that public and publicly funded schools and programs may not
 - (a) discriminate against a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability;
 - (b) refuse enrollment of a prospective student, expel a current student, or withhold privileges from a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student because of an individual's race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability; or
 - (c) discipline, invoke a penalty against, or take any other retaliatory action against a student or parent or guardian of a student who files a complaint alleging that the program or school discriminated against the student, regardless of the outcome of the complaint.**

Please note that contact information and federal, state, or local content requirements may change between editions of this document and shall supersede the statements and references contained in this version. Please see the online version for the most up-to-date information at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/nondiscrimination.

For inquiries or complaints about discrimination against MCPS students***	For inquiries or complaints about discrimination against MCPS staff***
Director of Student Welfare and Compliance Office of District Operations Student Welfare and Compliance 15 West Gude Drive, Suite 200, Rockville, MD 20850 240-740-3215 SWC@mcpsmd.org	Human Resource Compliance Officer Office of Human Resources and Development Department of Compliance and Investigations 45 West Gude Drive, Suite 2500, Rockville, MD 20850 240-740-2888 DCI@mcpsmd.org
For student requests for accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	For staff requests for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act
Section 504 Coordinator Office of School Support and Improvement Well-Being and Student Services 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 257, Rockville, MD 20850 240-740-3109 504@mcpsmd.org	ADA Compliance Coordinator Office of Human Resources and Development Department of Compliance and Investigations 45 West Gude Drive, Suite 2500, Rockville, MD 20850 240-740-2888 DCI@mcpsmd.org
For inquiries or complaints about sex discrimination under Title IX, including sexual harassment, against students or staff***	
Title IX Coordinator Office of District Operations Student Welfare and Compliance 15 West Gude Drive, Suite 200, Rockville, MD 20850 240-740-3215 TitleIX@mcpsmd.org	

*This notification complies with the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended.

**This notification complies with the Code of Maryland Regulations Section 13A.01.07.

***Discrimination complaints may be filed with other agencies, such as the following: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Baltimore Field Office, GH Fallon Federal Building, 31 Hopkins Plaza, Suite 1432, Baltimore, MD 21201, 1-800-669-4000, 1-800-669-6820 (TTY); Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR), William Donald Schaefer Tower, 6 Saint Paul Street, Suite 900, Baltimore, MD 21202, 410-767-8600, 1-800-637-6247, mccr@maryland.gov; Agency Equity Officer, Office of Equity Assurance and Compliance, Office of the Deputy State Superintendent of Operations, Maryland State Department of Education, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-2595, oeac.msde@maryland.gov; or U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), The Wanamaker Building, 100 Penn Square East, Suite 515, Philadelphia, PA 19107, 1-800-421-3481, 1-800-877-8339 (TDD), OCR@ed.gov, or www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html.

This document is available, upon request, in languages other than English and in an alternate format under the Americans with Disabilities Act, by contacting the MCPS Office of Communications at 240-740-2837, 1-800-735-2258 (Maryland Relay), or PIO@mcpsmd.org. Individuals who need sign language interpretation or cued speech transliteration may contact the MCPS Office of Interpreting Services at 240-740-1800, 301-637-2958 (VP) mcpsinterpretingservices@mcpsmd.org, or MCPSInterpretingServices@mcpsmd.org.



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