MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Judith R. Docca, Chair, Board of Education Policy Management Committee

Subject: Tentative Action, Policy COA, Student Well-being and School Safety

The Montgomery County Board of Education Policy Management Committee (Committee) reviewed new Board Policy COA, Student Well-being and School Safety (Attachment A), at its April 8 and May 7, 2019, meetings. During the April 8, 2019, Committee meeting, Mr. Edward A. Clarke, chief safety officer, Department of School Safety and Security, and Dr. Christina N. Conolly, director, Psychological Services, Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement, shared detailed presentations concerning their teams’ work on stakeholder and community engagement around safety.

In spring 2017, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) launched a comprehensive review of its protocols, practices, and infrastructure related to the critical imperative of maintaining safe, orderly learning environments for all students. In summer 2017, MCPS released the Interim Report: School Safety and Security Focusing on High Schools. On April 12, 2018, the Board of Education (Board) received the Final Report (Attachment B, Introduction to the MCPS Final Report, School Safety and Security 2018). The Final Report, School Safety and Security 2018 (which includes the Interim Report) reaffirmed the priority recommendations for MCPS high schools and expanded these recommendations to elementary and middle schools. Of particular note, the Final Report, School Safety and Security 2018, details that, “School safety cannot be achieved merely by adding more cameras or more security staff. It is equally important to foster a culture and climate that incorporates safety into daily operations at every school. Research clearly shows that safe schools are built on a foundation—consistent with MCPS’s core values of equity, relationships, and respect—that ensures all students have positive relationships with at least one responsible adult; all students, faculty, and staff are treated with respect; the diversity of MCPS school communities is fully embraced; and all students’ families and the broader community are fully engaged in supporting student success.”

The new policy ties together the efforts outlined in the Interim and Final Reports into the district’s work on student well-being, which also is being discussed at today’s Board meeting. Specifically, draft Policy COA addresses safety from the perspective of promoting a positive school climate; accountability for all; behavioral threat assessment; facilities, security staff, and technology; collaboration with County partners including health and law enforcement agencies; and emergency planning and preparedness. The policy also incorporates language from
the Principles for School Safety, Privacy, and Equity, to protect all students’ safety, privacy, and right to an equal education. The Principles for School Safety, Privacy, and Equity were developed by AASA, The School Superintendents Association, and 39 other education, privacy, disability rights, and civil rights organizations and are meant to serve as a starting point for conversations with policymakers and school officials about how to keep students safe while respecting their dignity and encouraging their individual growth (Attachment C).

On April 10, 2018, Governor Larry Hogan signed into law Senate Bill 1265 (Chapter 30), the Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018 (Attachment D), which enacted several requirements regarding behavioral threat assessment teams, and the identification of a mental health coordinator and a school safety coordinator to serve as liaisons between local law enforcement agencies and the Maryland Center for School Safety. Draft Policy COA incorporates these requirements as well as the tenets of the Maryland Center for School Safety’s Maryland Model Policy for Behavior Threat Assessment. An excerpt from this document including the Introduction, Procedures, and Guidelines is attached (Attachment E). Maryland’s Model Policy for Behavior Threat Assessment includes procedures for the assessment of and intervention with students, staff, parents/guardians, contractors, and non-affiliated individuals on school property whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students.

Additional reference material to support the Board discussion on draft Policy COA is included in the Executive Summary of the Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety, December 18, 2018 (Attachment F). The Committee now is recommending that the new policy be approved for Tentative Action and sent out for public comment.

The following resolution is provided for your consideration:

WHEREAS, Policy COA, Student Well-being and School Safety, was reviewed by the Policy Management Committee on April 8, and May 7, 2019; and

WHEREAS, Policy COA, Student Well-being and School Safety, provides an outline for a new Montgomery County Public Schools’ School Safety Plan that encompasses student well-being and behavior threat assessment; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education take tentative action on Policy COA, Student Well-being and School Safety; and be it further

Resolved, That Policy COA, Student Well-being and School Safety, be sent out for public comment for a period of 30 days.

JRD:SPW:mm

Attachments