

*Melissa McDonald, MCEMSA President*  
*Letter to the Board of Education January 2016*

My name is Melissa McDonald, and I am the president of the Montgomery County Educational Media Specialists Association, better known as MCEMSA. I am the media specialist at Flower Hill Elementary School, and a strong advocate for the school library media programs in MCPS. I have four children that have graduated from, or are currently attending, MCPS schools, and have benefitted from access to the books and services that the media center provides its students.

Through MCPS School Library Media Program (SLMP) we provide the key piece that supports student's intrinsic motivation to read. We complement the work that is done in the classroom that helps guide the mechanics of reading by providing interesting materials that students will want to read.

As a full library experience for students, we guide them through the skills needed to be independent library users, which will help them in school and in life. County-wide 34.8% of our students receive financial assistance and qualify for FARMS this year, and 43.3% students have ever received FARMS. Our student body represents 157 countries and 138 languages. Our English as a Second Language students reflect 14.2% and Special Education students reflect 11.7% of our 156,447 students. These same students often do not have access to books and online resources outside of those that their school provides them, yet are the ones who need the services the most. In addition to reduced class sizes, we stand with MCEA and ask for both reduced class sizes and improved services for our students. The school library media program is one of the most important services that a school can provide its students. Please increase the funding above the floor of the superintendent's budget to provide for both reduced class size and a fully funded media program in all 202 MCPS schools.

Libraries are a cornerstone of our democracy. The school library provides the place and the opportunity for students to engage in print and digital tools, with the guidance of the school librarian, to determine if materials are relevant, authoritative, and free from bias. These are skills students need as future voting citizens: is it helpful, is it real, how will I know, and if not, where do I go to find materials that are? The media assistant is another vital staff member for the school library who helps maintain the digital and print collections, and make resources available for staff and students.

With the advent of increased digital learning, now more than ever, we need the skills of a school librarian, also known as a certified school library media specialist, to help students and staff sift

through the increasing complexity, and develop skill sets that will enable them to continue to be flexible thinkers, learners, readers and creators, into this new 21st century learning.

The vision of MCPS is, ***“We inspire learning by providing the greatest public education to each and every student.”*** Our students need full access to the media center and its resources more than ever, and fully staffing our media centers allows us to provide the greatest service to our 156,447 students. Former First Lady (and librarian) Laura Bush once said, “Libraries allow children to ask questions about the world and find the answers. And the wonderful thing is that once a child learns to use a library, the doors to learning are always open.” Help us to keep the learning doors wide open for all of our 156,447 MCPS students.

Source of statistics:

[http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/about/Refresh\\_2011\\_Content\\_Pieces/At%20a%20Glance%20%2001.14.16.pdf](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/about/Refresh_2011_Content_Pieces/At%20a%20Glance%20%2001.14.16.pdf)