

MCCPTA Health Committee March 08 Update

Tracy Fox, MPH, RD, Health Committee Chair, MCCPTA (tracyfox@comcast.net)
Update as of March 3rd, 2008

Citizens Advisory Committee on Family Life and Human Development

I attended the Feb. 27th meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Family Life and Human Development. We reviewed materials for the middle school health curriculum: 2 DVDs, one on teens and sexual behavior *Real People: Abstinence Choosing to Wait*, and *Reality Matters: Deadly Desires*. Most committee members recommended the use of one (2nd one) but not the first due to derogatory language. We also reviewed visual aides depicting the male and female reproductive system/anatomy.

CAC members received a copy of the circuit court's opinion published January 31, 2008, in response to oral arguments presented to the court January 16, 2008. The judge ruled in favor of new sex-education lessons in 8th and 10th grades dismissing a legal challenge from Citizens for Responsible Curriculum and 2 other groups. An appeal may be filed within 30 days.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 16th, 7-9pm.

State Legislative Action

Three bills have been introduced at the state level that impact school health as follows:

SB 473: YRBS Passive Consent: The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was developed by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 1990 in order to collect data which would assist educational, health, and policy entities in developing approaches to reducing health risks and improving the health and safety of children. It is administered every 2 years. It was first administered in Maryland statewide in 2005, although it has been used in Baltimore City for over 15 years. While CDC recommends the use of passive parental consent for student participation, current Maryland law requires active parental consent except in Baltimore City. SB 473 seeks to amend existing law to allow passive consent statewide.

The YRBS is administered to junior and senior high school students in randomly selected schools, and thus, different schools participate in different years. Student names are not used – the answers are completely anonymous. The number of questions varies slightly from year to year and covers the following areas:

- Demographics, height and weight
- Safety behaviors (bike helmets, seat belts, weapon exposure, etc.)
- Depression, suicidal thoughts
- Use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs
- Sexual behavior
- Weight, diet, and eating habits
- Physical activity
- AIDS education

Montgomery County Health Department supports the bill; MCPS originally supported the concept when discussions were underway months ago in anticipation of the bill being introduced but then seemed to change their mind – not sure if lack of communication was a factor. Negotiations are underway now to encourage MCPS to support it. The information collected is critical to help secure grant funding and to better target limited dollars to address real health

concerns and issues. There has been one hearing on the bill in the Senate; the comparable House bill 536 will be heard on Tuesday, March 11.

HB 503: Bryan Moore Student Health and Fitness Act: MD Healthy Schools Coalition and a number of state legislators are working hard to pass a Physical Education Bill this session. Called the Bryan Moore Student Health and Fitness Act (HB 503) the goal of this legislation is to assure that all children in grades K- 5 participate in a daily program of physical activity totaling 150 minutes per week to include a minimum of 90 minutes of Physical Education with the balance to be made up of recess and other developmentally appropriate, moderate to vigorous physical activity.

At the BOE meeting on Monday evening, Feb. 25th, about a half dozen people testified in support of the bill. Representatives from the American Diabetes Assoc., American Cancer Society, MD Healthy Schools Coalition, Montgomery Health Care Action, and others, supported the need for more emphasis on physical education and activity in schools, but also recognized MCPS long-held opposition to this type of bill and others that impose more curriculum requirements on local school districts. The bill hearing on HB 503 will be in the House Ways & Means Committee on Tuesday March 11.

Note: the MCCPTA has 2 resolutions on the books (Passed in Spring 2005) supporting standards-based PE and urging BOE to look at ways to enhance PE opportunities in schools.

SB 158: The Jane Lawton Farm to School Program: this bill passed the State Senate on February 25,2008 with farmer, State Dept of Agriculture, Maryland School Board and PTA support. Senator Raskin had 13 Senate sponsors on the bill when it was introduced. Delegate Sheila Hixson, Chairman of the State Ways and Means Committee, introduced and smoothed the way for the same bill on the House side. Her bill, HB 696 was heard in the Environmental Matters last week. Most Montgomery County legislators cosponsored the bill. Named after the late state delegate who was a champion for better school nutrition, the bill includes an educational component and also puts into place a communications line where the schools would communicate with the farm community what produce they need for their school lunch program and the farmers would communicate to the school lunch programs what they have available and when.

Nutrition Talk to Stone Mill ES: I will be talking about nutrition (general nutrition/hot topics in nutrition) to Stone Mill PTA representatives on Tuesday evening, March 4th at 7:30pm.

April Delegates' Assembly Program: the April DA program will be devoted to Nutrition and Physical Activity/Education topics. I have met with several parents to discuss the format; Kathy Lazor, Food & Nutrition Division Director has agreed to participate as has Susan Loftus, PE teacher from Burning Tree ES. I am waiting to hear from Terri McCauley, Health Coordinator for MCPS. Parents interested in helping plan this program are encouraged to contact Tracy Fox (tracyfox@comcast.net).