

What are the Councils on Teaching and Learning?

The Councils on Teaching and Learning are the means through which the 11,000 teachers in MCPS have a voice in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of curriculum, assessment decisions, and instructional practices. The Councils are a collaborative effort by MCEA and MCPS, and were created in 2002.

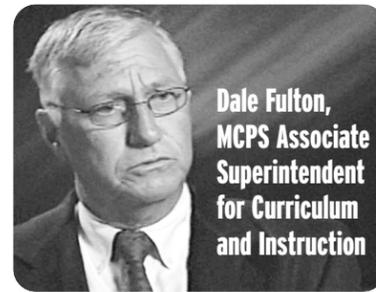
There are three Councils: one each for elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Each Council has approximately 30 teacher positions, representing classroom teachers by grade level or subject discipline. These teacher representatives meet monthly with Council members representing the MCPS central offices that deal with curriculum, assessment, instruction, and staff development. Teacher reps to the Councils are compensated for their time and work through a jointly-funded stipend.

The Councils on Teaching and Learning are charged with:

- Providing a vehicle for teacher discussion of, reaction to, and then communication about MCPS initiatives related to curriculum, assessment, instruction, and staff development;
- Representing the perspective of teachers at each grade level and in each subject area on matters of curriculum, assessment, instruction, and staff development; and
- Participating with MCPS representatives in collaborative problem-solving regarding matters germane to curriculum, assessment, instruction, and staff development.

The Councils are a unique and groundbreaking effort because they are a joint project of the teachers union and the school administration to involve elected teacher representatives in the ongoing process of instructional improvement.

Why are the Councils on Teaching and Learning important to teachers?



“This is a way for teachers to be in on the initial steps of development—curriculum development—and as they implement the curriculum, to provide us feedback so that we change it. It’s dynamic and it really is suited to the needs of teachers and students.”

“Teachers care about the curriculum they are being asked to deliver and the work that we are asking students to do.”



What kinds of issues get discussed in the Councils?

During their first two years of operation, teachers and administrators on the Councils have discussed:

- The MCPS curriculum framework, instructional guides, and blueprints
- ECAP testing
- High school assessments
- Student placement
- Effort-based intelligence
- The MCPS Framework for Improving Teaching and Learning
- Math textbooks
- Foreign language curricula
- Grading and reporting
- NCLB Highly Qualified Standards
- ESOL and AYP
- Middle school reorganization study
- Staff development offerings

How are classroom teachers’ voices represented on the Councils?

MCEA representatives to the Councils on Teaching and Learning are elected by their individual constituencies. Nominations are open to all MCEA members. Each cohort of job-alike classroom teachers is considered a “constituency”: for example, all first grade teachers and all high school math teachers. A detailed list of the constituencies and their representation on the Councils can be found on the next page.

“I think it’s hugely important that these positions be elected. I think that the people who represent the teachers ought to reflect their needs and concerns.”

—NANCY SHAY
High School CTL Member

What do the Councils on Teaching and Learning do?

The Councils serve in many different capacities within MCPS and MCEA.

Within MCPS, the Councils:

- Gather feedback about MCPS practices that have been put in place or are about to be established, and convey that feedback to the administrative representatives on the Councils;
- Make decisions and problem-solve about issues that are best resolved jointly by teachers and MCPS central office administrators;
- Initiate discussions about concerns and new ideas from teachers regarding curriculum design, instructional practice, and assessments;
- Encourage clarity and consistency in the understanding among teachers about key MCPS policies and practices in curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Within MCEA, the Councils:

- Are new democratic structures for representing teacher “constituencies” in the areas of curriculum, assessment and instruction. They are part of the formal governance structure of the union. Each cohort of classroom teachers within MCPS (each grade level at the elementary level and each subject discipline at the secondary level) elects representatives of their choosing to the Councils on Teaching and Learning.
- Have primary responsibility for recommending new directions for MCEA policy on issues of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and for keeping MCEA’s leadership and elected building representatives informed about key issues in these areas.