

## **Safety Committee Report – September 2009**

**Chair: Laurie Halverson**

The Safety Committee is gearing up for the challenges this year as the MCPS Operating Budget is squeezed even more to take into account an extra 2,000 or so students and more square footage of space, with fewer dollars than last year dedicated to maintenance. County dollars outside of the MCPS budget are also jeopardized as we look to the County Council and the Montgomery County Police Department to keep our children safe with crossing guards and EFOs as well as creating better safe walking areas with more sidewalks, signs and traffic lights.

The Safety Committee Work Plan this year calls for an increased relationship with the leaders in the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD.) MCPS works closely with the MCPD on the security of our schools as well as making decisions on crossing guards.

A new anti-bully policy, as required by the state, will be out for public comment this fall. While the policy is an improvement, consistent and deliberate implementation and accountability will be the key to improving the environment in our schools. If you look at the results of the latest school environment surveys, you can see that bullying is perceived by students to be a problem. County wide, 65% of middle school students say teasing is a problem and 56.7% agree that bullying is a problem (while only 34.8% of parents agree bullying is a problem.) In elementary school, 69.1% say teasing is a problem and 60.9% agree that bullying is a problem (20.4% of parents perceive that bullying is a problem.) You can look up your own school's survey results if you click on your school from the "Schools" portion of the MCPS website. PTAs need to work closely with counselors and principals to make sure parents and children understand the resources available to them and how to report a bullying incident.

This summer, Dr. Weast responded to the Indoor Air Quality Resolution as passed by MCCPTA and introduced by the Safety Committee. He did not address all of our concerns, but has stated that he is committed to providing "greener" and safer portables in future years. He also mentioned that there is now a required basic training course that will be provided to all new building service workers. We are still concerned that supervision may be lacking, carpets still need to be replaced in portables, indoor air quality is not recognized as a "health concern" by MCPS, and there is still no formal MCPS policy to address indoor air quality.

In August, Laurie Halverson met with Pam Montgomery, Director of System wide Safety Programs at MCPS and learned that there is now a 15 year turn around for playground equipment replacement instead of a 30 year turnaround. If your PTA is planning to pay for replacement this year, you may want to find out first if you are close to that 15 year mark. Pam is the only person in charge of auditing the safety compliance of all of our 200 schools in addition to her many other responsibilities. As much as she would like, she doesn't have time to audit every school. So, if your playground looks like it needs

mulch or you notice safety practices that need attention (such as broken playground equipment, High School defibrillators that need battery replacements, possible lead in toys,) it is important to alert your principal and Pam Montgomery.

All PTA members are welcome to come to the MCCPTA Safety Committee meetings which are held at the Carver Educational building on 850 Hungerford Drive in room 223:

- Wednesday, September 23 at 7:00 PM (Guest Speaker: MCPS Director of Facilities Management, Joe Lavorgna)
- Wednesday, October 28 at 7:00 PM
- Monday, December 7 at 7:00 PM
- Wednesday, February 10 at 7:00 PM
- Monday, March 22 at 7:00 PM
- Monday, May 10 at 7:00 PM