

## **Health and Safety Committee Report January 2010**

**Chair: Laurie Halverson**

### **Reorganization of MCCPTA Committees**

To help MCCPTA meet quorums at their board meetings, changes were made to consolidate committees so now the Health Committee has merged with the Safety Committee and Laurie Halverson is chair of the Health/ Safety Committee. If you would like to be added to the email list, please contact Laurie at [LSH2727@verizon.net](mailto:LSH2727@verizon.net).

### **Anti Bullying Policy**

Individuals who wish to provide comments to Policy JHF, Bullying, Harrassment, or Intimidation should respond in writing **by January 18, 2010**. All responses should be sent to the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850 or emailed to the Board of Education at [boe@mcpsmd.org](mailto:boe@mcpsmd.org). All responses will be shared with the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdfcomment/JHFcomment.pdf>

### **Educational Facility Officers**

At our December 7 Safety Committee meeting, EFO Russell Larson and Sgt. Kent Smith joined us and spoke about their role in our schools. Both came in full uniform, including tasers and guns.

The Montgomery County term for a police officer who works in the schools is “Educational Facility Officer (EFOs.)” In other parts of the state and country, the term used is usually “School Resource Officer (SRO.) EFOs began as an outreach program in our county in 2003, spurred as one method of enhancing safety in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and to align with the rest of the state and country. The 1999 Columbine incident created awareness for the need for police officers in our schools. EFOs apply for the job and are selected and are highly motivated which has increased the reputation of the program.

EFOs come from the perspective of being “here to help.” EFOs enforce laws and help to keep children safe while at school. They serve high schools during most of their time but also serve middle schools and they visit elementary schools occasionally to talk to elementary school kids. The initiative in the county began in 2003 with 12 EFOs and has now grown to 26. There are three middle schools that have EFOs-Martin Luther King, Neelsville and Argyle. There is one EFO assigned per each high school and they work Monday through Fridays serving 8 hour days, or they may work a 4 day, 10 hour week. It is possible that a high school may not have coverage for a full day given that some EFOs work the 4 day schedule.

EFOs are employed by the Montgomery County Police Department. They get full police training, plus extra training which helps them know how to deal with youth issues.

EFOs maintain an office at the high school for needed paperwork. (They often share space with the security officers.)

Each middle school and high school also has a security team, but security personnel report to administrators of the school and they are **not** employed by the police department and do not undergo police training. High schools have 5 to 6 security officers and middle schools have 1 or 2. Security officers must pass along relevant information to EFOs to help EFOs to enforce the law.

EFOs work mostly on a reactive basis but because of the relationships they develop with students, they can often prevent an incident from occurring. EFOs serve as mentors, counselors, law enforcement officers and teachers.

The EFO budget is not part of the MCPS budget. It is funded by the Montgomery County Police Department. The budget is very lean right now. EFOs are not allowed to take overtime and it is difficult to find any areas to cut. EFOs work with MCPS and the police department and the new visitor management system has been helpful in identifying crimes, however the EFOs do not monitor the cameras. Administrators are responsible for using the cameras to assist the EFOs. EFOs also help with emergency preparedness and gang deterrence. It helps for EFOs to be inside the schools so they can hear what is going on-this can help them identify crimes within or outside the school. EFOs have assisted with cybercrimes as well.

EFOs attend cluster meetings with administrators on emergency preparedness and they conduct code red and blue drills. EFOs also attend many other meetings on gang training, guest presentations, cybersafety training, Outdoor Education Training, and drug and alcohol meetings.

EFOs see a need for more EFOs in middle schools.

There currently is nothing in place to notify EFOs if a juvenile previously convicted enters the school system.

The DARE program used to be very effective but was cut previously which is a concern.

Advice from EFOs-TALK TO YOUR KIDS. Have conversations about difficult subjects on drugs and alcohol often. Know what your kids are doing. Learn about cybersafety measures. EFOs have seen cases where inappropriate pictures were emailed and students were arrested-so it is important to keep up with what your child is doing on his/her IPOD/Computer/phone, etc.

### **H1N1**

Montgomery County government has a website to keep everyone updated on H1N1 which includes dates and locations of vaccination distribution areas. Cases have slowed down recently, but will likely accelerate in January/February so vaccination is still recommended. We still have not seen seasonal flu yet. H1N1 has been found to go deep into the lungs in young children for unknown reasons. There have been 10 reports of Guillain-Barre syndrome. Most deaths in Maryland have occurred in Baltimore city. When you take your children into the doctor, it is important to write down the dates of vaccination. If your child received a live virus vaccine, they cannot receive a live H1N1 nasal mist for one month. It is ok though for a child to receive a shot though (not a live virus.)

There is concern that children in schools are not getting time to wash their hands before lunch. The Health and Wellness policy says that students should wash hands before eating.

### **Hand Sanitizer**

Hand sanitizers should be funded by MCPS. School administrators have the ability to order hand sanitizer. Some PTAs have been asked to fund hand sanitizers-use your discretion, but be aware that schools can order it using their school budgets.

### **Next Meeting Date**

Because of a conflict with a newly scheduled County Council testimony date, **our meeting on Wednesday, February 10 will be rescheduled.** Please watch MCCPTA announcements on the Bulletin Listserve for the new date.