

Article 15: Professional Development

A. Developing and Retaining Highly Qualified Educators~~Teachers~~:

MCEA and MCPS agree that quality teaching is a complex job that requires knowledge, skill, preparation, and commitment. To be effective with diverse students, educators need to be culturally proficient and have a significant repertoire of skills, strategies, and practices derived from research about teaching and student learning and the knowledge to match these skills to student instructional needs.

We acknowledge that incentives may be needed to encourage highly qualified educators to join or remain in the workforce at our highly impacted schools. One of the best incentives for educators is to understand that they will be joining a professional learning community, working with colleagues who are willing and able to collaborate with them and support their growth. MCEA and MCPS recognize the significant leadership that educators provide in the improvement of instructional practice and school quality. Educators work collaboratively with colleagues and administrators to design job-embedded professional development that is focused on student achievement, their own professional growth, and the advancement of their profession. We will develop and encourage innovations in professional development and teacher leadership that allow our best educators to lead and coach colleagues for educational improvement.

Lastly, we acknowledge the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification—the teaching profession’s highest distinction—is one of the ways that educators can demonstrate accomplished teaching. We commit to developing a support system that will encourage and sustain applicants and reward recipients of National Board Certification.

Improving student learning and achievement is the goal for all educators as teachers, principals, and other administrators collaboratively plan professional development. All training and development activities are directly aligned to support student outcomes and system goals. The best strategy for improving teaching and learning is building the capacity of a school to function as a learning community in which professional development is job-embedded and is supported with sufficient time and resources. This comprehensive professional program, collaboratively designed, implemented, and assessed, becomes the cornerstone of all district operations.

B. Professional Development Collaboration

1. The Professional Growth System—The parties commit to maintaining the comprehensive professional growth system that has been jointly designed and implemented.

Through the Professional Growth System (PGS), MCPS and MCEA aspire to achieve the highest performance possible of every student and educator by raising the quality of instruction in the schools. The Professional Growth System acknowledges that peers provide valuable support in establishing and expanding good teaching practices.

a) Elements of PGS

The Professional Growth System is a multidimensional approach to supporting and improving the quality of teaching in MCPS. The essential elements of the system are as follows:

- 1) Standards for performance.
- 2) Training for evaluators and unit members.
- 3) A professional growth cycle that integrates the formal evaluation year into a multiyear process of professional growth.
- 4) A job-embedded professional development program utilizing best practices of professional growth, such as school-based staff development teachers.
- 5) Time to allow teachers to participate in professional development activities during their workday.

b) Governance of PGS Implementation

The Professional Growth System is governed by the collaborative PGS Implementation Team that includes representatives of MCEA, the MCPS Office of Human Resources and Development, and the MCPS Department of Professional Growth Systems. Ongoing program evaluation of this complex initiative will continue through the PGS Implementation Team, a multi-stakeholder team that designs and oversees the collaborative program evaluation of the PGS and makes recommendations for improvements in the system.

The role of the PGS Implementation Team is to problem solve around issues related to the entire professional growth system. If changes need to be made to the evaluation component, including the instrument and processes, changes shall not be made without following the procedures set out in Article 16.

c) PGS Handbook

The Professional Growth System is described in detail in an official handbook that is written by the PGS Implementation Team and reviewed and revised by the Implementation Team annually.

d) Reflection on Teaching and Learning in a Professional Learning Community

Intrinsic to the concept of continuous improvement is self-reflection on knowledge, skills, strategies, and practices. Observations by others are supportive of this reflection. All teachers may be observed ~~formally and/or~~ formally and/or informally at any time. ~~All teachers may be observed formally when deemed necessary; teachers will be given at least 30 duty days between formal observations to implement recommendations from the initial observation~~ The teacher and the administrator performing the observation will agree upon a reasonable timeframe to implement any recommendations from the initial observation before the next formal observation. During professional development years, formal observations are not required. However, administrators, resource teachers (RTs), middle school content specialists, or interdisciplinary resource teachers (IRTs) are expected to do a minimum of two (2) informal observations each professional development year in order to be familiar with teachers' classroom practices.

Recognizing that each professional staff member must constantly seek ways to improve their effectiveness, a program of 360-degree feedback will be implemented for all unit members. This practice of 360-degree feedback will include classroom teachers, counselors, media specialists, pupil personnel workers, and other unit members working with students by students, and assistant principals and principals by teachers. All feedback will be confidential and for the sole use of the unit member seeking the feedback. Unit members are encouraged to share the results of the data and their plans for improvement with those individuals who have participated with them in the feedback process.

2. Peer Assistance and Review Program

- a) MCEA and MCPS agree to jointly operate a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program. The PAR Program is a mechanism for maintaining systemwide excellence and ensuring that all unit members are functioning at or above the high MCPS standards of performance. It provides intensive assistance for any teacher who has not yet achieved that standard or who falls below acceptable standards. Assistance and review are provided to both experienced MCPS teachers in need of significant improvement and teachers in their first year of teaching.
- b) The PAR Program shall operate in accord with the procedures enumerated in the Teacher-Level Professional Growth System handbook. PAR operational guidelines will be established by the Panel, in accord with the Handbook.
- c) The PAR Program shall be run by a PAR panel. The panel shall consist of at least twelve (12) members appointed by the superintendent, an equal number being

teachers recommended by MCEA, and school-based administrators recommended by MCAAP.

d) The PAR Program has consulting teachers who provide instructional support to novice teachers (teachers new to the profession) and those not performing to standard.

~~e) The ratio of clients to consulting teachers shall not exceed 16:1.~~

~~f)e)~~ The parties agree to design and oversee jointly evaluation of the PAR Program.

~~g)f)~~ PAR is, by definition and design, a collaborative effort between MCEA and MCPS. In the event that one of the parties determines that the PAR Program fails to live up to the purposes and collaborative principles for which it was established, the PGS Implementation Team will meet with the superintendent and the president of MCEA to review options and attempt to address concerns. If consensus cannot be reached, MCEA can discontinue its involvement in the program with ninety (90) days' notice. MCPS may continue to fund positions in the budget associated with the evaluation system, but it may not refer to the program as PAR.

~~h)g)~~ g) PAR Panel Recommendations

1) Probationary Teacher

If the PAR panel recommends contract nonrenewal for a probationary teacher, the teacher will be given the opportunity to appear before the PAR panel. If the teacher chooses to appear before the PAR panel, the principal also will be given the opportunity to present information to the PAR panel. If the PAR panel affirms its original recommendation for nonrenewal, that recommendation is forwarded to the superintendent. A majority vote of the PAR panel shall be required to overturn its preliminary recommendation and uphold the teacher who has submitted the information.

2) Tenured Teacher

If the PAR panel recommends contract termination for a tenured teacher, the teacher will be given the opportunity to appear before the PAR panel. If the teacher chooses to appear, the principal also will have the opportunity to present information. A majority vote of the PAR panel shall be required to overturn its preliminary recommendation and uphold the teacher. If the PAR panel affirms its original recommendation for dismissal, that recommendation will be forwarded to the superintendent. Tenured teachers retain due process rights afforded them by the MCEA collective bargaining agreement and/or state law; **MCPS will ensure that the teachers whose dismissal is recommended to the superintendent are informed in writing of their date of separation and appeal rights.**

h) Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers in the PAR Program

- 1) Nothing in this Article or the PAR Program shall diminish the rights granted to teachers under Section 6-202 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, relative to suspension and dismissal, and the right to appeal such personnel actions.
- 2) MCEA unit members participating in the PAR Program, as consulting teachers or as members of the PAR panel, shall be indemnified and held harmless by the Board against any and all claims arising as a result of their actions within the scope of their duties.

C. Professional Development

1. **Principles**—Professional development is the process by which educators individually and jointly enhance and update their knowledge of curriculum, content, and process and improve their instructional skills and strategies. Enhanced professional development increases effectiveness; builds confidence, morale, and commitment; and subsequently, the ability to improve the quality of education of all students in MCPS.

The parties agree on the following assumptions about professional development:

- a) Successful professional development programs, activities, and plans must be focused on student learning and achievement.
 - b) Professional development should be continuous, focus on research-based best practices, and include job-embedded opportunities.
 - c) School climates that promote professional learning and growth provide opportunities for collaboration and dialogue around student and teacher work for the purpose of improving student achievement.
 - d) The professional learning community is responsible for collegial growth and support.
2. **Professional Development Program Tiers**
 - a) Professional development programs offered by MCPS shall be categorized into four “tiers”:

Tier One—Any training that MCPS requires a unit member to attend.

Tier Two—Training programs that provide important content or skill enhancement for unit members.

Tier Three—Other courses that are offered, which enable members to meet state or local certification mandates.

Tier Four—Other courses made available by MCPS, which unit members may self-select but do not meet the criteria for a higher tier.

- b) The identification of tier level for MCPS course offerings will be a collaborative effort between MCPS and MCEA.
- c) Unit members will be notified of any Tier One summer training no later than March 1, if it is to be required. Unit members will be provided with options to take such training at alternative times. This may include during or after normal school hours or on days not otherwise scheduled as duty days for 10-month teachers.

3. Choice of Professional Development Activities

Professional development can take many forms. Examples of professional development options are provided in the PGS Handbook. MCEA unit members, **including staff development teachers, will work** in collaboration with their administrators and their staff development teacher, content specialist, resource teacher, or team leader (as appropriate) ~~to~~ and staff development teacher, will ~~to~~ determine the appropriate forms of professional growth and development.

4. Graduate Coursework for Professional Development Tuition Reimbursement Program

The Board agrees to provide tuition reimbursement for full-time and part-time unit members who complete ~~graduate~~ courses that enable them to continue their professional development and to maintain or increase their skills as education professionals ~~in their employment~~ with MCPS.

Unit members may request tuition reimbursement for graduate university and college courses, CPD and CEU coursework, and general professional development coursework not offered by the in-service program. All courses must directly relate to K-12 instruction of K-12 leadership training, meet the criteria specified below, and be approved by MCPS. ~~Courses must meet the criteria specified above be approved by MCPS. MCPS shall create an optional, timely, binding pre-approval process by June 30, 2024, for unit members to use to streamline the process and avoid miscommunication between MCPS and unit members regarding reimbursement approvals. MCPS shall update at the beginning of each fiscal year, a list of approved institutions and approved~~

coursework options on the tuition reimbursement website for unit members to consider prior to enrolling in any coursework. All documentation must be submitted (PDO application, proof of grade, proof of tuition, and proof of payment) within 60 calendar days of the course end date.

a) The criteria for receiving tuition reimbursement is as follows:

- 1) CEUs or CPDs must be approved and earned through a state-accepted accrediting agency.
- 2) Certificate of completion including total participation hours must be provided for general professional development courses. General professional development courses will be reimbursed at 1 credit per fifteen hours of professional development.
- 3) MCPS may reimburse undergraduate coursework – at the undergraduate tuition reimbursement rate – for new, conditionally certified unit members, and unit members actively and continuously participating in an MCPS partnership program. Reimbursement for undergraduate coursework is limited to coursework required to complete initial certification. Evidence of there being a pathway to initial certification is required.

a)b) The unit member must achieve a grade of “B” or better. Documentation must be submitted (report card and proof of payment) within sixty (60) days of the end of the course.

b)c) Reimbursement shall cover actual tuition only and not the cost of books, fees, or other materials.

e)d) Except as otherwise indicated, Reimbursement shall be for 50 percent of the current cost of in-state graduate tuition at the University of Maryland, College Park, up to a maximum of nine (9) hours-credit hours per fiscal year for graduate courses not currently offered by the in-service program.

d)e) MCPS may waive the 9-credit-hour limit. The nine (9) credit hour limitation may be waived for a specific year (or years) under the following conditions:

- 1) Completion of the requirements of ~~the~~ an approved program requires enrollment in more than nine (9) credits during one (1) or more years of the program, or MCPS approves enrollment in more than nine (9) credits in order to meet a specific school system need. MCPS determines that the requirements to complete a specific program would require a unit member to enroll in more than 9 credits per year.

- 2) No reimbursement for additional credits outside the approved program will be approved until the total reimbursement from the first year of excess credits is less than an average of 9 credits per year.
- 3) If the employee retires or resigns prior to the time the average reduces to nine (9) credits per year, the employee will be required to repay MCPS for any excess reimbursement beyond the average of nine (9) credits per year from the first year of excess reimbursement.
- 4) In no event may the employee be reimbursed for more than forty-five (45) credits in the five (5) year period, beginning with the first year of excess reimbursement.
- ~~5) The Board will reimburse fifty percent (50%) of the cost of tuition for the equivalent of one (1) credit hour, up to the maximum of nine (9) credit hours per year, for completion of Continuing Education Unit (CEU) or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses not offered by the in-service program (see below). Reimbursement requests must be submitted with proper documentation verifying completion of CEUs or CPDs that have been approved through a state-accepted accrediting agency.~~

5. MCPS/MCEA CPD Course Partnership

- a) Unit members have an interest in expanding the availability of courses that will enhance their professional development and potentially lead to salary and career advancement. MCPS has an interest in offering professional development opportunities designed to achieve system goals and priorities. In this collaborative spirit, MCPS and MCEA will jointly plan, design, implement, and assess courses carrying CPD credit. MCPS and MCEA will design and implement courses that address system and unit-member needs. The intention of this plan is to widen the variety of courses available to teachers and to facilitate training on MCPS priorities. This joint enterprise will be self-supporting; tuition will cover fees, salaries, and overhead.
- b) Instructors for CPD courses will be paid a stipend of \$750.00 per credit hour regardless of when they are offered.
- c) Instructors for non-CPD courses, who do not provide professional development as part of their essential functions in their job description, will be paid their hourly rate per clock hour regardless of when they are offered.

6. Joint Professional Learning Committee (JPLC)—A joint committee that provides for regular, ongoing discussions and monitoring of adult learning in MCPS, resulting in

recommendations to the superintendent. The committee will [advise and provide feedback to the Office of Strategic Initiatives Department of Districtwide Professional Development \(OSI\) as they work to](#) create a systemwide vision for ongoing and future professional learning that maximizes staff's talents; proactively meets current and future workforce needs; addresses race, class, and implicit bias; and guarantees a high-quality educational experience for ~~ALL~~[all](#) students. The vision will articulate a focus on how professional learning enhances instruction and professional growth and improves the work lives and careers of all staff, while enhancing MCPS's ability to attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce.

- a) The membership of the JPLC will include the presidents (or designees) plus two (2) members from each employee organization and at least three (3) key MCPS staff members, who are charged with the development and implementation of adult professional learning. Guests may be invited by the JPLC, as needed, without having to alter the composition of the committee. The composition of the group may be expanded by mutual agreement of the parties. Members of this committee will have appropriate decision-making authority.
- b) The ~~charge of the~~[subjects that OSI may bring to](#) JPLC ~~shall~~[may](#) include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - 1) **Shape MCPS Professional Learning Program:** Through the review of research, consultation with experts, benchmarking with other districts, and internal best practices, the committee will make innovative recommendations for the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of ongoing, high-quality professional learning for all staff, based on student needs and system priorities.
 - 2) **Track Education Workforce Research and Trends:** Identify innovative professional learning models, based on current and future education workforce research and trends, while addressing the needs of ~~ALL~~[all](#) types of employees in the system.
 - 3) **Strengthen Stakeholder Partnership:** Gather input and feedback from stakeholders in the development of a high-quality professional learning cycle and program offerings for all staff.
 - 4) **Provide Value for All Staff:** Make recommendations for the implementation of innovative and relevant professional learning opportunities to address the needs of staff, including an increased emphasis on entry-level workers, employees in transition, and early careers, through proactive job training and career support.
 - 5) **Develop Communication Plans:** Develop clear and comprehensive communication plans for all staff to understand the purpose, goals, and outcomes

of professional learning and its value in a self-renewing and continuously improving organization.

- 6) **Assess Processes and Programs:** Assess the effectiveness of the adult learning initiatives, the use of technology, and the variety of programs offered, and make recommendations for revisions as necessary. The intent is to incorporate methods to evaluate and continuously improve professional learning in MCPS.
- 7) **Address Technology:** Identify the different types of technology available to facilitate the charges above and ensure employees are trained to use them.

D. Time and Resources for Professional Development

1. Recognizing the need for maximizing available instructional time for students, time for professional development is provided using a variety of options, either within the work day or beyond the work day, as determined collaboratively by ILT.
2. When professional development activities take place during the workday, time may be provided by—
 - a) flexible grouping and scheduling,
 - b) use of technology,
 - c) use of substitutes,
 - d) team or department meeting times,
 - e) asynchronous
 - f) staff meeting times, or
 - g) other options as determined by the ILT.
3. When professional development activities take place outside the workday, compensation can be provided in the form of—
 - a) university credit,
 - b) stipends,
 - c) CPD (in-service), or

- d) other options as determined by the local ILT.
- 4. Funds available for local school professional development will be allocated to the local school with no less than a two thousand dollars (\$2000) base and one half (.5) of the substitute cost for each member of the school's professional staff to come from allocated funds. The allocation of these funds will be reported to ILT.
- 5. For the term of this Agreement, the Board agrees to budget funds for the purchase of books, equipment, and other educational resource materials it determines to be necessary for use by the professional staff.
- 6. The Board is committed to continuous improvement through job-embedded professional development and agrees to fund support for activities that may include the following:
 - a) School-based staff development teachers.
 - b) Necessary resources, materials, and equipment to be used specifically to support local school, field office, and districtwide staff-development activities and programs, including the training of staff development leadership.
 - c) Ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the Professional Growth System and programs offered by the OHRD.

~~7. The Board agrees to budget \$750,000 per year for unit members to attend or make presentations to conferences and/or programs. No more than 20 percent of these funds may be used for MCPS-related conferences/programs. The Association shall determine the unit members eligible for such assistance and the amount each member receives.~~

~~8. Leave to attend professional meetings: Upon written application in advance and with the recommendation of the appropriate supervisor, the superintendent or designee may grant a unit member leave to attend professional meetings (e.g., conventions, conferences, or committees) as participant or observer without loss of salary or, pursuant to the same request and approval process, the superintendent or designee may grant a unit member leave, without loss of salary, for short-term study of no more than twenty (20) working days. "Study" is meant to include academic or nonacademic coursework, seminars, or other activities for professional improvement, but does not include activities for the purpose of generating additional income. Leave for short-term study may be approved and used in blocks of less than a full day.~~

E. Teacher Leadership

1. The parties agree on the following assumptions about teacher leadership:
 - a) We face a pressing challenge to increase the number of experienced, highly skilled teachers teaching in our most highly impacted schools.
 - b) Skillful teachers have a profound and positive impact on improving the practice of peers.
 - c) Many of our most skilled and experienced teachers desire to provide leadership in their schools without leaving classroom teaching.
2. Given those assumptions, while simultaneously acknowledging that the Blueprint for Maryland's Future establishes teacher leadership levels, MCEA and MCPS are committed to creating a variety of opportunities to recognize, reward, and encourage mastery and leadership in teaching and to encourage our master teachers and teacher leaders to contribute to the improvement of our schools, especially our mostly highly impacted schools.

3. Support for National Board Certification

Certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is recognition of high levels of knowledge and skills, the ability for self-reflection and continuous improvement, and the ability to use a variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of a diverse student population. It is in the interest of MCPS and MCEA to support unit members in the certification process. To that end, the Board agrees to the following:

- a) Provide for communication to administrators, parents, content teacher specialists, and teachers about the process and what it means.
- b) Allow for local school material resources (video cameras, microphones, etc.) to be used by candidates in the process.
- c) Allow for process-related tasks to be done within the context of professional development.
- d) Provide support from the Office of Human Resources and Development.
- e) Permit use of tuition reimbursement funds to pay the cost of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards components, renewal fees, and successful retakes of National Board unit exams, provided the total cost for this and credit reimbursements does not exceed the maximum available per individual.

4. Supervising Student Teachers

Participation by supervising unit members in the training of student teachers or graduate interns in an education program shall be voluntary and shall be based on criteria established by the OHRD. The teacher and principal will receive a copy of the assignment, programs, and work schedules for approval. The Board shall support a systematic program of training for those unit members who wish to train personnel from approved teacher training programs in accredited institutions.

F. National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) Support

1. A National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) who facilitates a component-specific course, including renewals, in the NBCT Candidate Support Program as a NBCT Facilitator, shall receive ~~at the~~ stipend **amount listed in Article 22.B.8** ~~of \$1,500~~ for each course facilitated. Course facilitation will include a minimum of 30 hours of organized group based on specific training plans developed through NBPTS, as well as informal consultations and support for program participants as needed. These hours shall be logged and submitted to the Director of Professional Growth Systems by the second week in April.
2. There will be no limit on the number of NBCT Candidate Support sections MCPS may offer for potential candidates interested in pursuing National Board certification.
3. Participants will be charged the CPD fee, commensurate with the cost of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course, for participating in the NBCT Candidate Support Program.
4. Two **(2)** unit members will be designated as NBCT Lead Teacher Organizers for the NBCT Candidate Support Program. Their duties will include addressing candidate and facilitator questions, serving as a guest presenter or possible substitute, liaising with the state, communicating with the MCPS state liaison, and maintaining an informational webpage to support the program. Two **(2)** unit members will be designated as NBCT Lead Teacher Organizer Assistants to provide support to the Lead Teacher Organizer. Their duties will include addressing candidate and facilitator questions and serving as a guest presenter or possible substitute.
5. The NBCT Lead Teacher Organizers and the NBCT Lead Teacher Organizer Assistants will report to the Director of Professional Growth Systems. NBCT teachers will facilitate no more than one section of NBCT Candidate Support Program participation for any given fiscal year. These courses will be capped at no more than 25 participants per section and will have no fewer than 15 participants.

G. New Educator Support

1. Contingent upon the availability of funds allocated for this purpose in the budget, MCPS shall offer New Teacher Training (NTT) 1, 2, and 3 courses, in addition to other courses designed to support early career and new-to-the-district educators. NTT 1 and 2 shall be made available each semester. ~~MCEA will develop and provide a component for NTT 1 explaining the importance of the union in building a strong public education system.~~
- ~~2. MCPS shall contribute at least \$200,000 annually to grow and maintain a professional development program in support of provisionally certificated unit members. The program will be designed and oversight will be provided by the Joint Professional Learning Committee.~~
- ~~3.2. Every ILT will develop an induction program to their schools for new MCEA unit members.~~

H. Studying Skillful Teaching (SST)

Contingent upon the availability of funds allocated for this purpose in the budget, MCPS shall offer Studying Skillful Teaching (SST) 1 and 2 courses to educators and make them available each semester. Additional sections of each course shall be added when the waitlist reaches 20 people.