

May 19, 2010

Dear Councilmember,

While discussing whether or not MCPS should face additional cuts to its budget this Spring, Council Member Trachtenberg made the following statement as quoted in the May 5, 2010 issue of *The Gazette*: "The school system could furlough its central office employees and librarians, because they 'aren't doing something that's specific to classroom instruction.'" This comment singles out one specific MCEA instructional position and shows a lack of understanding of the Media Specialist's role within the MCPS instructional program. Not only do Media Specialists provide direct instruction to MCPS students at all levels, but Media Specialists provide critical support for classroom teachers to insure successful delivery of their direct classroom instruction.

MCPS Media Specialists teach information literacy skills in collaboration with classroom teachers every day. It is the MCPS Media Specialist whose teaching takes the form of both large group and one-on-one instruction for students practicing information literacy skills so that by the time they leave MCPS for college or careers, they are able to perform them independently. MCPS Media Specialists instruct all of the students in a school, often providing students with special needs access to information through assistive technology. Starting at the lowest grade level, students are taught the basics of using resources to answer questions. Through regular instruction, students learn to access increasingly more difficult resources, evaluate the credibility and purpose of the information, and give proper credit for using the work of others in all formats -- from print to electronic.

When integrated with each curricular area, from the humanities to the arts, the information literacy skills taught by MCPS Media Specialists are essential critical thinking and life skills. There is no other curriculum more essential for students to master in the technologically complex and information-rich culture in which we now live than information literacy. In addition, the skills Media Specialists teach support the Seven Keys to College Readiness; satisfy the Maryland State Technology standards; and appear on the MSAs and HSAs.

It is the MCPS Media Specialist who also provides direct instruction to encourage free choice reading to support a school's literacy objectives through thoughtful collection development, book talks, and reading promotion programs.

It is the MCPS Media Specialist who provides indispensable support to classroom instruction as well. Furloughed Media Specialists will not be able to trouble-shoot broken audiovisual/technology equipment needed to present a lesson in a classroom; show a teacher how to use new software or technology that supports classroom instruction; create a pathfinder for student research; or select a classroom set of books to support the teacher's classroom objectives.

It is imperative that decision-makers be fully informed and have accurate information before making decisions regarding proposed reductions. MCPS Media Specialists head Media Programs that are an integral part of each Montgomery County Public School's instructional

program because they directly teach students information literacy skills and provide critical support for classroom instruction.

Respectfully,

Daria Taylor, President
Montgomery County Educational Media Specialist Association