



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive


Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

March 2, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

cc: Gabe Albornoz, President
Montgomery County Council

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

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation #22-63 MCPS
Lifecycle Upgrades

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #22-63 MCPS Lifecycle Upgrades is unlikely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County. ORESJ recognizes the importance of school repairs and improvements in sustaining a healthy environment for all working and learning in schools. However, available information does not indicate that the students most impacted by racial disparities in school performance and opportunity attend either of these two schools at rates proportional to the demographic and service group makeup in the county. Additionally, the absence of data on students with disabilities and the lack of details about the repairs being undertaken limits ORESJ's ability to assess the extent to which repairs will address documented accessibility barriers in these schools, although elevator repairs in Brooke Grove elementary school will certainly have a positive impact. Given these observations and the absence of information regarding school selection process in this CIP, ORESJ does not believe that this set of projects are likely to address racial inequities or issues of accessibility in process or outcome.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #22-63 is to support capital improvements in two schools using Aging Schools Program funds. The two schools where improvements took place are Brooke Grove Elementary School and Sherwood Elementary

School. These improvements will protect the school building from deterioration, improve safety of students and staff, and enhance the delivery of educational programs.

Typically, to determine the extent to which a supplemental appropriation like this advances racial equity and social justice in the County, ORESJ would assess the process of school selection, the demographics of students, and whether there is evidence that the resources provided will reduce racial disparities and other forms of inequity.

At the time of this analysis, there was evidence that ADA compliance will inform the district's planned lifecycle asset replacement and that projects are evaluated¹, but the specifics regarding how the two schools involved in this supplemental appropriation were selected was not available. ORESJ is, therefore, not able to assess whether the process was equitable or how historical inequities in school resource allocation were considered.

Regarding the students whose schools will be impacted, there is an underrepresentation of Hispanic/Latino students and Asian students compared to the County overall. In contrast, the percent of students who are White in Brooke Grove and Sherwood Elementary school is higher than the representation of White students in the County overall. Black students are underrepresented in Sherwood Elementary school and overrepresented in Brooke Grove Elementary school compared to the student population in the County overall. Similarly, there is an underrepresentation of students participating in ESOL and FARMS programs compared to the County overall. These differences suggest that the students experiencing the greatest disparities in school performance and opportunity² make up smaller shares of the student population in Sherwood Elementary School, and to a similar but somewhat lesser extent in Brooke Grove Elementary School.

MCPS Demographic and Service Group Statistics compared to Brooke Grove and Sherwood Elementary Schools, 2020-2021 School Year

Schools	Asian	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	White	Two or More Races	Participate in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	Participate in Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS)
Sherwood Elementary School	11.9%	18.8%	17.9%	41.1%	9.5%	10.9%	17.1%
Brooke Grove Elementary School	11.9%	27.%	18.8%	34.9%	6.5%	15.3%	24.9%

¹ Superintendent's Recommended FY2023 Capital Budget Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville, Maryland and the FY2023 -2028 Capital Improvements Program. Available at https://gis.mcpsmd.org/cipmasterpdfs/CIP23_EntireBook.pdf

² Elaine Bonner-Tompkins. MCPS Performance and Opportunity Gaps. Report Number 2019-4. December 2019. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/OLOReport2019-14.pdf>

Schools	Asian	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	White	Two or More Races	Participate in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	Participate in Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS)
Montgomery County Public Schools	14.1%	21.4%	32.4%	25.9%	5.3%	18.2%	33.3%

Source: Data on MCPS student demographics and service group characteristics is available here: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/about/homepage/At%20a%20Glance2020-21.pdf>. Data on individual school demographic and service group characteristics was provided during the REIA information gathering phase by OMB.

In addition to the demographic and service group characteristics provided above, it is important to note that data about students with disabilities was not available at the time of this analysis. Students with disabilities face unique barriers in school despite advances in federal policy to promote inclusion³. The intersection of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status with disability exacerbates these barriers. While there are many factors affecting the outcomes of students with disabilities, it is without question that equitable, safe, and inclusive access to the physical environment is critical. In the past two years, an Accessibility Evaluation of MCPS was conducted to assess the compliance of facilities with requirements of 28 CFR Part 35, the 2010 ADA Design Standards for Accessible Design, and the State of Maryland Building Code sections related to accessibility⁴. In this study, Brooke Grove Elementary School had 57 items and Sherwood had 96 items needing work ranging from minor to major barrier removal⁵. It is unclear to what extent the repairs funded under this supplemental appropriation will include any of the items identified as barriers to accessibility in these schools.

At the national level, there is recognition that a lack of data about the condition of school buildings and funding for repairs and modernization is a major challenge to addressing competing demands for new schools and repairs with finite and stretched resources. Given the growth in student population in MCPS, this is likely a frequent challenge. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) emphasizes the importance of school facilities within the larger context of educational opportunity, stating:

³ Katie Pak and Arianna Parsons. University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. Perspectives on Urban Education. "Equity Gaps for Students with Disabilities". Spring 2020. Available at <https://urbanedjournal.gse.upenn.edu/volume-17-spring-2020/equity-gaps-students-disabilities>

⁴ Superintendent's Recommended FY2023 Capital Budget Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville, Maryland and the FY2023 -2028 Capital Improvements Program.

⁵ ADA Title II Assessment for Brooke Grove Elementary School. Prepared by EMG <https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/ada/reports/02518.pdf> and ADA Title II Assessment for Sherwood Elementary School. Prepared by EMG <https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/ada/reports/02501.pdf>

“School quality impacts recruitment and retention of effective leaders and teachers, student attendance, and the health of the entire school community. In 20 studies analyzed by the 21st Century School Fund, all but one found a positive correlation between student achievement and the condition of the school building when controlling for other student demographic factors.”⁶

Given the important link between the school environment and achievement, and known racial, ethnic, and service group disparities in school performance and opportunity in the County, attending to the condition of aging schools in an equitable manner has the potential to reduce disparities. While addressing aging school infrastructure is critical across the school district, the manner in which repairs are planned, prioritized, and implemented has the potential to make meaningful differences in the reduction of racial and service group disparities.

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnership, Office of the County Executive

⁶ National Association of Secondary School Principles. Top Issues in Education. Position Statements. School Facilities. Available at <https://www.nassp.org/top-issues-in-education/position-statements/school-facilities/>.