



February 28, 2010

Dr. Jerry D. Weast
Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Dr. Weast,

On Tuesday, February 23, 2010 the Montgomery County Council of PTAs adopted the following resolution.

Resolution to Propose Changes to the definition of “Serious Incidents” in Regulation COB-RA

WHEREAS on November 13, 2007, the Board of Education adopted Resolution #548-07 to support the district’s goal of improving school safety and security. This resolution provided for useful data on “serious incidents,” suspensions, and other pertinent school data.

WHEREAS MCPS Regulation COB-RA defines “serious incidents” for purposes of reporting to an appropriate MCPS office. A compilation of “serious incidents” is the data that is provided for each school in the School Safety and Security at a Glance publication.

WHEREAS the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005 requires MCPS to report to the Maryland State Department of Education incidents of harassment and bullying as defined by a new state mandated policy.

WHEREAS most incidents of harassment and bullying are not shown in the School Safety and Security at a Glance report unless an incident qualifies as a “serious incident” under Regulation COB-RA. This does not reflect an accurate picture of bullying and harassment incidents in a school, nor does it indicate the bullying and harassment incidents that are reported to the Maryland State Department of Education.

BE IT RESOLVED that MCCPTA requests that MCPS expand its definition of “serious incident” under COB-RA and modify the School Safety and Security at a Glance Report to include all incidents of bullying and harassment as defined by Policy JHF.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that MCCPTA requests that data on the following statement be added to the School Safety and Security at a Glance Report: “In this school, students bullying other students is a problem.” This statement is currently reflected in the Student Survey of the School Environment but is not shown with the other two safety related questions in the School Safety and Security at a Glance” Report.

Two items to note:

MCCPTA requests that MCPS expand its definition of “serious incident” under COB-RA and modify the School Safety and Security at a Glance Report to include all incidents of bullying and harassment as defined by Policy JHF.

MCCPTA requests that data on the following statement be added to the School Safety and Security at a Glance Report: “In this school, students bullying other students is a problem.” This statement is currently reflected in the Student Survey of the School Environment but is not shown with the other two safety related questions in the School Safety and Security at a Glance Report.

Our organization is concerned that the definition used by MCPS is one that is not specific enough to capture all pertinent information. MCCPTA is asking the school system to take immediate steps to expand its definition for “serious incidents” as reported in the MCPS School Safety and Security at a Glance Report. The school system has an obligation to capture accurate data. The public has a right to know that any school system data collected is accurate, up to date and will be used to better school system current practices.

National PTA has adopted positions on bullying and harassment and those positions, in turn, are positions of Maryland PTA and MCCPTA.

National PTA Resolution Against Bullying

<http://www.pta.org/1159.htm>

*Excerpt 1: **Whereas**, Bullying in schools is a pervasive problem that can have negative consequences for the school climate and for the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear, and one that can have negative lifelong consequences, both for students who bully and for their targets; and*

*Excerpt 2 : **Whereas**, Bullying for too long has gone unchallenged, with parents, who are often unaware of the bullying problem, neglecting to talk about it with their children; with students feeling that adult intervention is infrequent and ineffective and will only bring more harassment from bullies; and with school personnel viewing bullying as a harmless rite of passage that is best ignored; and*

The school system administers Surveys of School Environment to students that include the following question, “*In this school, students bullying other students is a problem.*” MCCPTA believed that the data is useful and pertinent and should be reflected in the current MCPS School Safety and Security at a Glance Report.

MCPS has stated on the Office of Shared Accountability website the following:

MCPS surveys are important sources of information about the perceptions of the school learning environment. These findings can be used to monitor continuous improvement efforts and inform school improvement goals. Interpretation of this information should take into consideration the number and percentage of survey respondents. Survey data best represent perceptions of the school environment when response rates are high.

The overall goal is to make sure that all students attend school in a safe environment conducive to learning. The school system should capture data to address identified concerns when a school environment for any child may not be one where a child feels safe and thus impacts their direct ability to learn. Children who are bullied and harassed in schools go into their adult lives with repercussions from the trauma.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Romero". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K' and 'R'.

Kay Romero
President, Montgomery County Council of PTAs

cc: Montgomery County Board of Education
Dr. Frank H. Stetson, Acting Chief School Performance