A. PURPOSE

To affirm the Board of Education’s commitment to the social-emotional well-being and mental health of students as essential components of learning and academic achievement, school attendance and school completion.

To set forth a framework for a multi-tiered system of universal, targeted, and intensive student services that support the educational mission of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

B. ISSUE

Student learning and academic achievement, school attendance, and school completion all have strong social-emotional and mental health components: cognitive demands for learning; social and emotional and mental health demands for behaving according to school rules, norms, and expectations; and physical demands to be active throughout the school day.

School communities thrive when the student body is engaged in
school life, healthy, and makes positive decisions that promote their own well-being and the well-being of others.

C. POSITION

1. The Board seeks to support students’ academic success with a multi-tiered system of supports that –
   a) appropriately leverages the skills and resources of MCPS professionals, as well as community partner agencies through appropriate memoranda of understanding; and
   b) aligns with Policy COA, Student Well-being and School Safety, and the Be Well 365 Initiative that support the development of positive and safe school climates.

2. A multi-tiered system should include, but is not limited to, the following key components:
   a) Universal programming available to all students – grade-specific and age-appropriate classroom instruction through the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) curricula for social-emotional learning, health education and mental health literacy; school-wide programs such as bullying prevention; and drop-in support from school-based mental health professionals.
   b) Targeted student supports – consultation through school-level Student Well-being Teams (SWBT) and
Educational Management Teams (EMTs) to consider specific student needs and strengths and develop behavior support and interventions that address identified concerns through short-term individual and group counseling; referrals to community partners; small group skills training; and case management.

c) Intensive support – referral to community partner agencies for individual or group therapy; home visits/interventions for absenteeism; behavior threat assessment; suicide assessment; and crisis intervention.

a)–d) Strong and supportive leadership teams at each school that analyze and organize all available resources and professionals including school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers (SSWs), and direct outreach professionals such as pupil personnel workers (PPWs), emergent multilingual learner therapeutic counselors (ETCs), and parent community coordinators (PCC).

2.3. The Board affirms the importance of educators and trusted adults in every school setting, in addition to social-emotional and mental health professionals, who interact with students daily, show empathy to students and whom students and families may view as reliable and caring sources of support in times of worry, concern, or crisis. MCPS will establish learning objectives and supporting resources for MCPS staff and, as appropriate,
volunteers who regularly interact with students, so that they are knowledgeable about the functions of the school SWBTs and EMTs, and may facilitate appropriate and timely connections with social-emotional and mental health programming and services for students.

43. Consistent with Policy ABC, *Family-School Partnerships*, the Board promotes student and family access to social-emotional well-being and mental health supports, programming and services, either provided directly by MCPS staff or through community partners.

a) Students will have regular opportunities to meet in person with school-based MCPS social-emotional and mental health professionals, who will help them understand, as appropriate, the programming and services available to students, including each school’s SWBT.

b) MCPS will effectively communicate school-level information to families and students about the social-emotional well-being, mental health professionals, and programming and services at each school, either through direct provision by MCPS staff or through referrals to community partner agencies.

5. Consent for the disclosure of confidential student information by MCPS staff is subject to the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and community partner agencies may be subject to the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
6. MCPS will establish memoranda of understanding with community partner agencies that specify, as appropriate, partnership roles and responsibilities, referral processes, safety planning, decision making rules, and confidentiality and data-sharing protocols in alignment with the FERPA which governs MCPS staff and programming, and HIPAA which governs health providers.

D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. All students will thrive and become healthy, resilient, self-confident, and successful young people, who are engaged in school life and make positive decisions that promote their own well-being and the well-being of others.

2. Students and families will access, when needed, the appropriate supports students may need and understand the purposes of social-emotional and mental health programming.

2.3. The educational mission of MCPS will be supported by an effective and efficient system of universal, targeted, and intensive student services to foster positive, respectful, orderly, and safe learning environments necessary for effective learning.

E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The superintendent of schools will –
1. implement school counseling, social-emotional learning, and health education curricula that assist students to gain the social-emotional knowledge and skills appropriate for their level of development;

2. provide students and families with school-level and topic-specific information needed to effectively access each social-emotional and mental health program and practice area, provided through MCPS resources and/or community partners;

3. collect regular feedback on stakeholder access to social-emotional and mental health programming and services; and

4. establish regulations or other administrative procedures necessary for carrying out the commitments and priorities outlined in this policy, and consistent with developing a positive school climate as set forth in Policy COA, Student Well-being and School Safety.

F. REVIEW AND REPORTING

1. The Board will regularly review the staffing and capacity of social-emotional and mental health programming and services for elementary, middle, and high schools and alternative programs to promote equitable and effective staffing of social-emotional well-being and mental health programming and services.

2. The superintendent of schools shall recommend to the Board through the budget process funding to implement
the goals of this policy and strategically deploy such professionals in an effective and equitable manner.

3. This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Board of Education’s review process.

Related Sources: MD Educ Code § 7-1501 (2018); Code of Maryland Regulations, sections 13a.07.11.03; 13a.05.05.02; 13a.12.03.02; 13a.12.03.07; 13a.12.03.11; 13a.12.03.08.08; 13a.12.04.08.08

Policy history: Formerly Policy IJA, School Counseling (2004); amended by Resolution No.         , adopted          .

A. PURPOSE

The Board of Education is committed to ensuring high quality school counseling programs that are comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, foster academic achievement and personal growth, and are provided to all Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) students in an equitable manner.

B. ISSUE

Comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, school counseling programs and services provided by credentialed school counselors are essential to achieving the MCPS mission of academic excellence and success for all students. School counselors are critical partners in the delivery of a high-quality education and contribute significantly to the removal of barriers to learning. In partnership with school staff, school counselors teach the knowledge and skills necessary for success in a rigorous instructional program and promote healthy social and emotional development as it pertains to academic achievement. Counselors collaborate with staff, parents, and community members to mobilize resources needed to support student success. Counselors support students in attaining their full potential and achieving their academic and personal aspirations.
C. POSITION

1. In all schools:

   a) Counselors provide a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate school counseling program to all students

   b) The school counseling program aligns with the MCPS educational mission

   c) Counselors provide information and support to students and families about academic programming, community supports, and other relevant information

   d) School counselors are essential to the articulation process and communicate information needed to ensure a student’s continued success

   e) The school counseling program is based on national standards and includes prevention, intervention, and crisis response services

   f) School counselors promote personal, interpersonal, health, academic, and career development for all students through proactive classroom programs and other services

   g) School counselors address the unique needs of individual students through interventions which are culturally appropriate

   h) School counselors communicate the role and goals of the school counseling program with all stakeholders including students, parents, staff, administrators, and community

   i) The school counseling program and school counselors address equitably the needs of the diverse school population and advocate for educational excellence for all students

   j) School counselors collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data to identify and address student needs and to develop, implement, evaluate, and continuously improve the counseling program

2. The school counseling program is implemented in grades preK-12. Because the academic and developmental needs of students change as they mature, the counseling program addresses the unique academic and developmental needs of students at each school level in collaboration with staff, parents, and community.

   a. At the elementary level:

      (1) The school counseling program promotes school success by assisting students in acquiring the skills and attitudes necessary for academic achievement

      (2) The school counseling program teaches decision making, problem solving, and resiliency skills

      (3) School counselors foster the development of positive self-concept and interpersonal skills
b. At the middle school level:

(1) The school counseling program focuses on building academic and social competence and career awareness.

(2) School counselors coordinate, monitor, and manage the process by which students develop a rigorous, appropriate comprehensive plan that meets high school graduation requirements and reflects post-secondary goal setting.

c. At the high school level:

(1) School counselors meet with students regularly to review, guide, and support them through the academic and career planning process. School counselors plan and manage the process for students reviewing and updating rigorous comprehensive plans to support students’ post-secondary educational and career goals.

(2) The school counseling program equips students to develop competence in decision making, career planning, interpersonal relationships, personal responsibility, and other skills essential to being a productive citizen.

D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

Throughout MCPS, all students will have access to comprehensive, developmentally appropriate school counseling programs and services which support academic achievement and personal growth. At all school levels, school counselors collaborate with parents, students, staff, and community to remove barriers to learning and provide opportunities and supports to empower students to embrace their full potential and achieve their academic and personal aspirations.