

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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MARYLAND

February 15, 2007

Dr. Jane de Winter, President
Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations
2096 Gaither Road, Suite 204
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Dr. de Winter:

Thank you for your letter dated January 26, 2007, on the resolution of the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations (MCCPTA) regarding safety and security at local schools. I share your interest that all schools provide a safe environment.

As you may know, the Department of School Safety and Security earlier this year substantially expanded the annual comprehensive security assessment as part of ongoing revisions to improve the review conducted at each Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) facility (enclosure). The individual school assessment is undertaken by staff with expertise in school safety and security measures. They conduct the assessment using a series of consistent benchmark appraisals, in collaboration with the school's administrators and other staff. The thorough assessment is designed to facilitate continuous improvement of security measures not only at the time of the review, but also throughout the school year. The annual crisis preparedness training provided to school staff also ensures that the required crisis preparedness drills contribute to the overall provision of enhanced security at each school. Parents who have specific concerns about security matters at the schools their children attend should bring these concerns to the principals at those schools.

MCPS has protocols in place that all schools are to follow for access and visitor control and to secure schools against intruders. The protocols are in addition to procedures governing student discipline and behavior and procedures developed in collaboration with the Montgomery County State's Attorney and the Montgomery County Department of Police regarding reported crime and serious incidents on school property. These efforts are part of an overall effort by the school system to engage staff, students, and parents, at all levels, in establishing and maintaining respectful, trusting relationships that enable everyone to feel and be safe in our schools and to report dangerous or inappropriate behaviors that could cause harm to students or others.

The concerns raised about relocatable classrooms are heightened by the fact that we have too many such facilities. Our efforts to reduce the number substantially over the next several years will help address this issue. In the meantime, while the placement of such facilities on our school campuses is not ideal, there are comprehensive procedures governing their placement, use, and inclusion in each school's security plan. The specific location or relocatable classrooms

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on a school campus is determined by a number of factors, chief among which is security, topography, and location of utilities. Relocatable classrooms are included in each school's security assessment. Specific procedures are to be followed by staff at each school in the event of a fire or other school emergency, including by students and staff in relocatable classrooms. During a Code Red situation, for example, no one is permitted to leave any classroom or secured location. During a Code Blue situation, however, some movement is permitted, including those for restroom visits and lunch, and schools have plans in place to accommodate students in relocatable classrooms at such times. For example, a Code Blue authorizes the principal to activate the On-Site Emergency Team (OSET) if needed, and one of the OSET responsibilities is to provide staff supervision of main entry doors and the doors leading to relocatable classrooms in order to facilitate supervised student movement to and from the main building.

I am grateful to you and the membership of MCCPTA for supporting a safe and secure environment for teaching and learning in our schools, and I have asked staff to keep these concerns in mind as any further improvements are developed. Thank you, again.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry D. Weast". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

Jerry D. Weast, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JDW:vnb Enclosure

Copy to:

Mr. Bowers

Dr. Lacey

Mr. J. Porter

Mr. Kress

Mr. Bedford

Mr. B. Porter

Mr. Edwards

Mr. Hawes

Mr. Hellmuth