



# STEDWICK ELEMENTARY

A Strong  
Community in  
Need of Excel  
Beyond the Bell  
Elementary (EBBE)



*“Funding EBBE at Stedwick would not just extend the school day it would strengthen families. It would allow parents to work full shifts without fear of job instability,...give students access to enrichment that supports academic success, [and]...help close opportunity gaps in a community that is already working hard to thrive. This is not about convenience. It is about equity, opportunity, and long-term outcomes for children in our neighborhood.”*  
- Parent of Multiple Students at Stedwick ES and Montgomery Village MS

## WHY EBBE MATTERS

- Despite similar demographics and needs, **Stedwick ES is the only elementary school in our Watkins Mill HS cluster without EBBE.**
- Stedwick’s Title I and Community School status demonstrate **high need.**
- EBBE funding would **ensure equitable resources** comparable to similar schools.
- Without EBBE, Stedwick risks widening achievement gaps.
- The Stedwick **school improvement plan** prioritizes the need for **academic growth.**
- There is **limited availability of alternative after school opportunities that are affordable** at our school. The only other after school program offered at Stedwick costs \$700+ per month per child, posing a burden on our community of majority low-income families.

## SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

- **Location:** Montgomery Village, MD (District 7)
- **Grades:** Pre-K through 5
- **Enrollment:** 492 students
- **Title I School:** Yes – serving majority low-income families
- **Community School:** Providing wraparound services to meet academic and social needs
- **Student Demographics** (MCPS School Profiles Dashboard):
  - FARMS: 79.7%
  - EML: 33.4%
  - Special Ed: 19.2%
  - African American: 31.1%
  - Hispanic: 51.8%
  - Asian: 6.5%
  - White: 6.1%
  - 2 or More Races: 4%
- **2025 Academic Performance** (Maryland Report Card):
  - Math Proficiency: 21%
  - Reading Proficiency: 30%

## OUR ASKS OF COUNCILMEMBERS

- **Support EBBE funding, specifically at Stedwick Elementary.**
- **Include EBBE expansion to Stedwick ES in the FY27 budget.**

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

77

Stedwick families have shared their support via survey to bring EBBE to Stedwick (more every day!)

11

Written testimonials from Stedwick families about how EBBE will positively impact them and their children.



Montgomery County Council Public Hearing – FY27 Operating Budget  
April 8, 2026

The following pages include written testimonials and personal impact statements from parents and families of students at Stedwick Elementary School, all in support of bringing Excel Beyond the Bell to Stedwick Elementary School. These voices reflect the real and immediate need for equitable access to high-quality after-school programming in our community, and the meaningful impact such opportunities would have on our children, families, and the broader Montgomery Village community.

*Written Testimonials for Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary at Stedwick Elementary School*

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council,

I am writing as a parent of a student at Stedwick Elementary School to respectfully request that the County Council strongly consider implementing the Excel Beyond the Bell after-school program at our school.

My family, like many in our community, is a two-income household. While we are grateful to be employed, we do not qualify for financial assistance programs. Between the high cost of living in Montgomery County and the approximately \$800 per week we spend on daycare for our two younger children, we simply cannot afford additional after-school care for our daughter at Stedwick.

Although I am fortunate to work remotely from home, my workday extends into the afternoon hours when school dismisses. During that time, I am unable to provide my daughter with the focused attention, enrichment, and social engagement that she deserves. I know we are not alone in this challenge. Many families are stretched thin, balancing professional responsibilities while striving to give their children safe and meaningful after-school experiences.

The Excel Beyond the Bell program would provide a safe, structured, and enriching environment where students can thrive socially and academically beyond the school day. Programs like this not only support working families, but also strengthen school communities by creating additional opportunities for connection, engagement, and growth.

We have been incredibly grateful for the many resources and supports offered through Stedwick's community school model. Implementing Excel Beyond the Bell would further enhance that sense of community and ensure that more students have access to consistent, high-quality after-school programming regardless of their family's financial circumstances.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to support this effort in any way possible and to collaborate with other families who share this interest.

Sincerely,

Courtney Simon

Parent, Stedwick Elementary School

*Written Testimonials for Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary at Stedwick Elementary School*

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council,

I am writing to ask you — sincerely and urgently — to approve funding for an Excel Beyond the Bell (EBBE) program at Stedwick Elementary School.

Stedwick is a Title I school and a designated community support school. The needs of our families are not abstract statistics — they are lived realities. According to 2024 MSDE Office of Finance data, more than 70% of Stedwick students qualify for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARM). That number tells a powerful story. It tells us that the majority of our families are working hard, often multiple jobs, often hourly positions, doing everything they can to provide stability for their children.

Yet every afternoon at 3:45 p.m., many parents face an impossible choice.

Without EBBE, families must arrange immediate pickup. For some, that means cutting work hours short. For others, it means risking employment stability. Private after-school programs exist, but their costs are simply out of reach for many Stedwick families. When you are already stretching every dollar to cover rent, groceries, transportation, and healthcare, hundreds of dollars per month for childcare is not an option.

The impact extends beyond our elementary students. In the Watkins Mill cluster, nearly every other school already has access to EBBE — but Stedwick does not. As a result, Montgomery Village Middle School students who have younger siblings at Stedwick are unable to participate in EBBE at their own school. They must rush to Stedwick by 3:45 p.m. to provide care for their siblings. These middle schoolers lose out on academic enrichment, extracurricular activities, peer connection, and structured supervision — not because they lack interest, but because they are stepping into caregiving roles out of necessity.

If Stedwick had EBBE, it would be transformative.

Elementary students would have access to safe, structured, enriching after-school programming. Middle school students would regain the opportunity to participate in their own after-school activities. Parents would be able to work their full shifts with peace of mind, knowing their children are safe and supported. Family stability would improve. Student outcomes would improve. Opportunity gaps would narrow.

This is not about convenience — it is about equity.

When nearly every other school in the Watkins Mill cluster offers EBBE, but Stedwick — a school with over 70% FARM eligibility — does not, we must ask ourselves whether we are truly allocating resources where they are most needed.

Stedwick families are resilient. They are hardworking. They are committed to their children's education. What they need now is partnership.

Funding EBBE at Stedwick Elementary would send a clear message: that Montgomery County sees these families, values their children, and is committed to removing barriers that stand in the way of their success.

I respectfully urge the County Council to award EBBE funding to Stedwick Elementary School. This investment will pay dividends not just in supervision hours, but in stronger families, stronger students, and a stronger community.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to Montgomery County's children.

- Lauren Brown, parent of a 2nd grader at Stedwick Elementary

*Written Testimonials for Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary at Stedwick Elementary School*

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council,

My name is Matt Brown, and I am the parent of a child at Stedwick Elementary School. I am writing to ask you, sincerely and personally, to approve funding for EBBE at Stedwick.

Like many families at Stedwick, we have struggled to find safe, appropriate, and affordable after-school care. We tried the current after-school care offerings available at the school. Unfortunately, it was not a good fit for our child. There were many more students than we were comfortable with, and fewer trained staff supporting them. The environment felt chaotic, and our child struggled.

On top of that, the cost was incredibly expensive, approximately \$700/month for less than an hour of care in the morning and 1 hour of care in the afternoon. We were paying a significant amount of money for a program that did not meet our child's needs. Ultimately, we had to make the difficult decision to withdraw.

Since then, our family has made major sacrifices to ensure that one parent is home every day by 3:45 p.m. to pick up our child. That decision has shaped every aspect of our professional lives. It has meant not pursuing new employment opportunities. It has meant not being able to work a typical in-person 9–5 office job because the school doors don't open until 9:10am and dismissal is 3:45pm. It has meant being less competitive for promotions because we cannot stay late, travel, or fully commit to the expectations that many employers quietly assume.

In a time of increasing inflation, soaring health insurance costs, and widespread layoffs, this reality is incredibly stressful. Every family is trying to build stability and financial security. Yet we have been forced into a path that limits our earning potential — not because we lack ambition, but because we are doing what is best for our child.

If Stedwick had an EBBE program, it would change everything.

EBBE is run by MCPS educators — professionals with training, classroom management skills, and a deep understanding of student needs. That level of experience and consistency far surpasses what the average after-school care employee can reasonably be expected to provide. For children like mine, who thrive with structure, trained supervision, and predictable routines, EBBE would be a much better fit.

This is not just about convenience. It is about giving families like mine the ability to work, to grow professionally, and to remain economically stable — without compromising our children's well-being.

Stedwick is a Title I and community support school. More than 70% of students qualify for FARM. The need here is undeniable. Nearly every other school in the Watkins Mill cluster already has EBBE. Our children deserve the same opportunity.

Approving funding for EBBE at Stedwick would relieve immense stress for families, provide a safe and supportive environment for our children, and promote greater equity within our cluster.

Please invest in Stedwick. Please invest in our children. And please give families like mine the chance to breathe a little easier.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

- Matt Brown, parent

Dear Montgomery County Leadership,

I am writing to strongly support the expansion of the Excel Beyond the Bell program to Stedwick Elementary School in Montgomery County.

As a parent of a student at Stedwick, I have seen firsthand how critical extended academic programming is for working families. Programs like Excel Beyond the Bell provide structured academic support, enrichment opportunities, and a safe environment for children after the traditional school day ends. For many families—especially those of us working long shifts—this type of programming is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

As a healthcare provider who works 12-hour shifts, I deeply understand the challenge of balancing professional responsibilities with ensuring my child receives consistent academic reinforcement and supervision. Having access to extended-day programming at her own school would not only provide academic continuity, but also eliminate transportation barriers and reduce stress for working parents.

Beyond childcare support, Excel Beyond the Bell helps close learning gaps, reinforces classroom instruction, and promotes positive peer engagement in a familiar and supportive environment. Students benefit from additional tutoring, enrichment, and mentorship—all within the community they already know. This strengthens not only academic outcomes, but overall student confidence and well-being.

Stedwick Elementary serves a diverse community of families who would greatly benefit from equitable access to high-quality after-school academic programming. Expanding Excel Beyond the Bell to this school would be an investment in student achievement, family stability, and long-term community success.

I respectfully urge the county to consider allocating the necessary resources to make this program available at Stedwick Elementary. Our students and families would benefit tremendously from this support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Idman Guled, MSN, RN

PMHNP-BC | Nurse Practitioner

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council,

I am writing to ask you urgently and with sincerity on behalf of my community to approve funding for an Excel Beyond the Bell program at Stedwick Elementary School.

Stedwick is a Title I school and designated community support school for diverse families in need. Our area is one of the sanctuary cities to provide safety and support to our diverse communities. If a family is new to the area they know no one or know about the resources. The needs of our families are real not abstract. Basically during these economic times not all parents have the money to pay for before and after school care. They are barely making ends meet and under great pressure to meet the demands of their jobs and the needs of their children. It's a vicious cycle to try to get to work and the children to school on time. That is taking into consideration the child has two parents. Let's not forget about the single parents having to do it all by themselves. Some single parents may not have any support from their families or know their neighbors. Without Excel Beyond the Bell families are isolated and do not know where to get help.

With Excel Beyond the Bell the impact extends beyond our elementary school students. In the Watkins Mill cluster nearly every other school has the Excel Beyond the Bell program in place. The Watkins Mill cluster area is growing and in need of support and safety for our working parents. All the students in our community should have the opportunity of academic enrichment, experience extra curricular activities and connect with their peers in a safe and structured environment.

Respectfully,

Terry A. Reed - Grandparent

*Written Testimonials for Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary at Stedwick Elementary School*

Hello,

My name is Bhefta Furudu I have a daughter 4th grade at stedwick elementary school and I have special need son at Rosemont Elementary school next year his home school will be stedwick elementary school for kindergarten so because of my kids I couldn't work full time and per time so I really needed after school program thank you very much

Best

Bhefta Furudu

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Hello,

My name is Joyce Bonsu and I have 3 children at Stedwick Elementary School. As a working parent, the after-school program will be an absolute lifeline for my family. It will provide more than just a safe place for my children to stay until I finish work and it will give me a total peace of mind knowing that my children are in a familiar, nurturing environment where they can finish homework and stay active. This will allow me to focus on my professional responsibilities without worry. It will truly bridge the gap between the school day and home life, making our evenings much more relaxed and meaningful. I hope this after school program will be granted to the school, thank you for your kind consideration

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Dear Councilmembers,

As a parent of a current first grader at Stedwick Elementary, I strongly urge the council to fund the Excel Beyond the Bell (EBBE) program at our school. Currently, the only after-school option available to our families is Bar-T, which many families cannot access due to cost and limited availability. As a Title I school, many of our students would greatly benefit from a free, enriching after-school program that provides academic support, structured activities, and a safe place to learn and grow.

It is especially concerning that all of the surrounding elementary schools already have the EBBE program, while Stedwick students are left without the same opportunities. Our children deserve equitable access to the same resources and enrichment as their peers in neighboring schools.

Bringing EBBE to Stedwick would support working families, strengthen student achievement, and help ensure that every child has a safe, engaging place to go after the school day ends. I respectfully ask the council to fund the Excel Beyond the Bell program at Stedwick Elementary.

Sincerely,

Will Mills, parent of a 1st grader at Stedwick Elementary

**Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council,**

My name is Angela Williams, and I am a working mother in the Watkins Mill cluster. I am writing to respectfully and personally urge you to approve funding for an Excel Beyond the Bell (EBBE) program at Stedwick Elementary School.

For families like mine, this issue is not theoretical it affects our daily lives. I work full-time, and like many parents in our community, my job requires long and sometimes unpredictable hours. As a working mother, I am constantly balancing providing financially for my family while also ensuring my son is safe, supervised, and engaged after school. Without an after-school program at Stedwick, the school day ending at 3:45 p.m. creates immediate stress and difficult choices.

Cutting my work hours is not a sustainable option. Leaving my son without structured supervision is not an option either. Private after-school programs exist, but their cost is simply not realistic for many families in our community. When you are managing rent, groceries, utilities, transportation, and other essential expenses, hundreds of dollars per month for childcare is a serious burden.

More importantly, this is about more than just supervision. My son deserves the opportunity to stay engaged in a safe, structured environment where his mind can continue to grow after the final school bell rings. Programs like EBBE provide academic enrichment, social development, mentorship, and positive peer interaction. They keep children active, supported, and focused during the critical after-school hours the time of day when many children are most vulnerable to falling behind academically or socially. As a parent, I want my child busy in ways that build his confidence, strengthen his skills, and expand his opportunities. I want him learning, exploring, and growing — not simply waiting for me to get off work.

Stedwick Elementary serves a community where more than 70% of students qualify for Free and Reduced-Price Meals. That statistic reflects families like mine who are working hard every day to provide stability and opportunity. In the Watkins Mill cluster, nearly every other school has access to EBBE — yet Stedwick does not. That gap creates inequity for our children and places additional strain on our families.

Funding EBBE at Stedwick would not just extend the school day it would strengthen families. It would allow parents to work full shifts without fear of job instability. It would give students access to enrichment that supports academic success. It would help close opportunity gaps in a community that is already working hard to thrive. This is not about convenience. It is about equity, opportunity, and long-term outcomes for children in our neighborhood.

As a mother, I am asking you to invest in our children's growth, safety, and future. An EBBE program at Stedwick Elementary would make a meaningful difference for my family and for many others in our community.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to Montgomery County's children.

Respectfully,  
Angela Williams  
Parent

*Written Testimonials for Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary at Stedwick Elementary School*

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing as a parent of a Stedwick student who is in support of providing the Excel Beyond the Bell (EBB) program at the school.

For many working families, consistently providing after-school academic assistance or reinforcing classroom learning at home can be challenging. An after-school program such as EBB would help bridge this gap by offering students additional time and guidance to complete homework, strengthen their understanding of lessons, and remain actively engaged in learning.

On a personal note, I have seen firsthand how targeted academic support can make a meaningful difference. Last year, my son's 4/5 Compact Math teacher recognized that when he felt confident in the material, he remained focused and engaged. However, when negative self-talk set in, it often disrupted his progress. By guiding him with thoughtful questions and helping him work through the next steps in problem-solving, she reinforced his understanding and rebuilt his confidence. Her support was pivotal in encouraging him to continue challenging himself in 5/6 Compact Math.

As a single parent who often works through the evenings, I am not always able to provide the level of academic support I would like at home. My son, now in 5th grade, sometimes struggles to process information in real time and can become discouraged when he does not master something immediately. An opportunity like the EBB program would provide future Stedwick students with the consistent support, encouragement, and structured environment they need to stay engaged, build resilience, and view challenges as opportunities for growth.

Beyond academics, EBB also offers valuable enrichment opportunities that help students develop critical thinking skills, confidence, and perseverance—qualities that are essential not only in school but throughout life.

I respectfully urge the Montgomery County Council to consider bringing the EBB program to Stedwick Elementary School, so students have access to the resources and opportunities they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Leah S. Reed  
Parent, Stedwick Elementary School

**Written Testimony: Support for Bringing Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary to Stedwick Elementary School**

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council,

My name is Brandon Coffee-Borden and I am a parent of a third grader that attends Stedwick Elementary School. I am writing to express my strong support for bringing Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary (EBBE) to our school. Stedwick Elementary School serves a high percentage of children from low-income families (Title 1) and receives critical wraparound services and supports as a Community School. Our school serves a similar student population as other schools with EBBE programs in our cluster, Whetstone Elementary School and Watkins Mill Elementary School, yet our students do not have access to this critical program. This situation creates an opportunity gap in the heart of Montgomery Village and EBBE will benefit our students in multiple ways:

1. **Academic Support and Enrichment:** EBBE offers structured activities that reinforce classroom learning, promote literacy and numeracy skills, and provides hands-on, engaging experiences that support students' overall growth.
2. **Safe and Supervised Environment:** Many working parents face challenges ensuring their children have safe, supervised care before and after school. EBBE will give families peace of mind, knowing their children are in a secure, nurturing environment.
3. **Social and Emotional Development:** Through group activities, arts, and collaborative projects, students develop important social skills, teamwork, and confidence, essential for thriving both academically and personally.
4. **Equitable Access:** Bringing EBBE to our school ensures that children from all backgrounds and locations across Montgomery Village have access to this opportunity. Programs like EBBE help reduce disparities and support students who might otherwise miss out.

Our school community is eager for programs that enhance learning, safety, and well-being for our students. Bringing EBBE to Stedwick Elementary School aligns with Montgomery County's commitment to child development and educational equity.

I urge the Montgomery County Council to prioritize funding and support for Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary to expand its reach to our school. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Brandon Coffee-Borden