Montgomery County Commission on Children and Youth

School Safety Subcommittee Recommendations

June 2019

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The Montgomery County Board of Education unanimously passed a resolution focused on the safety of students and staff. Similarly, the State of Maryland passed the Safe to Learn Act in 2018. The Commission is concerned about a) balancing psychological and physical safety in Montgomery County schools, and b) providing a safe environment for students during non-instructional hours, including after school activities on campus.

The Commission has examined current initiatives, supports, and services in order to identify gaps, opportunities, and recommendations. The Commission applauds the increased focus on and commitment to school safety, and the increased infrastructure designed to ensure a safe and supportive school environment for our students. The following recommendations, in no particular order, are presented to help further the mission of promoting school safety throughout the county.

Recommendations:

- The MCPS/MSDE provides a thorough and comprehensive safety plan. We recommend adding language to the MCPS/MSDE safety plan to include language on psychological safety - consistent with the existing inclusion of psychologists in community discussions.

- We appreciate public access to annual reports of school safety and other related incidents in schools. We recommend that beyond reviewing annual data, the county complete trend analyses on existing school safety data, which would allow review of improvements over time and areas of continued concern.

- We appreciate the infrastructure created to have a team review school safety data on a regular basis. We recommend the creation of an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental task force to a) review school safety data, and b) participate in future decision-making. Members of that task force should include representatives from:
  - Elementary and secondary school settings
  - Teachers
  - Students
  - Parents
  - Office of School Support and Improvement
  - Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement
  - Office of Chief Operating Officer
  - Office of General Counsel
  - Communications

- We recommend that in addition to existing data collection efforts, the county should collect data on date, time & location of serious incident reports, including before and after school, to help identify trends or common spaces where incidents occur.

- We recommend that the county conduct fidelity checks of implementation of policies associated with school safety to ensure appropriate and consistent implementation.

- To ensure transparency, we recommend that the county include data from school safety evaluations on school data dashboards, unless those data are considered sensitive, confidential, or would pose a threat by virtue of releasing to the public.

- We recommend that the county create and/or allow a process for students to report incidents or safety threats during non-instructional hours. Within this recommendation, we suggest that such a process:
  - build off of existing forms to report bullying, harassment, and intimidation;
  - utilize an online form that can be done from a phone, computer, or tablet;
  - would be connected to a secure portal; and
  - more easily accessed, easier to find, and less of a barrier for students.

- We recommend that the county develop and provide training for teachers and staff on how to respond when there is a physical fight or altercation.
  - Within this recommendation, we do not consider CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) training as solely appropriate to meet this objective, as the training focuses specifically on safe physical restraint.
  - Such trainings could be made available as part of summer salary day options and throughout the year.

- We appreciate the recent work on the Athletics Supervision Action Plan. We recommend that this work be expanded and made directly applicable to all activities outside of normal school hours, and that all staff associated with those activities receive brief training on this process.
  - This would include Interagency Coordinating Board activities (i.e., any activities hosted by outside vendors using school facilities and property).
  - Ensure a consistent protocol for access to school facilities (i.e., doors) outside of normal school hours.