



MCEA Members at the March for our Schools in Annapolis

From the President



Chris Lloyd
President of MCEA

We as a community take great pride in our schools in Montgomery County, and in our commitment to our children. And yet we know that today, we're not meeting the needs of our children. The Kirwan Commission has been working over the past two years in Annapolis, and their study has found that our schools here in Montgomery are missing significant resources, totaling \$488 million dollars annually.

This year, Governor Hogan increased state funding to Montgomery by 3.8%, and the legislature is in the process of setting aside another \$1 billion statewide to start to implement the Kirwan Commission's recommendations. It's a down payment to what will need to be a prolonged and dedicated effort to build the schools our kids deserve.

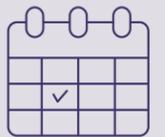
But locally, it's a different story, with an increase from last year of only 0.7%. That doesn't account for the nearly 1,000 new students entering our doors, nor the cut of \$25 million dollars that our schools sustained this spring. If we take into account these two factors alone, we see a decrease in local funding that is demoralizing to our workforce and community.

Kirwan has made clear the need for expanded pre-k education to help students in poverty succeed. And at the state level over the next two years, about \$2 million is provided to accomplish this here in Montgomery County.

Kirwan has recognized the impact of concentrated poverty on schools. We know in such places, that community schools have proven successful, with a vibrant school-community partnership, powerful wrap-around services, culturally relevant curriculum, positive behavior practices, and high-quality teaching and leadership. The state is looking to fund coordinators and health providers in 8 of our schools which have more than 80% of children on free or reduced meals.

We know that the federal government underfunds special education to the tune of \$20 billion annually, forcing states and localities to pick up the balance from general operating revenues. This year in Annapolis, the Kirwan Commission recommended the state increase special education by \$137.5 million dollars for next year and again the year after, with \$19 million of that allocated to Montgomery next year.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Teacher Appreciation Week
May 6-10

Rep Assembly
Wednesday, May 29

Last Day of School
Friday, June 14

Professional Day for Teachers
Monday, June 17

! MCEA Unit Members – Know Your Rights

Did you know that if an experienced MCPS teacher is recommended by the principal for inclusion in the Peer Assistance and Review Program, that teacher must also be observed first by a Consulting Teacher (CT) to determine whether PAR is truly needed?

The PAR Program is a central accomplishment of MCEA. PAR gives us educators responsibility and authority in establishing and upholding the standards by which we measure good teaching, a structure through which to provide colleagues with support, and a powerful voice in determining who is meeting standard. Arbitrary and capricious recommendations for inclusion in PAR are unlikely because teachers are guaranteed a "second opinion" from an independent CT. Moreover, PAR is designed so that no teacher is dismissed before receiving almost a year of intensive CT support to help them meet standard.

Experienced teachers are referred to PAR only after receiving a "below standard" rating on a formal

evaluation by their principal. "Below standard" evaluations are due March 1 (or the next duty day) for probationary teachers, March 31 (or the next duty day) for tenured teachers. Referral, however, is not an automatic inclusion into the program. First a CT must independently observe the teacher. The decision for inclusion rests with the PAR Panel, made up of eight teachers recommended by MCEA and eight principals recommended by the principals' union, MCAAP. If, after carefully reviewing the evidence provided by the CT and the principal, the PAR Panel disagrees with a principal's recommendation, the teacher's evaluation will be rewritten as meeting standard.

Thus, the PAR referral process provides members with a thoughtful check and balance to the principal's evaluation.

Now you know!

Kirwan's findings painted an alarming picture of the teaching profession in Maryland. A few facts:

- Last year, Maryland had to import over 60% of its teachers, compared to just 6% in Massachusetts.
- Compared to like professions, teachers in Maryland make 25% less than such professions, and carry significant student loan debt.
- Maryland ranks 49th nationally in teacher autonomy, and a recent Gallup poll found that teachers were last compared to other professions in saying that "my opinion matters at work."
- Nationally, the profession is hemorrhaging, with over half of new teachers leaving the profession within five years, and teacher preparation programs struggling to find candidates, and closing down.

The starting salary in Montgomery County falls \$8,000 short of annual expenses, when utilizing cost of living data from the Economic Policy Institute and the Montgomery County government. Rent, transportation, groceries, student loan debt, and other expenses outstrip new teachers' paychecks, forcing many of them to secure a second job during the school year, commute long distances, or share housing with other teachers.

With that in mind, Kirwan recommended increasing teaching salaries by 10% over the next three years and moving the starting salary in the state to a minimum of \$60,000. Failure to address the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers is already impacting our classrooms, and with our need to hire almost 1,000 teachers each year here in the county, we simply will not have enough certificated, high-quality teachers with our children in the years to come.

Thousands of new students have come to us over the past 10 years, making us the fastest growing jurisdiction in the state. Yet in that same period, local per pupil expenditures have actually gone down. That's why Kirwan found a \$488 million shortfall here in Montgomery.

In December of last year, the superintendent put forward a budget asking for \$29 million more for next year. After the governor provided his budget, the superintendent trimmed the MCPS request by \$13 million, using state dollars to supplant local funding. And after the county executive cut the budget by another \$13 million, the system is now left asking for about 14 cents more per day for each student for next year. At this rate, it will take 122 years to fully fund the schools our children deserve here in Montgomery. The county council will act on the budget in the coming weeks, and we hope they will partner with us in advocating a return to the \$29 million requested by the superintendent back in December.

We can't feed our children's minds by starving our schools. We're better than this.

Christopher Lloyd, NBCT

Loving Husband

President



MCEA Members Showing Up



MCEA members at our town hall discussions with the Montgomery County Board of Education

Be Seen. Be Heard. Be There.



David Airozo

4th grade teacher at Forest Knolls Elementary School

Be heard. Be heard like those teachers last December, when MCEA leaders shared with our elected leaders the stories of outrageous special educator caseload and paperwork burdens; suspect school attendance policies; the widespread impact of mandated, standardized testing; and many more issues facing teachers today.

Be seen. Be seen, like the 160 educator-activists, most clad in Red for Ed T-shirts, who packed the Carver Educational Center as MCEA directors told those teacher stories, taking advantage of a rare opportunity to bring to the Board of Education members unfiltered, first-hand accounts of what it is like to be an MCPS educator.

The Dec. 19 show of union strength got the ball rolling. But it was just one step in an ongoing campaign to ensure that our voices are heard and our issues are addressed.

At the meeting BOE members pledged to visit at least three schools or other work sites to talk directly with staff; and to hold events where educators will have the opportunity to speak directly with the BOE. BOE members have already visited a number of schools and more visits are scheduled.

And on April 30th we held our first town hall, a powerful gathering with BOE members where hundreds of MCEA activists shared their concerns with the Board.

As we launch a new round of contract negotiations, we must continue to come together to dig into issues that have the greatest impact on our students and our jobs. What's going well? What challenges do we face? What can we do – together – to bring about the changes we know are needed?

There will be more opportunities for activism in the months ahead.

Be heard! Be seen! Be there!

