



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

May 4, 2024

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriations #24-84
Education Support Professionals Bonus Grant

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #24-84 Education Support Professionals Bonus Grant is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery. Education Support Professionals (ESPs) are critical to the operation of schools and school campuses, and the bonuses awarded under this supplemental appropriation will help to address workforce challenges identified in our research. The ESP workforce in Montgomery County is more representative of the MCPS student population, with larger shares of Black, Latinx, and Asian ESPs compared to the teacher population. Given racial economic disparities in the County and the critical role ESPs play in school communities, this supplemental appropriation can both help fill income gaps and ensure continuity of service in MCPS.

- II. **BACKGROUND** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #24-84 is to allocate \$4,940,018 from the Maryland Department of Education Bonus and Report Grant (Grant) to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) FY24 Operating Budget. The Grant Program, established by Bill 831, provides bonus payments to local education agencies (LEA) education support professionals (ESPs). ESP is a noncertified public-school employee designated as part of a bargaining unit under state law. This includes

paraeducators, media assistants, and other noncertificated school personnel who do not have an educational function, such as school bus operators and food services workers”¹. MSDE identified a total of 10,249 employees in MCPS who qualify for the bonus in FY24. Grant funds will provide a bonus payment of \$482 to all identified employees to be reflected in the employee’s paycheck on June 14, 2024. MCPS will absorb the employer’s Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) cost, a total of \$377,911.

According to the State’s Program Information Guide for the Education Support Professional Bonus and Report, LEAs are subject to the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)². Section 427³ of the Act requires all applicants for new awards (including under the ESP Bonus and Report grant program) to respond to the following questions: Describe how your entity’s existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

- Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
- Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
- What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

At the time of this analysis, MCPS’s responses to these questions were not publicly available. Though the grant award provides a universal benefit to all ESPs, it is valuable to consider these questions as they shape the context in which ESPs will learn about and receive their bonus.

Background on Educational Support Professionals

ESPs work in nine career fields: clerical services, custodial maintenance service, food service, health and student service, paraeducators, security service, skilled trade, technical service, and transportation service⁴. The services they provide help to ensure schools and school campuses are healthy and safe and facilitate student learning. The National Education Association (NEA) estimates that one out of three public school employees is an ESP⁵ and that the most common career family for ESPs is paraeducator (39.4%), followed by clerical (16.3%) and custodial (15.8%)⁶. The Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) estimates that nationally, ESPs make up more than 40%

¹ <https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/OFPOS/GAC/ESP2024/index.aspx>

² <https://oese.ed.gov/gepa/>

³ <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/10/General-Education-Provisions-Act-GEPA-Requirements-Section-427-ED-GEPA-427-Form.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/action-center/our-issues/education-support-professionals>

⁵ <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/action-center/our-issues/education-support-professionals>

⁶ <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NEA%20ESP%20Earnings%20Report%202022%20FINAL.pdf>

of the total K-12 education workforce⁷. The National Association of State Boards of Education published a policy update in October 2022 that highlighted the role of ESPs in improving school climate. Given the large percentage of ESPs who work in the communities they live, “they contributed to students’ well-being in ways that went beyond their required duties.”⁸ The bonuses funded under this supplemental appropriation will help to address some of the policy concerns raised in the report, particularly those related to increasing pay and identifying opportunities for recognition and support⁹. This finding is echoed in a comparative analysis of economic incentives for teachers and paraeducators, with one study showing that paraeducators are offered stipends or bonuses for professional growth at lower frequency compared to teachers¹⁰.

Because a large percentage of ESPs are paraeducators, we spent additional time on some of the historical and current trends affecting this subgroup of ESPs. A Working Paper from Brown University charted the historical and current policies that have shaped the growing paraeducator workforce and examined the diversity of the field compared to the teacher workforce. The paper also highlighted policy and human resource strategies that support the development of paraeducator professionals, including policies aimed at increasing their knowledge, skills, and abilities; improving motivation in the role; and incorporating their voices and perspectives into decision-making¹¹. Addressing workforce challenges like job security, fewer performance incentives, less professional development and mentoring, fewer opportunities for evaluation, learning, and advancement within the field is critical both for the field and for student success¹². Some policy concerns identified in our research are addressed in the current SEIU Local 500 CtW Agreement for 2023-2025. A deeper analysis of the contract in comparison to this research is beyond the scope of this REIA.

III. **ANALYSIS** As reported in the text of the supplemental appropriation, MSDE identified a total of 10,249 employees in MCPS who qualify for the bonus in FY24. ORESJ identified the following demographic profile for ESPs, paraeducators, teachers, and students in Montgomery County in FY22:

Race and ethnicity	Education Support Professionals (FY22)	Paraeducators (FY22)	Teachers (FY22)	Students (2022-2023)

⁷ <https://marylandeducators.org/about-msea/esp/>

⁸ https://nasbe.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/2022/10/Fleischer_Support-Professionals-final.pdf

⁹ https://nasbe.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/2022/10/Fleischer_Support-Professionals-final.pdf

¹⁰ Pg. 28. <https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai21-490.pdf>

¹¹ <https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai21-490.pdf>

¹² <https://www.nctq.org/blog/Paraprofessionals:-Understudied,-undercompensated,-and-in-short-supply-> and <https://www.future-ed.org/paraeducators-growth-diversity-and-a-dearth-of-professional-supports/>

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American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Asian	13.0%	10.8%	6.6%	13.9%
Black or African American	25.7%	21.4%	12.3%	21.8%
Hispanic/Latino	25.7%	18.4%	8.4%	34.6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races	1.3%	1.3%	1.6%	5.1%
White	33.9%	47.8%	71%	24.4%

Data sources: Student Demographics. MCPS Demographics 2022-2023. Available at: <https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/annualreport/2023/#about-demo>. ESP, paraeducator, and teacher demographics available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/REPORTS/2022/MCPS-2022.pdf>

This data shows that the MCPS ESPs and paraeducator population is more diverse than MCPS teacher population. This is in line with our research about the field. There is an underrepresentation of Hispanic/Latino and Two or More Races ESPs and paraeducators compared to the MCPS student population. There is proportional representation for Asian students, ESPs, and paraeducators. The population of Black or African American paraeducators is proportional to the student population, while there is a slight overrepresentation of Black ESPs compared to the student population.

Looking at the state of Maryland more generally, here is the data on ESPs: In 2019, one-in-three ESPs in Maryland was a paraeducator¹³. ESPs worked in the following career families:

Career Family Category	Percentage of ESP workforce in Maryland (2019)
Custodial	16.4%

¹³ <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NEA%20ESP%20Earnings%20Report%202022%20FINAL.pdf>

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Security	1.9%
Food Service	9.8%
Health/student	1.1%
Paraeducator	32.1%
Clerical	19.6%
Technical	7.1%
Skilled Trades	3.9%
Transportation	8.0

Source: Author re-created Table 2a “Career Families” Total ESP Work Force by State, 2019. Source data: US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS).

<https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NEA%20ESP%20Earnings%20Report%202022%20FINAL.pdf>

Additional analysis at the County-level, including workforce demographics in these other Career Families, would help determine whether historical or current occupational segregation¹⁴ is impacting workers’ and their economic opportunities in the county.

The FY24 SEIU Salary Schedule sets the salaries for MCPS ESPs covered by the Agreement between SEIU Local 500, CtW and the Montgomery County Board of Education for the 2023-2026 school years¹⁵. The salaries range from \$18.11/hr for Grade 06, Step 1 to \$67.43/hr for Grade 17, Step 30¹⁶. In, 2023 the Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS) for one adult, no kids was \$47,294¹⁷. As of February 14, 2024, the living wage in Montgomery County for one adult, no children is \$27.12/hour¹⁸. Using the living wage as a benchmark, it’s clear that (effective July 1, 2023) ESPs at lower grades and in lower step categories would not make the current living wage in Montgomery County.

¹⁴ https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Occupational_segregation and <https://equitablegrowth.org/fact-sheet-occupational-segregation-in-the-united-states/>

¹⁵

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c7ed8197a1fbd33a3e795b9/t/654115251b606a1fea6a0b76/1698764070898/seiu_agreement_2023_2026.pdf

¹⁶

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c7ed8197a1fbd33a3e795b9/t/654115251b606a1fea6a0b76/1698764070898/seiu_agreement_2023_2026.pdf

¹⁷ The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Maryland 2023. Center for Women’s Welfare, University of Washington.

https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/MD2023_SSS.xlsx. Also available at:

<https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/Maryland/>

¹⁸ <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/24031>

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There are a total of 300 Grade and Step combinations in the FY24 salary schedule, 89 of those combinations would not garner a living wage in 2024. For example, in our analysis we found that the largest share of ESPs is in Pay Grade 12 and 13, making up 53% of ESPs¹⁹. The salary range for Pay Grade 12 is \$ 21.33/hr to \$29.93/hr. The salary range for Pay Grade 13 is \$22.20/hr to \$31.26/hr. This means that some segment of ESPs who make up the largest Pay Grade category would not make a living wage in 2024. The precise number and percentage of ESPs who do not make a living wage in Montgomery County requires additional analysis. However, this data echoes our research findings in the Background section and highlights the importance of this supplemental appropriation in addressing ESP workforce challenges and racial economic inequities.

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive
Monique T. Felder, Interim Superintendent of Schools, Montgomery County Public
Schools

¹⁹ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/REPORTS/2022/MCPS-2022.pdf>