

Federal Stimulus Funds To Improve Services for Students, Title I Schools

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Board of Education Unanimously Approves New Spending Plan for \$21.4 Million Federal Investment in Next Year's Budget

Congressional and Council Leaders Praise Plan to Expand Full-day Head Start, Improve Special Education Programs

ROCKVILLE, MD—Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) will receive \$21.4 million in new federal stimulus dollars to expand services for students with special needs and to provide more support for elementary schools most severely impacted by poverty. The new investment enables the significant expansion of full-day Head Start in these schools and will restore teacher positions to reduce class size, support reading and math interventions, and support students for whom English is not their first language.

Montgomery County Board of Education President Shirley Brandman and MCPS Superintendent Jerry D. Weast were joined today by U.S. Representatives Chris Van Hollen and Donna Edwards, and Montgomery County Councilmember Valerie Ervin, to highlight the school system's plans for the use of the federal funds, which were unanimously approved by the Board on Monday night. Of the \$21.4 million in federal grants slated to come to MCPS in each of the next two years from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, \$15.3 million will be targeted to special education and \$6.1 million will support elementary schools highly impacted by poverty, also known as Title I schools.

The Board of Education unanimously amended its adopted Fiscal Year 2010 Operating Budget to reflect the new spending in the plan being sent to County Executive Isiah Leggett and the Montgomery County Council next week.

Among the highlights of the items included in the Board's approved plan, with regard to Title I funding:

- Increase the number of Title I schools from 27 to 30. Rosemont, Brown Station and Watkins Mill elementary schools will have Title I status.
- Increase the number of full-day Head Start classes from 13 (in 10 schools) to 21 (in 18 schools). This addition comes in the wake of an MCPS research study that demonstrated significantly improved academic performance among students in the full-day programs.
- Maintain small class sizes.
- Increase reading and math support, with the restoration of teacher positions in these areas.
- Increase support for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programs.

Initiatives that will be funded with the additional \$15.3 million in special education funds for next year include:

- Add hours-based staffing to 15 more middle schools, for a total of 31 middle schools. Hours-based staffing is a more precise staffing model that better matches staffing to the

needs of students.

- Restore 20.5 elementary school special education teacher positions to better meet the needs of special education students.
- Strengthen professional development programs.
- Increase access to technology support for students at the secondary level. This will give special education students access to various modes of communication and support in the classroom.
- Expand Positive Behavioral Intervention Support to support schools implementing this successful behavior management program.
- Purchase assistive playground equipment for school locations that do not have appropriate equipment.
- Purchase additional equipment for deaf and hard of hearing students and students with visual impairments.
- Provide new greenhouses at Rock Terrace and Stephen Knolls schools.

The federal funding also will enable the Board to restore about \$2.1 million in funding that had to be cut previously in the budget. The Board voted to restore funding for the Middle School Magnet Consortium, staff development and reading specialists at 11 schools, academic intervention teachers and training for support staff.

“The addition of the federal stimulus funds offers an opportunity to restore a number of budget initiatives that will help to strengthen teaching and learning for some of our most vulnerable students and expand some very key investments that we know work for students,” said Brandman. “The budget process this year has been extraordinarily difficult, so it is helpful that we will be able to provide additional support in the classroom to meet the needs of our students.”

“This entire federal stimulus package has been about sparking economic recovery, in both the short term and the long run, and certainly one of the best ways to achieve both of these objectives is to make sound investments in our schools,” said Weast. “This funding comes at a critical time for us, as we are serving more students who are living in poverty and with special needs. We will put every dollar to work on their behalf. We are extremely grateful to the President and Congress for providing this critical support.”

“The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will bring \$3.8 billion into Maryland, including vital funding for education programs,” said Congressman Van Hollen. “Montgomery County Public Schools will see an increase of over \$50 million in funding over two years. These funds will help keep us from taking a step backwards in our educational achievements, and I applaud Superintendent Weast and the Montgomery County School Board on their decisive implementation of this critical funding. Montgomery County and the State of Maryland are national leaders in the effort to raise the bar on educational performance and close the achievement gap. We face difficult economic times, and the American people deserve leaders who will forge a path to long-term fiscal sustainability and success. The investments we make today in education will undoubtedly help our children to succeed in the future.”

“I am pleased that stimulus funds will be used to invest in our greatest resource—our children’s education,” said Congresswoman Edwards. “This funding will allow Montgomery County Public Schools to expand early childhood education by adding eight new full-day

Head Start programs so that there are now 21 such classes in 18 Title I low-income schools. We will also help create jobs by restoring teacher positions to reduce class sizes. With the \$2 billion budget shortfall facing Maryland, I look forward to working with my Congressional colleagues to ensure that we continue to make our children's education a number one priority."

"The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will allow Montgomery County Public Schools to preserve \$21.4 million of teaching and support services for Montgomery County's most vulnerable children," said County Councilmember Valerie Ervin, chair of the Council's Education Committee. "The expansion of full-day Head Start to all Title I schools that have a Head Start program will help close the achievement gap and provide comprehensive preschool services, especially for those from low-income communities. I want to thank our local members of Congress, Donna Edwards and Chris Van Hollen, for making the investment in Maryland and Montgomery County's children a top priority."

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[**Study on the impact of full-day prekindergarten programs on student academic performance FY 2010 Operating Budget Amendments**](#)