

**MEMORANDUM**

November 9, 2021

TO: Education & Culture Committee  
Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Nicole Rodríguez-Hernández, Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Student Wellbeing Action Group (SWAG) and Reimagining School Safety and Student Wellbeing (RSSSW) Reports

PURPOSE: Receive briefing and have discussion, no action required

**Expected Participants:**

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)

Jimmy D'Andrea, Chief of Staff

Niki Hazel, Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instructional Programs

Shauna-Kay Jorandby, Director of Student Engagement, Behavioral Health & Academics

Kyson Taylor, SWAG Co-chair & Student

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

Dr. Rolando Santiago, Chief of Behavioral Health and Crisis Services

Monica Martin, Administrator, Child and Adolescent School and Community Based Services

JoAnn Barnes, Contractor

The Committee will receive a briefing and hold a discussion on the recommendations from the Student Wellbeing Action Group (SWAG) and Reimagining School Safety and Student Wellbeing (RSSSW) committee. Specifically, this worksession will focus on 1) requested curriculum changes; 2) restorative justice recommendations; 3) recommendations on mental health supports for students; and 4) MCPS' response to school specific recommendations.

A Public Safety and Education & Culture joint Committee meeting will be held on a future date to discuss the implementation and next steps for the Community Engagement Officer (CEO) program (formerly known as the Student Resource Officer (SRO) Program) and the changes to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MCPS and the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD); Montgomery County Sheriff's Office; Rockville City Police Department; and the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office.

This staff report provides: A) background on the creation of both groups; B) a summary of key recommendations for both groups; and C) known next steps, specifically for the RSSSW initiative.

## **A. The Creation of SWAG and RSSSW**

In March 2021, County Executive Elrich announced the removal of police from all public high schools, specifically proposing the removal of 29 police positions (5 vacant) in the FY22 budget with the intent of implementing a community policing model. As Maryland law requires each local education agency to have “adequate law enforcement coverage at all schools,” a new model had to be implemented by the start of the 2021-2022 school year. As a result, two workgroups were convened to study alternatives to the SRO program and propose additional recommendations.

**SWAG.** In April 2021, Councilmembers Jawando and Rice launched a student-led and focused workgroup to “develop a set of recommendations for the [Council] and [MCPS] that map out student supports to address inequities unsuccessfully addressed by the [SRO] program and to improve student wellbeing.” The founding Councilmembers intent for the workgroup was to center and emphasize student voice and leadership roles.

The workgroup was chaired by a student and representatives from MCPS, DHHS, and the Montgomery County Collaboration Council; and consisted of 25 stakeholders representing students (8), parents, community organizations, and healthcare professionals. Most agency partners (e.g. County Council) served as listening-only participants. SWAG stakeholders were divided into three subgroups for concentrated discussions: 1) School Curriculum and Climate; 2) Mental and Behavioral Health in School; and 3) School Discipline and Police. In addition, the group provided MOU non-negotiables “as well as comments on future safety models for MCPS schools as part of a post-[SRO] conversation.”

**RSSSW.** The County Executive announced the RSSSW interagency partnership to rethink public safety in schools and to provide the best social and mental health support for public school students in April 2021. In May 2021, a Steering Committee chaired by MCPS, DHHS, and MCPD with representatives from the chairing agencies in addition to the County Council and County Executive offices (totaling 32 stakeholders) was formed to “develop an implementation plan with timelines; identify the financial implications and needs to support programs; and create a communication plan that supports implementation timelines” related to the goals of the RSSSW initiative. The Steering Committee formed three subcommittees for focused efforts: 1) the MOU; 2) mental health; and 3) restorative justice.

As both groups were developed with similar purposes, the RSSSW Steering Committee committed to incorporating relevant SWAG recommendations into their own discussions, recommendations, and timelines as well. SWAG completed their reports prior to RSSSW’s report release.

## **B. Summary of Key Recommendations: SWAG and RSSSW**

As of today’s meeting, the SWAG workgroup has released their preliminary report on July 16 ©1 and final report on October 12 ©7. The RSSSW Steering Committee completed their preliminary

report on August 25 and was officially released on October 13 ©12. A summary of key recommendations can be found below, however, today's briefing will focus on curriculum changes, mental health, and restorative justice.

Overall, both groups generally recommend enhancement of mental health supports and a more robust restorative justice presence. The SWAG workgroup included the elimination of police presence on school grounds, and the RSSSW Steering Committee concurred and transitioned SROs to Community Engagement Officers (CEOs). As noted previously, the joint Public Safety and Education & Culture Committee will meet at a future date to further discuss the MOU and CEO program.

## **SWAG Final Recommendations.**

### School Curriculum & Climate

1. Create a number of cultural centers/educational enrichment hubs to promote cultural experiences and programs to transform school climate.
2. Create a committee (student, guardian, and other relevant stakeholders) within MCPS to use the results of MCPS' anti-racism audit to transform school climate and curriculum.

### Mental and Behavioral Health in Schools

1. Add school staff and school-based mental health providers with specific increased support for undocumented students. Consider culturally competent and trauma informed social workers and social workers of color to lead programs that involve social workers.
2. Ensure schools have mental health teams and students are aware of the resources available.
3. Include mental health first aid for students to SOS (signs of suicide)
4. Ensure all, but especially student feedback, is regularly sought out and considered through quarterly meetings and student engagement groups.

### Discipline and Police in Schools

1. Allocate funding for restorative justice in all MCPS schools: hire restorative justice practitioners and expand the existing unit; provide training to all MCPS staff; review and incorporate restorative justice into the MCPS code of conduct; involve students in the implementation and oversight of restorative justice goals. Police officers should not be restorative justice practitioners.
2. Eliminate police presence from school campuses.

### MOU Non-Negotiables

1. Eliminate police presence on school campuses.

2. Emergency response must use mobile crisis teams and only involve police in violent crime cases.
3. If a student must interact with the police, a clear plan must be given with the aid of a clinical social worker. The approach must center the student's wellbeing and safety.

**RSSSW Preliminary Recommendations.** The RSSSW Steering Committee's preliminary report also categorizes the recommendations into draft immediate, 6 months, and 1-year timeframes. RSSSW is also expected to release a final report by December 31, 2021.

#### Mental Health Subcommittee

1. Look at root causes of behavior with funding for mental health supports rather than police presence.
2. Create/enhance systems of support to respond to student mental health crises in school: increase verbal de-escalation training for all MCPS staff; create comprehensive and integrated crisis intervention decision tree and intervention guidelines; support School Wellbeing Teams in addressing/preventing crises.
3. Assess if there are sufficient mental health professionals available to students for proactive engagement: school counselors and resource specialists.

#### Restorative Justice Subcommittee

1. Rewrite the MCPS Student Code of Conduct to elevate restorative practices within each level.
2. Hire a full-time restorative justice lead teacher at every school and establish a learning community for them.
3. Create a restorative justice team at every school with a variety of representatives. Establish monitoring and accountability tools to elevate disparities among students.
4. Implement cluster trainings on restorative practices and more.

#### MOU Subcommittee

1. SROs are now called community engagement officers (CEOs). They should not be stationed in school buildings or on school grounds. School requests for police service will not be made directly to the CEOs.
2. MOU recommendations: "A critical incident where policy may (from shall) take the lead in investigating depending on the circumstances."

- a. Move the following to the section highlighted above: arson, knowingly making false reports about a destructive device, and distribution or manufacture of a controlled drug substance.
- b. Further review the following prior to moving it to the section highlighted above: hate crime and gang related incident/crime
- c. Change the following under the section highlighted above:
  - i. “Physical attack on another that requires medical attention outside the health room”: Change to “In the event of a 911 call regarding a physical attack on another that requires medical attention outside the health room.
  - ii. “Theft (any single incident or series of incidents committed by the same perpetrator where the value of stolen property is \$500 or more)”: Change \$500 to \$1500.
  - iii. Possession of a marijuana: Police will only confiscate the substance

**C. Next Steps for SWAG and RSSSW**

**SWAG.** While the SWAG workgroup has completed their meetings and finalized their recommendations, the report notes SWAG’s offer to assist in future collaborative efforts on school discipline and student wellbeing. In addition, SWAG notes they “[hope] to become a permanent body of students and community members that make yearly recommendations to improve student wellbeing in Montgomery County.”

**RSSSW.** The RSSSW Steering Committee will continue their subcommittee work that will include a specific timeline for each recommendation and a comprehensive review of the MOU. Based on the preliminary report, additional stakeholders (e.g. students) are being included for the current discussions. The final report is expected by December 31, 2021.

<u>This report contains:</u>	<u>Page #</u>
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# STUDENT WELLBEING ACTION GROUP (SWAG)

## *Progress Report, Preliminary Recommendations, & Timeline*

July 16, 2021

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Summary**

Since its start, the Student Wellbeing Action Group (SWAG) has met 5 times for an hour and 30 minutes biweekly. We split into 3 subgroups, each focusing on one of the following topics:

1. *School Curriculum and Climate*
2. *Mental and Behavioral Health in Schools*
3. *School Discipline and Police*

We've chosen to share MOU non-negotiables as well as comment on future safety models for MCPS schools as part of a post-School Resource Officer (SRO) conversation. Our workgroup has 25 members (8 of which are students) as well as 4 co-chairs (one of which is a student). SWAG has effectively centered the student voice, ensuring that students speak before other participants and take a clear leadership role.

As of July 16th, SWAG has mapped out 6 priorities (2 from each group), which have been converted into preliminary recommendations, as well as 3 non-negotiables for the Memorandum of Understanding between the Montgomery County Police Department and MCPS. Going forward, SWAG will be seeking feedback from the students of MCPS, as well as consulting with a variety of professionals to receive and provide feedback about our recommendations.

After giving our final recommendations, SWAG hopes to become a permanent body of students and community members that make yearly recommendations to improve student wellbeing in Montgomery County.

#### **Intentions:**

Our end goal is to develop a set of recommendations for the Montgomery County Council and Montgomery County Public Schools that map out student supports to address inequities unsuccessfully addressed by the School Resource Officer Program and to improve student wellbeing.

#### **Purpose of Progress Report:**

SWAG recognizes the urgency of this issue and is releasing this progress report containing our preliminary recommendations at the request of the council. The purpose of this release is to alert all invested parties to SWAG's progress and allow for the council to make use of its remaining 2

weeks in session to act accordingly. Please note that these are NOT our final recommendations. SWAG's final recommendations will be released in mid August.

**SUBGROUP REPORTS & PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Subgroup 1: School Curriculum and Climate**

*The subgroup on School Curriculum and Climate has chosen to focus on improving school climate by uprooting racism from within the curriculum and centering cultural awareness and unity.*

**Preliminary Recommendations**

1. Creation of a number of cultural centers/educational enrichment hubs to provide MCPS schools with cultural experiences and programs in and outside of schools to engage youth and transform school climate with partnerships from community organizations.
2. Creation of a committee within MCPS to use the results of the anti-racism audit to transform school climate and curriculum in a proactive and inclusive way.

**End Goals**

- By the end of these meetings, we hope to create a recommendation that is engaging and maintains high-standards and diversity while allowing for discussion-based learning and building opportunities for all students to learn from authentic experiences (speakers from various fields, field trips, etc).

**Requests to further Subgroup 1 goals:**

**A. Subgroup 1 requests the following from the Montgomery County Public Schools:**

- i. Updates on the MCPS anti-racism audit and its results.
- ii. Information on StudySync.
- iii. All of the texts and resources used in ALL classes that MCPS uses in schools to analyze for diversity.

**B. Subgroup 1 requests the following from the Montgomery County Council**

- i. Funding for the creation of cultural centers.

**Next Steps**

1. Create a phase plan mapping out the different changes that could be made to the curriculum at different grade levels, and what those changes would look like in the classroom.
2. Looking at the inclusivity of the educational tools provided by MCPS
3. Create a diverse author's list to share to get feedback. Include texts that celebrate diverse voices. This can be connected to the things taught in the past to StudySync.
4. List and create community partnerships to prevent crime and proactively support students (Street Outreach network and Educational Equity & Enrichment Hubs (List of demands)

5. List out celebrations and important holidays (AAPI, Pride, BHM, LHM, etc) to be acknowledged in classes and school
6. Lay out the racial biases of StudySync and where there is area for growth.

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### **Subgroup 2: Mental and Behavioral Health in Schools**

*The subgroup on Mental and Behavioral Health in Schools has chosen to focus on expanding access to school based mental health supports who can provide therapeutic services to the students of MCPS, as well as developing processes for the student oversight on and engagement in mental health practices.*

### **Preliminary Recommendations**

1. Increase student access to mental health/wellbeing resources needed for success:
  - a. Add school staff and also school based (nonMCPS) providers: school psychologists, school counselors, licensed clinical social workers (outside of the Social and Emotional Special Education Services (SESES) program). Specifically increase support for undocumented students and consider Black and other social workers of color who can work with the county to lead any program that would involve Social Workers.
  - b. Ensure that students have a strong relationship with their counselors and work to re-imagine the role of counselors so that we move away from such an academic/scheduling role. Ensure that schools have mental health teams - counselors, psychologists, and social workers working together in order to support students. Students need to know what resources are available.
  - c. Mental health first aid for students is added to SOS (signs of suicide)
2. Ensure sure everyone especially students have a voice:
  - a. Quarterly meetings to gather student feedback to ensure well being needs are met; include opportunities for peer support and representation.
  - b. Student Engagement Groups - those 20-30 groups identified by students that may support identity development within the school to allow students the opportunity to support one another through more intentional engagement and interactions perhaps guided by Social Workers, making sure every student feels comfortable coming back to school and talking with counselors and administration.

### **End Goals**

- To be part of the change in society as it approaches mental health as a normal, daily need. We wish to shift from a reactionary approach to a more proactive method of teaching mental health skills as we do others skills.
- Ensure every student feels comfortable coming back to school and talking with counselors and administration. Ensure students who need mental health support know what resources are available.



- Ensure everyone, especially students, have a voice in matters surrounding student mental health.
- Develop a plan for a MCPS mobile crisis team of professionals who can attend to crisis - to address all youth.

Requests to further Subgroup 2 goals

**A. Subgroup 2 requests the following from MCPS and the County Council:**

- ii. To incorporate our goals in all schools from the elementary to the highschool level.
- iii. To make sure that hiring new, culturally competent professional staff is a priority as defined in 1a with the goal of decreasing student-counselor/psychologist/school social worker.
- iv. As this is one of our more urgent priorities, to ensure that funding is available for the hiring for mental health professionals and distribute new resources equitably.
- v. Determine ways to reduce academic duties for school counselors and allow for an increase in time allocated for student counseling and support.

Next Steps

1. Discussing whether we want to keep 1a broad or if to make a specific ask for hiring of staff.
2. Collaborating with the Climate and Curriculum Subgroup to brainstorm how to create student peer teams within the schools.

**Subgroup 3: Discipline and Police in Schools**

*The subgroup on Discipline and Police in schools has chosen to focus on uprooting the current school discipline system and replacing it with a thorough restorative justice model in an effort to radically transform school culture. Additionally, the subgroup has chosen to lay out a set of criteria for future school safety models that may involve police in the form of MOU non-negotiables.*

Preliminary Recommendations

1. Allocate funding for restorative justice in all MCPS schools. This includes:
  - a. Hiring Restorative Justice Practitioners in all schools. Expanding the existing MCPS Restorative Justice Unit. Police should not be practitioners.
  - b. Providing Restorative Justice Training for all MCPS staff (including administrators, security, and teachers). Retraining those who are responsible for school discipline to approach harm created in the school environment using restorative justice and NOT punitive measures. Creating methods for teacher and staff accountability when punitive punishment is implemented (ie: calling

- security).
  - c. Reviewing the MCPS code of conduct considering restorative justice; codification of when and how to use RJ, with due school flexibility.
  - d. Community and student involved in the practice of planning and performing RJ; exploration of student role in disciplinary action (possibly through a pilot honor board/council)
  - e. Student representation for community oversight
2. Eliminate police presence on school campuses, meaning no consistent law enforcement presence on school campuses (police cannot be stationed inside, outside, or immediately around schools) as it would hinder our ability to move away from punitive punishment and subject students of color to the school to prison pipeline.

#### End Goals

- Hire professionals within MCPS that can effectively guide restorative justice programs in each high school, middle school, and elementary schools.
- Implement a train the trainer model related to RJ practices (a part of teacher training and repeated emphasis)
- Create a set of criteria for police presence in schools
- Creating a document of resources for the use of the Council and MCPS
- Education and awareness surrounding the MCPS code of conduct and channels for student input.
- Create a body for oversight on school discipline that is composed of students.

#### MOU Non Negotiables

1. Eliminate police presence on school campuses meaning, no consistent law enforcement presence on school campuses (police cannot be stationed inside, outside, or immediately around schools).
2. Emergency response must use mobile crisis response teams and only involve police in cases involving violent crime as defined by the Maryland Safe to Learn Act. Culturally competent and trauma-informed social workers will be supporting the student during police involvement.
3. In the rare circumstance in which students encounter police (in relation to an MCPS referral/event) after all RJ practices have been unsuccessful, a clear plan be given to the student of whom they will be interacting (who would see a report they file, etc.), and what possible consequences and steps would be followed regarding the incident, with the aid of a clinical social worker. This approach must center the student's wellbeing and safety.

#### Requests to further Subgroup 3 goals

##### **A. Subgroup 3 requests the following from MCPS:**

- i. How is the allocation of school security staff determined?

- ii. What are the duties of MCPS security currently? They should have a clear role that works in tandem with administrators to execute RJ practices.
- iii. To finalize our recommendations, budgetary guidance from the BOE/County Council would be useful, should SWAG need to give feedback regarding funding for mobile crisis teams or restorative justice coordinators/the feasibility of such.
- iv. Ensure transparent, accessible, plans for administration of when to involve different justice practices; for students, a clear plan of when they will be interacting with MCPS security, police, or MCPS guidelines; codification of RJ in code of conduct and publicity of that for school communities; involve students; in school discipline and RJ processes; when students are being discussed, invite students from diverse working groups and organizations.

**B. Subgroup 3 requests the following from the County Council**

- i. Support the limited role of police through funding for social work; when students are being discussed, invite students from diverse working groups and organizations.
- ii. To finalize our recommendations, budgetary guidance from the BOE/County Council would be useful, should SWAG need to give feedback regarding funding for mobile crisis teams or restorative justice coordinators/the feasibility of such.

Next Steps

1. Writing up for a full report on how our plans should be implemented by MCPS and the County Council.
2. Considering funding for our recommendations and how students and community will oversee the successful implementation of RJ and police presence being eliminated from schools.

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS TIMELINE</b>
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1. **July 16th:** Share progress report containing preliminary recommendations, priorities/goals, expectations, and next steps with the Council and MCPS.
2. **July 21st:** Start process of obtaining public (student) input on possible recommendations.
3. **END OF JULY:** *We hope to have feedback on SWAG’s progress from the Council and MCPS as well as answers to any questions posed in the subgroup requests section of the report by the end of July. In this feedback we welcome any and all guidance.*
4. **In Mid August:** Final recommendations sent to the County Council and MCPS, explaining how they should be used and by whom.

# STUDENT WELLBEING ACTION GROUP (SWAG)

## *Report and Final 2021 Recommendations*

October 12, 2021

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Summary**

Since its start, the Student Wellbeing Action Group (SWAG) met 7 times for an hour and 30 minutes biweekly. We split into 3 subgroups, each focusing on one of the following topics:

1. *School Curriculum and Climate*
2. *Mental and Behavioral Health in Schools*
3. *School Discipline and Police*

Our workgroup has 25 members (8 of which are students) as well as 4 co-chairs (one of which is a student). SWAG has effectively centered the student voice, ensuring that students speak before other participants and take a clear leadership role. We hope to serve as an example for future county initiatives as youth voice is always necessary.

Though these recommendations include both individual funding requests for the County Council and policy changes for MCPS, we emphasize that the two bodies must collaborate in order to fulfill our county's commitment to student wellbeing. Students hope to avoid last year's unproductive and oscillating shift in responsibility between the Council and Board of Education that led to so much inaction on the issues of police in schools and mental health supports. With due support from both bodies, SWAG offers to aid and/or lead this collaboration.

We recognize that these recommendations are by no means comprehensive and are enthusiastically willing to provide additional clarification. Student wellbeing remains a top priority of this county and students will continue to work to address systemic issues that hinder students' ability to thrive.

After giving these final recommendations, SWAG hopes to become a permanent body of students and community members that make yearly recommendations to improve student wellbeing in Montgomery County.

#### **Intentions:**

Our end goal was to develop a set of recommendations for the Montgomery County Council and Montgomery County Public Schools that map out student supports to address inequities unsuccessfully addressed by the School Resource Officer Program and to improve student wellbeing.

## SUBGROUP REPORTS & FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Subgroup 1: School Curriculum and Climate**

*The subgroup on School Curriculum and Climate focused on improving school climate by uprooting racism from within the curriculum and centering cultural awareness and unity.*

### **FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Creation of a number of cultural centers/educational enrichment hubs to provide MCPS schools with cultural experiences and programs in and outside of schools to engage youth and transform school climate with partnerships from community organizations. This requires funding from the Council.
2. Creation of a committee within MCPS to use the results of the anti-racism audit to transform school climate and curriculum in a proactive and inclusive way.

*SWAG recognizes that these recommendations are broad and lack detail. Our intention is that these two recommendations guide Montgomery County toward taking action on its anti-racist efforts by creating tangible entities and tools that can turn our audits into action.*

*We believe that a number of Cultural Centers, in conjunction with partnerships with community organizations, located throughout the county would be able to effectively provide MCPS schools with cultural experiences and programs to engage youth and transform school climate. MCPS's celebration of diversity cannot end at "International Night". We must celebrate diversity everyday in our schools, from in our curriculum to our teaching practices.*

*We also believe that the creation of a committee within MCPS (composed primarily of students of color, parents of color, and other relevant stakeholders) to use the results of the anti-racist audit is one of many ways to surmount our county's tendency toward inaction, again allowing us to turn audit into change.*

### **Possible Next Steps**

1. Create a phase plan mapping out the different changes that could be made to the curriculum at different grade levels, and what those changes would look like in the classroom.
2. Looking at the inclusivity of the educational tools provided by MCPS
3. Create a diverse author's list to share to get feedback. Include texts that celebrate diverse voices. This can be connected to the things taught in the past to StudySync.
4. List and create community partnerships to prevent crime and proactively support students (Street Outreach Network and Educational Equity & Enrichment Hubs)

5. List out celebrations and important holidays (AAPI, Pride, BHM, LHM, etc) to be acknowledged in classes and school
6. Lay out the racial biases of StudySync and where there is area for growth.

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### **Subgroup 2: Mental and Behavioral Health in Schools**

*The subgroup on Mental and Behavioral Health in Schools chose to focus on expanding access to school based mental health supports who can provide therapeutic services to the students of MCPS, as well as developing processes for the student oversight on and engagement in mental health practices.*

### **FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Increase student access to mental health/wellbeing resources needed for success:
  - a. Add school staff and also school based providers through the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS):
    - i. **Culturally Competent and Trauma Informed Licensed Clinical Social Workers** (outside of the Social and Emotional Special Education Services program) and School Psychologists. Funding from the Council is required.
    - ii. Specifically increase support for undocumented students and consider Black and other social workers of color who can work with the county to lead any program that would involve Social Workers.
  - b. Ensure that schools have mental health teams - counselors, psychologists, and social workers working together in order to support students. Students need to know what resources are available.
  - c. Mental health first aid for students is added to SOS (signs of suicide)
2. Ensure sure everyone especially students have a voice:
  - a. Quarterly meetings to gather student feedback to ensure well being needs are met; include opportunities for peer support and representation.
  - b. Student Engagement Groups - those 20-30 groups identified by students that may support identity development within the school to allow students the opportunity to support one another through more intentional engagement and interactions perhaps guided by Social Workers, making sure every student feels comfortable coming back to school and talking with counselors and administration.

*SWAG wants MCPS to be part of the change in society as it approaches mental health as a normal, daily need. We wish to shift from a reactionary approach to a more proactive method of teaching mental health skills as we do others skills. We want to ensure every student feels comfortable coming back to school and talking with counselors and administration. We want to ensure students who need mental health support know what resources are available. We want to ensure everyone, especially students, have a voice in matters surrounding student mental health.*

*Using the supports we have recommended, we believe MCPS should develop a plan for a mobile crisis team of professionals (not including law enforcement) who can attend to crises - to address all youth.*

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### **Subgroup 3: Discipline and Police in Schools**

*The subgroup on Discipline and Police in schools chose to focus on uprooting the current school discipline system and replacing it with a thorough restorative justice model in an effort to radically transform school culture. Additionally, the subgroup chose to lay out a set of criteria for future school safety models that may involve police in the form of MOU non-negotiables.*

### **FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Allocate funding for restorative justice in all MCPS schools. This includes:
  - a. Hiring Restorative Justice Practitioners in all schools. Expanding the existing MCPS Restorative Justice Unit. Police should not be practitioners.
  - b. Providing Restorative Justice Training for all MCPS staff (including administrators, security, and teachers). Retraining those who are responsible for school discipline to approach harm created in the school environment using restorative justice and NOT punitive measures. Creating methods for teacher and staff accountability when punitive punishment is implemented (ie: calling security).
  - c. Reviewing the MCPS code of conduct considering restorative justice; codification of when and how to use Restorative Justice, with due school flexibility.
  - d. Community and student involvement in the practice of planning and performing Restorative Justice; exploration of student role in disciplinary action (possibly through a pilot honor board/council). Students must have a right to restorative justice.
  - e. Student representation for community oversight
2. Eliminate police presence on school campuses, meaning no consistent law enforcement presence on school campuses (police cannot be stationed inside, outside, or immediately around schools) as it would hinder our ability to move away from punitive punishment and subject students of color to the school to prison pipeline.

### **MOU Non Negotiables**

1. Eliminate police presence on school campuses meaning, no consistent law enforcement presence on school campuses (police cannot be stationed inside, outside, or immediately around schools).
2. Emergency response must use mobile crisis response teams and only involve police in cases involving violent crime as defined by the Maryland Safe to Learn Act. Culturally

competent and trauma-informed social workers will be supporting the student during police involvement.

3. In the rare circumstance in which students encounter police (in relation to an MCPS referral/event) after all RJ practices have been unsuccessful, a clear plan be given to the student of whom they will be interacting (who would see a report they file, etc.), and what possible consequences and steps would be followed regarding the incident, with the aid of a clinical social worker. This approach must center the student's wellbeing and safety.

*We urge that MCPS ensures transparent, accessible, plans for administration of when to involve different justice practices; provides a clear plan of when they will be interacting with MCPS security, police, or MCPS guidelines for students; codifies restorative justice in code of conduct and publicizes that for school communities; involves students in school discipline and RJ processes; and when students are being discussed, invites students from diverse working groups and organizations to participate.*

*We would also like to clarify that we do NOT want police or law enforcement involved in restorative justice and school discipline practices moving forward. All processes must center students of color (especially black and brown students) who remain those most impacted by school discipline. We want to emphasize that a shift to a culture of restorative justice in our schools is meant to deconstruct the power dynamic between student and teacher, allowing students to share equal responsibility in managing school climate. Restorative justice must NOT replace punitive discipline as a means of controlling students.*

**We thank all of you for your commitment to student wellbeing.**



## **Reimagining School Safety and Student Well-being**

### **Preliminary Report as of August 30, 2021**

#### **Background**

On May 12, 2021, County Executive Marc Elrich announced the creation of the Reimagining School Safety and Student Well-Being (RSSSW) Committee. The Committee contains 32 stakeholders, including students; representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Department of Police, and Montgomery County Public Schools; and staff members from the Offices of the County Executive and County Council.

In order to more effectively address the responsibilities of the steering committee, three subcommittees were formed in June: Mental Health, Restorative Justice, and one focused on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed October 17, 2017, between Montgomery County Public Schools; Montgomery County Department of Police; Montgomery County Sheriff's Office; Rockville City Police Department; Gaithersburg City Police Department; Takoma Park Police Department; and the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office. Given the timeline dictated by the start of the 2021-2020 school year, a majority of the Reimagining School Safety and Student Wellbeing Steering Committee members and work efforts this summer focused on the MOU subcommittee and deadlines related to the reopening of school.

This preliminary report outlines the RSSSW Committee areas of focus, initial recommendations, timelines and actions taken to date.

#### **Recommendations as of August 30, 2021**

##### **Mental Health Subcommittee**

Areas of focus for the Mental Health Subcommittee identified by the entire Reimagining School Safety and Student Wellbeing committee:

1. Look at root causes of behavior (from a Mental Health vs delinquency lens) with funding for mental health supports rather than police response as a solution,
2. Create systems of support to respond to student mental health crises in school, and
3. Assess if there are sufficient mental health professionals available to students for proactive engagement

Recommendations to date:

1. Look at root causes of behavior (from a Mental Health vs delinquency lens) with funding for mental health supports rather than police response as a solution (*referred to Restorative Justice (RJ) subcommittee as it speaks to a shift in school culture that can be addressed through RJ training*)
2. Create/enhance systems of support to respond to student mental health crises in school
  - a. Increase training for all MCPS staff on verbal de-escalation skills and increase the number of staff in each school building trained in all levels of de-escalation (verbal and physical) in an effort to reduce the number/frequency of crisis incidents in the school
    - i. Invest in “train the trainer” model so that MCPS employees can provide the de-escalation training to school staff, reducing the cost of hiring outside trainers
  - b. Create a comprehensive and integrated crisis intervention decision tree and intervention guidelines
    - i. Define types of crises, including mental health crises, suicidal ideation, aggression, and physical threat, to increase connection of potential underlying mental health issues in acting out behavior
    - ii. Clearly define the role of those intervening in the crisis including school personnel, such as administrators, counselors, teachers, school security, and external support systems, such as the Crisis Center, the Mobile Crisis Response Team, and on-site contracted mental health professionals
  - c. Support School Wellbeing Teams’ (SWBT) effectiveness in addressing and preventing crises by designating or funding a SWBT leader who has knowledge of available resources, de-escalation and intervention strategies, and who has sufficient time to dedicate to these responsibilities
3. Assess if there are sufficient mental health professionals available to students for proactive engagement
  - a. Increase School Counselors’ availability to support student’s social/emotional needs
    - i. Complete a job class study assessing current job responsibilities
      1. Explore separation of academic counseling and social/emotional counseling duties
    - ii. Assess effectiveness of 1:250 counselor to student ratio in meeting the social/emotional needs of students, factoring available mental health supports at the school and level of need
      1. Hire more school counselors to lower the student/counselor ratio
  - b. Explore use of/increase in mental health navigators/behavioral health resource specialists to link students/families with available mental health providers, maximizing use of existing resources

The timeline for implementation of these initial Mental Health recommendations is outlined below, and presumes that more specific operational metrics will be added in phase two of this work as the school year begins. Subject matter experts from MCPS in the arena of student mental health supports will have the opportunity to contribute to this subcommittee in phase two as many were 10 month employees with limited availability over the summer. The Mental Health and Restorative Justice subcommittees chairs have met and plan for the subcommittees to work together more closely moving forward in order to expand cross-sector participation in both and further align or integrate recommendations wherever possible.

<b>Immediate Recommendation</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a comprehensive and integrated crisis intervention decision tree and intervention guidelines               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define types of crises</li> <li>○ Clearly define the role of those intervening in the crisis</li> <li>○ Update and integrate existing policies and procedures</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Support School Wellbeing Teams’ (SWBT) effectiveness in addressing and preventing crises by designating or funding a SWBT leader who has knowledge of available resources, de-escalation and intervention strategies, and who has sufficient time to dedicate to these responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration with MCPS, Crisis Center, DHHS</li> <li>● Funding for additional staff to run SWBT teams or remove staff responsibilities to increase ability to focus on SWBT</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendations Within 6 months</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assess effectiveness of 1:250 counselor to student ratio in meeting the social/emotional needs of students, factoring available mental health supports at the school and level of need</li> <li>● Invest in “train the trainer” model so that MCPS employees can provide the de-escalation training to school staff (verbal to all staff and more extensive training to limited number of staff), reducing the cost of hiring outside trainers</li> <li>● Explore use of/increase in mental</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Input from MCPS, students, parents, MCCPTA, on site behavioral health providers</li> <li>● MCPS staff who can be designated as trainers</li> <li>● Cost to train MCPS trainers on de-escalation model</li> </ul>

health navigators/behavioral health resource specialists to link students/families with available mental health providers, maximizing use of existing resources	
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<b>Recommendations Within 1 Year</b>	<b>Funding Resources Needed</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase School Counselors’ availability to support student’s social/emotional needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete a job class study assessing current job responsibilities</li> <li>○ Explore separation of academic counseling and social/emotional counseling duties</li> <li>○ Hire more school counselors to lower the student/counselor ratio</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MCPS OHR staff time to complete a job class study</li> <li>● Funding for additional school counselors</li> </ul>

**Restorative Justice Subcommittee**

Recommendations:

1. A rewrite of the MCPS Student Code of Conduct to elevate the full continuum of restorative practices that outline specific restorative practices for each level within the Code of Conduct
2. Hire a full-time, salaried, fully-released Restorative Justice (RJ) lead teacher at every school
  - a. Actualize a monthly RJ Lead Teacher Professional Learning Community (PLC) to encompass:
    - i. Professional Learning for the RJ Lead Teachers self-work
    - ii. Professional Learning for RJ Lead Teachers to take back to their respective schools
    - iii. Regular, consistent support provided to RJ Lead Teachers and schools throughout the year by the Restorative Justice Unit
3. A Restorative Justice Team at every school, led by the Restorative Justice Lead Teacher, with MCPS staff receiving the after-school stipend to engage in the development and implementation of monitoring and accountability models to actualize a restorative school.

- a. The team members would include, administrator(s), caregivers, students, teachers, school counselor(s), pupil personnel worker(s), and school security personnel (for middle and high school)
  - b. Monitoring and accountability tools would include the following to elevate disparities among student populations and engage in professional learning to dismantle the disparities elevated:
    - i. Student and Family voice data
    - ii. Referral data
    - iii. Suspension/Expulsion data
    - iv. Arrest data
4. Cluster trainings with Office of Teaching, Learning, and Schools – School Support and Improvement (OTLS-SSI) Directors, Administrators, Community Engagement Officers (CEOs), School Security Personnel, RJ Lead Teachers, and RJ team members to encompass:
- a. The full continuum of restorative practices, emphasizing the preventative before the responsive side of the continuum
  - b. Develop shared understanding in approaches
  - c. Seek to dismantle discrepancies within and across clusters as well as the school district
  - d. Unpacking the MOU between MCPS and MCPD
  - e. Scenario walkthroughs through a restorative lens
  - f. Scenarios that outline when to contact CEO
  - g. Mediation scenarios

Additionally, we elevate the listed items below to coincide with the funding asks outlined in the table below:

- Fully staffing the Restorative Justice Unit with 6 instructional specialists to support the implementation of Restorative Justice across the school district
- Funding to support the implementation and data analysis of Restorative Justice across the district for 10 years to allow for the full cycle of change and implementation theory to actualize
- Funding stipends and substitutes for all MCPS staff to stay within intentional and impactful cycles of professional learning and implementation

Immediate Recommendation	Human Resources Needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A rewrite of the MCPS Student Code of Conduct to elevate the <a href="#">full continuum of restorative practices</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Outline specific restorative practices for each level within</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration with MSDE, MCPS cross-office collaboration led by the MCPS Restorative Justice Unit, MCPS Office of the General Council</li> </ul>

<p>the Code of Conduct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ RJ Team supports the gradual and intentional shift from punitive to restorative measures within schools</li> </ul>	
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<b>Recommendations Within 6 months</b>	<b>Funding Resources Needed</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify a Restorative Justice lead teacher at every school, receiving the after-school stipend to engage in work before and after the duty day</li> <li>● RJ Team created at every school, led by the RJ Lead Teacher made up of the following members, with MCPS staff receiving the after-school stipend to engage in work before and after the duty day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Administrator(s)</li> <li>○ Caregivers</li> <li>○ Teachers</li> <li>○ Students</li> <li>○ School Security Personnel (for middle and high schools)</li> <li>○ School Counselor(s) and/or PPW</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Monthly RJ Lead Teacher PLC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Professional Learning for RJ Lead Teachers themselves</li> <li>○ Professional Learning to take back to their respective schools</li> <li>○ RJ Unit provides regular, consistent support to schools throughout the year</li> </ul> </li> <li>● RJ Team trained on the <a href="#">full continuum of preventative restorative practices</a></li> <li>● Training with administrators, CEOs, School Security, RJ Lead Teacher, and additional RJ team members to envelop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ MOU</li> <li>○ Scenario walkthroughs through a restorative lens</li> <li>○ Scenarios that outline when to contact CEO</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MCPS after duty day stipend amount</li> <li>● Stipend and/or substitute funding for RJ Lead teachers and MCEA and SEIU RJ Team members</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mediation scenarios</li> <li>● Cluster trainings with OTLS-SSI Directors, Administrators, CEOs, School Security Personnel, RJ Lead Teachers, and RJ team members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on the why of the full continuum of restorative practices</li> <li>○ Develop shared understanding in approaches</li> <li>○ Seek to dismantle discrepancies within and across clusters as well as the school district</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
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<b>Recommendations Within 1 Year</b>	<b>Funding Resources Needed</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify a Restorative Justice lead teacher with the maximum stipend allowable at every school</li> <li>● RJ Team created at every school, led by the RJ Lead Teacher made up of the following members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Administrator(s)</li> <li>○ Caregivers</li> <li>○ Teachers</li> <li>○ Students</li> <li>○ School Security Personnel (for middle and high schools)</li> <li>○ School Counselor(s) and/or PPW</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Monthly RJ Lead Teacher PLC led MCPS RJ Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Professional Learning for RJ Lead Teachers themselves</li> <li>○ Professional Learning to take back to their respective schools</li> <li>○ RJ Unit provides regular, consistent support to schools throughout the year</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <a href="#"><u>Monitoring and accountability models implemented to actualize a restorative school district</u></a></li> <li>● School RJ Team trained on the full continuum of preventative restorative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maximum Resource Teacher stipend amount</li> <li>● Funding for RJ Lead teachers to receive the maximum resource teacher stipend amount</li> <li>● Stipend and/or substitute funding for RJ Lead teachers and MCEA and SEIU RJ Team members</li> </ul>

<p>practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Training with administrators, CEOs, School Security, RJ Lead Teacher, and additional RJ team members to envelop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ MOU</li> <li>○ Scenario walkthroughs through a restorative lens</li> <li>○ Scenarios that outline when to contact CEO</li> <li>○ Mediation scenarios</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Cluster trainings with OTLS-SSI Directors, Administrators, CEOs, School Security Personnel, RJ Lead Teachers, and RJ team members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on the why of the full continuum of restorative practices</li> <li>○ Develop shared understanding in approaches</li> <li>○ Seek to dismantle discrepancies within and across clusters as well as the school district</li> </ul> </li> <li>● RJ School teams develop the RJ professional learning and implementation plan (<a href="#">sample</a>)</li> <li>● Actualize the implementation cycle with specific monitoring tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ kid/caregiver voice data</li> <li>○ Referral data</li> <li>○ Suspension/Expulsion data</li> <li>○ Arrest data</li> <li>○ Analyze monitoring tools for disparities within data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Professional learning to dismantle disparities that have been elevated</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
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Recommendations Within 2 Years	Funding Resources Needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify a full-time, salaried, fully released Restorative Justice lead teacher at every school</li> <li>● Monitoring and accountability models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Funding for a full-time, fully released RJ Lead Teacher at every school</li> </ul>



implemented to actualize a restorative school district

- Specific outlining of restorative vs punitive measures within the MCPS Student Code of Conduct
  - RJ Team supports the gradual and intentional shift from punitive to restorative measures within schools
- Cluster trainings with OTLS-SSI Directors, Administrators, CEOs, School Security Personnel, RJ Lead Teachers, and RJ team members
  - Focus on the why of the full continuum of restorative practices
  - Develop shared understanding in approaches
  - Seek to dismantle discrepancies within and across clusters as well as the school district
- RJ School teams refine the RJ professional learning and implementation plan
- Analyze monitoring tools for disparities within data
  - Professional learning to dismantle disparities that have been elevated and implemented
- Monthly RJ Lead Teacher PLC led MCPS RJ Unit
  - Professional Learning for RJ Lead Teachers themselves
  - Professional Learning to take back to their respective schools
  - RJ Unit provides regular, consistent support to schools throughout the year

## **MOU Subcommittee**

The MOU Subcommittee is committed to undertaking a comprehensive review and revision of the current MOU, beginning in September 2021 and concluding by December 2021. The subcommittee identified the following topics to be included in his comprehensive review:

- All components of the current MOU
- Incorporation of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services into a new MOU
- Focus on supporting students vs. only police responses
- Mobile crisis response
- Restorative justice
- Data collection and accountability
- Training for MCPS administrators and MCPD
- County community outreach workers
- Specific situations where there should be mental health professionals to respond vs. police

The subcommittee identified the following stakeholders be included in his comprehensive review:

- Students, including SGA representatives
- Educators
- Parents, including PTA representatives
- County council staff
- Principals
- DHHS
- Mental health professionals
- MCPD & municipal law enforcement agencies
- Community stakeholders
- State's attorney's office

In an effort to take some steps to reduce student and police interactions for the start of the 2021-22 school year, and prior to the comprehensive review and revision of the current MOU, the subcommittee extensively reviewed two sections of the current MOU: the duties of school resource officers (pages 1-3) and the lists of critical incidents in which schools are required to contact the police (pages 8-9). Based on these recommendations, it is expected that a new, signed MOU will be released by early September.

MCPD announced in late August that SROs will now be called community engagement officers (CEOs). The subcommittee recommends that they not be stationed in school buildings or on school grounds, and that school requests for police service not be made directly to the CEOs. (Instead, schools would call 911 for emergencies and 301-279-8000 for non-emergencies.)

On pages 8-9 of the current MOU, there are lists of critical incidents “where police shall take the lead in investigating” and “where police may take the lead in investigating depending on the circumstances. The subcommittee would like to review and revise this language around critical incidents in the comprehensive review and revision of the MOU beginning in September. However, working within the current framework, the subcommittee made the recommendations below. The police would still be contacted when these incidents occur.

Recommendations (Part 1): In the list of critical incidents on page 8 of the MOU, the subcommittee recommends moving the following incidents from “critical incident where police shall take the lead in investigating” to “critical incident where police may take the lead in investigating depending on the circumstances”:

- Arson (willful and maliciously set fire) or verbal or written threat of arson
- Knowingly making false reports about the location or detonation of a destructive device
- Distribution or manufacture of a controlled dangerous substance

Recommendations (Part 2): The subcommittee also recommended that the following incidents (pages 8-9) move from “critical incident where police shall take the lead in investigating” to “critical incident where police may take the lead in investigating depending on the circumstances.” However, in order to provide time for further legal review, these recommendations have been deferred to the comprehensive review/revision of the MOU:

- Hate crime (harassing a person or damaging property of a person because of their race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or national origin)
- Gang related incident/crime

Recommendations (Part 3): In the section of the MOU (page 9) that lists “critical incidents where police may take the lead in investigating depending on the circumstances,” the subcommittee recommends the following:

- “Physical attack on another that requires medical attention outside the health room”: Change to “In the event of a 911 call regarding a physical attack on another that requires medical attention outside the health room.
- “Theft (any single incident or series of incidents committed by the same perpetrator where the value of stolen property is \$500 or more)”: Change \$500 to \$1500.
- Possession of a marijuana: Police will only confiscate the substance.

## **Next Steps**

Reimagining School Safety and Student Well-Being (RSSSW) Committee work, through its subcommittees, will continue to focus on these recommendations regarding supports for students and will expand to include appropriate stakeholders as we move forward. Members of the various subcommittees will work jointly to finalize recommendations that overlap and we will engage the members of the County Council’s Student Wellbeing Advisory Committee as our recommendations also have significant overlap. The next report of recommendations and implementation steps is scheduled for December 31, 2021. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any of the co-chairs.

## **Reimagining School Safety and Student Well-Being (RSSSW) Committee Co-Chairs**

JoAnn Barnes, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services  
Jimmy D’Andrea, Montgomery County Public Schools  
Willie Parker-Loan, Montgomery County Department of Police

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**MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** MONIFA MCKNIGHT, ACTING SUPERINTENDENT, MCPS  
MARCUS JONES, CHIEF, MCPD  
RAYMOND CROWEL, DIRECTOR, DHHS

**FROM:** REIMAGINING SCHOOL SAFETY AND STUDENT WELLBEING (RSSSW)  
CO-CHAIRS: JOANN BARNES, DHHS; JAMES D'ANDREA, MCPS AND  
WILLIE PARKER-LOAN, MCPD

**SUBJECT:** EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CURRENT RSSSW  
ACTIVITIES/DELIVERABLES

**DATE:** August 25, 2021

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**Introduction:**

On May 12, 2021, County Executive Marc Elrich announced the creation of the Reimagining School Safety and Student Well-Being (RSSSW) Steering Committee. The steering committee contains 32 stakeholders, including students; representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Department of Police, and Montgomery County Public Schools; and staff members from the Offices of the County Executive and County Council.

In order to more effectively address the responsibilities of the steering committee, three subcommittees were formed in June: one focused on mental health, one focused on restorative justice, and one focused on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed October 17, 2017, between Montgomery County Public Schools; Montgomery County Department of Police; Montgomery County Sheriff's Office; Rockville City Police Department; Gaithersburg City Police Department; Takoma Park Police Department; and the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office.

**Committees Three Priority Areas Summary:**

**MOU**

The MOU subcommittee divided its work into two phases. The first phase of the work was a focused review of two key sections of the [MOU](#) : the duties of school resource officers, as outlined on pages 1-3, and the list of incidents requiring schools to contact the police, as outlined on pages 8-9. The first phase was completed over the summer, so that adjustments could be in place for the start of the school year on August 30, 2021.

The second phase of the work will begin in September and is designed to be a comprehensive review of the current MOU. The subcommittee plans to include additional stakeholders in the work and examine the current MOU through the lens of how it can be reframed to focus broadly

on supporting students. To that end, the subcommittee is planning to add the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as a party to the MOU and include topics such as restorative justice, mobile crisis support, etc.

Some highlights of the work that occurred in the first phase include:

- Clarification of the role of community resource officers (CROs): They will be assigned to specific schools, and they will be based in the community, not stationed in schools or on school grounds. They will not enforce MCPS policies, rules, regulations or procedures. Schools needing a police response will contact either 911 or the police non-emergency number depending on the circumstances, and then a police officer (or officers) will be dispatched to the school; the CRO will be part of this response if available.
- Recommendations to adjust when police are called to the school for specific incidents: The current MOU requires that police be contacted for “theft (any single incident or series of incidents where the value of stolen property is \$500 or more).” The subcommittee recommends that the threshold be changed to \$1500 and that all thefts below that amount be handled as school discipline issues. In addition, the subcommittee recommends that simple possession of marijuana be handled as a school discipline issue and that police respond to the school only to confiscate the marijuana.

### **Mental Health**

Areas of Focus (initially identified by RSSSW Steering Committee) & Related Recommendations:

1. Create systems of support to respond to student mental health crises in school
  - Recommendation #1: Increase training for all MCPS staff and other community partners in the building on verbal de-escalation skills by investing in more staff becoming certified Crisis Prevention Institute trainers
  - Recommendation #2: Increase the number of staff in each school building trained in all levels of de-escalation (verbal and physical) to reduce the number/frequency of crisis incidents in the school
  - Recommendation #3: Create a comprehensive and integrated crisis intervention decision tree and intervention guidelines
  - Recommendation #4: Support SWAG recommendations on peer support
  - Recommendation #5: Support School Wellbeing Teams’ (SWBT) effectiveness in addressing and preventing crises by designating a SWBT leader who has knowledge of available resources, de-escalation and intervention strategies, and who has sufficient time to dedicate to these responsibilities
2. Assess if there are sufficient mental health professionals available to students for proactive engagement
  - Recommendation #1: Increase School Counselors availability to support student’s social/emotional needs
  - Recommendation #2: Explore use of mental health navigators to link students with available mental health providers, maximizing the use of existing resources

3. Look at root causes of behavior (from a Mental Health vs delinquency lens) with funding for mental health supports rather than police as a solution. This area of focus has been referred to the Restorative Justice (RJ) subcommittee as it speaks to a shift in school culture in understanding that behavior is a form of communication and addressing that behavior from a restorative lens vs delinquency lens

### *Restorative Justice*

#### Recommendations:

1. A rewrite of the MCPS Student Code of Conduct to elevate the full continuum of restorative practices that outline specific restorative practices for each level within the Code of Conduct
2. Hire a full-time, salaried, fully-released Restorative Justice (RJ) lead teacher at every school
  - a. Actualize a monthly RJ Lead Teacher PLC to encompass:
    - i. Professional Learning for the RJ Lead Teachers self-work
    - ii. Professional Learning for RJ Lead Teachers to take back to their respective schools
    - iii. Regular, consistent support provided to RJ Lead Teachers and schools throughout the year by the Restorative Justice Unit
3. A Restorative Justice Team created at every school, led by the Restorative Justice Lead Teacher, with MCPS staff receiving the after-school stipend to engage in the development and implementation of monitoring and accountability models to actualize a restorative school.
  - a. The team members would include, administrator(s), caregivers, students, teachers, school counselor(s), pupil personnel worker(s), and school security personnel (for middle and high school)
  - b. Monitoring and accountability tools would include the following to elevate disparities among student populations and engage in professional learning to dismantle the disparities elevated:
    - i. Student and Family voice data
    - ii. Referral data
    - iii. Suspension/Expulsion data
    - iv. Arrest data
4. Cluster trainings with OTLS-SSI Directors, Administrators, CROs, School Security Personnel, RJ Lead Teachers, and RJ team members to encompass:
  - a. The full continuum of restorative practices, emphasizing the preventative before the responsive side of the continuum
  - b. Develop shared understanding in approaches
  - c. Seek to dismantle discrepancies within and across clusters as well as the school district
  - d. Unpacking the MOU between MCPS and MCPD
  - e. Scenario walkthroughs through a restorative lens
  - f. Scenarios that outline when to contact CRO
  - g. Mediation scenarios

### **Moving Forward**

Work in the subcommittees will continue and our next update will include a specific timeline for each recommendation. While the MOU committee moves on to other areas of the original MOU, HHS and other partners will be involved as it addresses other supports for students.

The RJ and Mental Health subcommittees will have some joint meetings to address the overlap between the two bodies of work. Additionally, the membership of these two subcommittees may increase to be sure that the perspectives of all stakeholder departments are represented.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any of the co-chairs. Thank you.



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND**

**COUNCILMEMBER NANCY NAVARRO  
DISTRICT 4**

**CHAIR, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND  
FISCAL POLICY COMMITTEE**

**EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**

**MEMORANDUM**

February 5, 2021

**TO:** Marc Elrich, County Executive

**FROM:** Nancy Navarro, Chair, Government Operations & Fiscal Policy Committee

**SUBJECT:** On School Resource Officers: A way forward

It was great speaking to you about an alternative approach to the current School Resources Officer (SRO) model. The model I envision would be consistent with state law, by assigning police officers to different geographic beats or clusters and creating teams that include mental health professionals and counselors. We would create a memorandum of understanding that would clearly define which type of issues would qualify for calls for assistance, thus eliminating the practice of calling law enforcement personnel for what should be disciplinary issues.

Like you and my colleagues on the Council, I am committed to a re-imagining of our county's public safety resources that dismantles racial inequities, is holistic and humanizes both our residents and members of our police force. I am eager to adopt a program for our children that incorporates positive youth development principles (counselors, nurses, parent community coordinators, youth outreach workers, pupil personnel workers, etc.), while prioritizing safety in our schools. We need resources for the emotional and social well-being of our students that are comprehensive and culturally appropriate.

The Montgomery County Board of Education is currently reviewing the issue of School Resource Officers (SROs) in school facilities and I had hoped they would have recommendations this past January. As a

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former member of the Board of Education, I was willing to respect the process and weigh in after hearing from the school board. They have since postponed their decision and at this point, I believe we need to move ahead and craft an alternative approach to the current School Resources Officer (SRO) model.

Listening to the community, studying the bills on SROs before the council and the state legislature, and the preliminary reports of the reimagining safety workgroup and the school system's workgroup on SROs, I am struck by how everyone seems genuinely focused on change in how Public Safety and the wellbeing of our students should be prioritized. Out of respect for all the work that has been done, I believe that in your administrative capacity, you can take all the input into consideration to design and propose a brand new model that de-emphasizes a law enforcement focus within our schools and instead focuses on the mentoring and mental health needs of our students. Our County has invested in Positive Youth Development Initiatives (PYD) that should be incorporated, and we can strengthen these with nationally recognized programs like CAHOOTS and The SANTE group models. This new approach would come with appropriate staffing and resources. The timing is perfect, now that the budget cycle is upon us.

Since school will be virtual for a while, we have the time we need as a team to work together and come up with the ideal model. I look forward to hearing from you on my proposal.

CC: Members of the County Council

Members of the Montgomery County Board of Education

Dr. Jack Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Chiefs of Staff

Rich Madaleno, Chief Administrative Officer (Acting)

Marlene Michaelson, Executive Director, County Council

Caroline Sturgis, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND**

**COUNCILMEMBER NANCY NAVARRO  
DISTRICT 4**

**CHAIR, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND  
FISCAL POLICY COMMITTEE**

**EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**

**MEMORANDUM**

Mar 3, 21, 9:02 AM

**TO:** Sidney Katz, Chair, Public Safety Committee  
Craig Rice, Chair, Education and Culture Committee

**FROM:** Nancy Navarro, Chair, Government Operations & Fiscal Policy Committee

**SUBJECT:** Proposed amendment to bills on School Resource Officers

The Public Safety (PS) Committee and the Education (E&S) Committee will be holding a joint session on two bills that address the future of School Resource Officers (SROs) in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). [Bill 46-20](#), *School Resources Officers – Prohibited* (introduced by lead sponsors Will Jawando and Hans Riemer on November 17, 2020, with a public hearing held on February 4, 2021), would prohibit the Montgomery County Police Department from deploying school resource officers in schools. [Bill 7-21](#), *Police – School Resource Officer – Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools* (introduced by lead sponsors Craig Rice and Sidney Katz on February 2, 2021, with public hearing scheduled for March 4, 2021), would authorize the Chief of Police to assign a law enforcement officer to work as a school resource officer in a County school upon the request of the Superintendent of Schools, with a requirement for enhanced training for a school resource officer.

It is appropriate that the PS/EC joint committee session is taking up both bills at the same time. This approach allows the Council ultimately to take a holistic approach. It affirms the fact that we all have a shared interest – how to focus on our students’ mental and emotional well-being without compromising their physical safety as our parents and students expect, and as mandated by state law.

After listening to the community, especially our youth, studying both bills and related proposals in the General Assembly, the reports of the Reimagining Safety Task Force workgroup as well as the school system’s workgroup, I am proposing a model that eliminates the current SRO model, de-emphasizes a law enforcement focus within our schools and instead focuses on the mentoring and mental health needs

of students. However, it includes a Public Safety cluster model comprised of Police Officers, mental health professionals and Positive Youth Development staff. This approach Patterned after the Kennedy Cluster model which I worked on and helped implement in 2007 when I was President of the Board of Education, this model would incorporate multi-agency and interdepartmental collaboration, Positive Youth Development (PYD) initiatives, and mental health support that our County has previously invested in, and that can be strengthened with nationally recognized programs.

On February 5th, I sent a memorandum to County Executive Marc Elrich, outlining my alternative option to the physical presence of SROs in schools (attached). I have since met with the County Executive, the Police Chief, the leadership of the department of Health and Human Services, and MCPS to make sure that this approach can be implemented. I am pleased with their feedback and their proactive work in this space. The County Executive has shared his proposed cluster model with me, and I look forward to us working with him as a team to stand up a policy and an instrument that have the teeth and compassion to support and protect our students.

My amendment to the proposed bills is attached. For purposes of the joint committee's work, I have chosen to amend Bill 46-20 with this team model and incorporate training for the team members with the requirements in Bill 7-21. The result is a new structure that addresses all the concerns I have heard, and that is also consistent with the research findings and recommendations of the Office of Legislative Oversight. In summary, under the umbrella of Racial Equity and Social Justice, my proposed amendment:

- Creates a team that resides outside the schools and moves SROs out of school facilities and into a “cluster” model.
- Includes PYD initiatives and mental health supports in the “cluster” model with appropriate training for team members.
- Defines and restricts the offenses for which school personnel can call the law enforcement team.
- Enhances school-based services and student-centered supports (pupil personnel workers, counselors, Parent Community Coordinators, Street Outreach Network, Wellness centers, Linkages to Learning, and other student-centered programs). In addition, there should be an awareness program for school personnel to make sure they are informed of the availability of student support services, so they may promote prevention.

In closing I would like to sincerely thank Councilmembers Jawando, Rice, Riemer, Katz and County Executive Elrich for all their work on this issue. I appreciate their commitment to racial equity and social justice, and a truly re-imagined public safety structure. We have an opportunity here to provide the appropriate leadership as a team and rally behind the joint committee as it puts forward a recommendation to the full council.

Copy to:

Members of the County Council  
Marc Elrich, County Executive  
Brenda Wolff, President, Montgomery County Board of Education  
Jack Smith, Superintendent of Schools  
Raymond Crowel, Director, Health and Human Services  
Marcus Jones, Chief of Police

Attachment

**Bill 46-20 - Navarro Amendment 1**

*Amend lines 23-30 as follows:*

- (8) Montgomery County Public Schools fall well short of the student to mental health and counseling staff ratios recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists and the American School Counselor Association; [[and]]
- (9) students of color would benefit from more opportunity to speak with therapists, nurses, and school psychologists with diverse backgrounds who can speak to the challenges they are facing; and
- (10) Montgomery County Public Schools must enhance mental health and counseling support for students.

*Add the following after line 40:*

- (d) Local law enforcement coverage program for public schools. The Executive must establish a local law enforcement coverage program for each public school that incorporates positive youth development principles while prioritizing safety through the use of multidisciplinary school teams that are not based in a school. The Chief of Police must assign police officers to different geographic areas to work on a school team with mental health professionals and counselors assigned by the Director of Health and Human Services. Each member of the school team must receive training on:
  - (1) de-escalation techniques;
  - (2) mediation and conflict resolution;
  - (3) childhood and adolescent development;
  - (4) alcohol/drug response;
  - (5) gang prevention and response;
  - (6) truancy prevention;
  - (7) child abuse and neglect;

- (8) culturally competent community engagement and outreach;
  - (9) emergency preparedness and response to critical incidents;
  - (10) threat assessment;
  - (11) mental health triage and crisis intervention;
  - (12) trauma-informed response practices;
  - (13) restorative justice;
  - (14) physical and developmental disability awareness; and
  - (16) mentoring.
- (e) Memorandum of Understanding. The Executive must negotiate a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Superintendent of Schools establishing guidelines for the operation of the school teams established under subsection (d). The MOU must:
- (1) include a comprehensive data sharing agreement between the Police Department and the Montgomery County Public Schools; and
  - (2) define the type of issues that:
    - (A) should result in a call for law enforcement assistance; and
    - (B) should be handled as a school discipline matter instead of a call for law enforcement assistance.
- (f) Reporting. The Chief of Police, after consulting with the Superintendent of Schools, must submit an annual written report to the Executive and the Council on or about July 15 of each year that includes:
- (1) the number and discipline of personnel assigned to each school team during the school year;
  - (2) the number of calls for law enforcement assistance for each school during the school year;
  - (3) the number of arrests of a student at each school broken down by race, gender, ethnicity, and disability during the school year;
  - (4) a description of each incident that resulted in an arrest of a student;

- (5) recommendations for improvements in the program; and
- (6) any other metrics that can be used to measure success of the program.

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# Student Wellbeing Action Group

Final Report and Recommendations

# Intro to SWAG

25 members 8 of which are students

4 co-chairs one of which is a student

SWAG has effectively centered the student voice, ensuring that students speak before other participants and take a clear leadership role.

SWAG hopes to become a permanent body of students and community members that make yearly recommendations to improve student wellbeing in Montgomery County.

**To develop a set of recommendations for the Montgomery County Council and Montgomery County Public Schools that map out student supports to address inequities unsuccessfully addressed by the School Resource Officer Program and to improve student wellbeing.**





# Subgroup Reports



# Subgroup 1: School Curriculum and Climate

*Focused on improving school climate by uprooting racism from within the curriculum and centering cultural awareness and unity.*

## **Recommendations:**

1. Creation of a number of cultural centers/educational enrichment hubs to provide MCPS schools with cultural experiences and programs in and outside of schools to engage youth and transform school climate with partnerships from community organizations. This requires funding from the Council.
2. Creation of a committee within MCPS to use the results of the anti-racism audit to transform school climate and curriculum in a proactive and inclusive way.

## Subgroup 1: School Curriculum and Climate

- The curriculum and climate group was not able to meet as many times as possible or the period of time SWAG worked on the recommendations. I am unable to provide any details on these recommendations as a result.
- SWAG is willing to reconvene to flesh these recommendations out with appropriate buy-in and assistance from relevant entities.
- The recommendations from this group represent the sentiment that the students of MCPS want to Montgomery County to take steps toward taking action on its anti-racist efforts by creating tangible entities and tools that can turn our audits into action.

## Subgroup 2: Mental and Behavioral Health in Schools

*Focused on expanding access to school based mental health supports who can provide therapeutic services to the students of MCPS, as well as developing processes for the student oversight on and engagement in mental health practices.*

## Subgroup 2: Recommendations

1. Increase student access to mental health/wellbeing resources needed for success:
  - a. Add school staff and also school based providers through the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS):
    - i. **Culturally Competent and Trauma Informed Licensed Clinical Social Workers** (outside of the Social and Emotional Special Education Services program) and School Psychologists. Funding from the Council is required.
    - ii. Specifically increase support for undocumented students and consider Black and other social workers of color who can work with the county to lead any program that would involve Social Workers.
  - b. Ensure that schools have mental health teams - counselors, psychologists, and social workers working together in order to support students. Students need to know what resources are available.
  - c. Mental health first aid for students is added to SOS (signs of suicide)

## Subgroup 2: Recommendations

2. Ensure sure everyone especially students have a voice:
  - a. Quarterly meetings to gather student feedback to ensure well being needs are met; include opportunities for peer support and representation.
  - b. **Student Engagement Groups:** 20-30 groups identified by students that may support identity development within the school to allow students the opportunity to support one another through more intentional engagement and interactions perhaps guided by Social Workers, making sure every student feels comfortable coming back to school and talking with counselors and administration.

## Subgroup 2: Mental and Behavioral Health in Schools

- SWAG wants MCPS to be part of the change in society as it approaches mental health as a normal, daily need.
- We wish to shift from a reactionary approach to a more proactive method of teaching mental health skills as we do others skills.
- We want to ensure every student feels comfortable coming back to school and talking with counselors and administration.
- We want to ensure students who need mental health support know what resources are available.
- We want to ensure everyone, especially students, have a voice in matters surrounding student mental health.
- Using the supports we have recommended, we believe MCPS should develop a plan for a mobile crisis team of professionals (not including law enforcement) who can attend to crises - to address all youth.

## Subgroup 3: Discipline and Police in Schools

The subgroup on Discipline and Police in schools chose to focus on uprooting the current school discipline system and replacing it with a thorough restorative justice model in an effort to radically transform school culture. Additionally, the subgroup chose to lay out a set of criteria for future school safety models that may involve police in the form of MOU non-negotiables.



# Subgroup 3: Recommendations

1. Allocate funding for restorative justice in all MCPS schools. This includes:
  - a. Hiring Restorative Justice Practitioners in all schools. Expanding the existing MCPS Restorative Justice Unit. Police should not be practitioners.
  - b. Providing Restorative Justice Training for all MCPS staff (including administrators, security, and teachers). Retraining those who are responsible for school discipline to approach harm created in the school environment using restorative justice and NOT punitive measures. Creating methods for teacher and staff accountability when punitive punishment is implemented (ie: calling security).
  - c. Reviewing the MCPS code of conduct considering restorative justice; codification of when and how to use Restorative Justice, with due school flexibility.
  - d. Community and student involvement in the practice of planning and performing Restorative Justice; exploration of student role in disciplinary action (possibly through a pilot honor board/council). Students must have a right to restorative justice.
  - e. Student representation for community oversight

## Subgroup 3: Recommendations

2. Eliminate police presence on school campuses, meaning no consistent law enforcement presence on school campuses (police cannot be stationed inside, outside, or immediately around schools) as it would hinder our ability to move away from punitive punishment and subject students of color to the school to prison pipeline.

## Subgroup 3: MOU Non-Negotiables

1. Eliminate police presence on school campuses meaning, no consistent law enforcement presence on school campuses (police cannot be stationed inside, outside, or immediately around schools).
2. Emergency response must use mobile crisis response teams and only involve police in cases involving violent crime as defined by the Maryland Safe to Learn Act. Culturally competent and trauma-informed social workers will be supporting the student during police involvement.
3. In the rare circumstance in which students encounter police (in relation to an MCPS referral/event) after all RJ practices have been unsuccessful, a clear plan be given to the student of whom they will be interacting (who would see a report they file, etc.), and what possible consequences and steps would be followed regarding the incident, with the aid of a clinical social worker. This approach must center the student's wellbeing and safety.

## Subgroup 3: Discipline and Police in Schools

- We urge that MCPS ensures transparent, accessible, plans for administration of when to involve different justice practices;
- Provides a clear plan of when they will be interacting with MCPS security, police, or MCPS guidelines for students;
- Codifies restorative justice in code of conduct and publicizes that for school communities;
- Involves students in school discipline and RJ processes; and when students are being discussed, inviting students from diverse working groups and organizations to participate.

**We do NOT want police or law enforcement involved in restorative justice and school discipline practices moving forward.** All processes must center students of color (especially black and brown students) who remain those most impacted by school discipline

**Restorative justice must NOT replace punitive discipline as a means of controlling students** as it has in the past.



# Montgomery County Council

## November 10, 2021



# Mental Health Subcommittee

## **Create/enhance systems of support to respond to student mental health crises in school**

1. Increase training for all MCPS staff and other community partners in the building on verbal de-escalation skills by investing in more staff becoming certified Crisis Prevention Institute trainers
2. Increase the number of staff in each school building trained in all levels of de-escalation (verbal and physical) to reduce the number/frequency of crisis incidents in the school
3. Create a comprehensive and integrated crisis intervention decision tree and intervention guidelines
4. Support SWAG recommendations on peer support
5. Support School Wellbeing Teams' (SWBT) effectiveness in addressing and preventing crises by designating a SWBT leader who has knowledge of available resources, de-escalation and intervention strategies, and sufficient time to dedicate to these responsibilities

## **Assess if sufficient mental health professionals are available to students for *proactive* engagement**

1. Increase School Counselors availability to support student's social/emotional needs
2. Explore/increase use of mental health navigators/behavioral health resource specialists to link students with available mental health providers, maximizing the use of existing resources



## Restorative Justice Subcommittee

1. A rewrite of the MCPS Student Code of Conduct to elevate the full continuum of restorative practices for each level within the Code of Conduct.
2. Hire a full-time, salaried, fully-released Restorative Justice (RJ) lead teacher at every school.
3. A restorative justice team at every school, led by the Restorative Justice Lead Teacher, with MCPS staff receiving the after-school stipend to engage in the development and implementation of monitoring and accountability models to actualize a restorative school.
4. Cluster trainings with Office of Teaching, Learning, and Schools

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# Curriculum

## **Social Studies**

- Developed courses reflecting antiracist content
- Provided professional learning on creating a classroom culture, planning and implementing instruction from an anti-bias, antiracism lens.
- Partner with scholars and organizations to provide professional learning to broaden content knowledge to ensure inclusivity in instruction.

## **Secondary English**

- Ongoing work with StudySync to add more diverse texts.
- Eliminated assessment items that are not culturally responsive and expanded diversity of voices in MCPS curriculum texts.
- Provided professional learning on antiracist ELA instruction

All content areas will evaluate and revise efforts using the recommendations of the anti-racist audit.



# Restorative Justice

- Restorative Justice Coaches have been identified and trained in all middle and high schools. Coaches are teacher staff members who receive stipends and are already a part of the school community.
- Coaches serve on school leadership teams and also engage in a monthly restorative justice professional learning community (PLC) where they share ideas, strategies, and learn and plan together.
- Over 11,000 teachers, security officers, and staff completed the *Fundamentals of Restorative Justice Training* this summer.
- Schools leaders and school teams also completed the Restorative Justice Designated Team Training together.
- Selected elementary schools (24) allocated a Restorative Justice Team Leader or Mindfulness Team Leader.
- Selected school-level coaches are hosting student and parent learning and planning sessions to continue to engage their communities in conversations about restorative justice.



# Restorative Justice

- Increased partnership with Appeals and Transfers and a developing framework that includes greater multi-office consideration when recommending 10 day suspension with recommendation for expulsion
- Advocacy for policy changes to the MCPS Discipline Policy and subsequently the [Code of Conduct](#)
- MOU changes that align with non-negotiables, including officers not stationed in schools
- Mobilization of the Restorative Justice Unit for direct support and consultation to schools
- Increased collaboration efforts across offices in student behavior interventions and discipline processes
- Implementation of programs and resources such as [SUPRE](#) that address root causes of behavior in lieu of exclusionary practices
- MCCPTA Restorative Justice group under the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee



# Restorative Justice

- Continuity - Funding and expanding the current Restorative Justice Unit. This small but mighty team is partially staffed on a grant that will end after this school year. As the team increases direct services and support to schools and families, they will need to expand beyond five specialists and a clinical social worker.
- Increased support and stipends to elementary schools. Secondary schools have coaches who put in 240 hours (\$6,000) of work in each school. There are 135 elementary schools and only 24 have an RJ/ Mindfulness Team Leader. Elementary RJ leaders are paid a one time amount of \$300 for their afterschool time and efforts.
- More direct support and implementation of restorative justice for the Virtual Academy
- Training for new staff and refresher training for existing staff (Summer 2022)
- Formal creation of a central student review or honor board

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