



MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

REIA #26-3 System of Professional Learning Grant

Requesting Department (s)	Dollar Amount
Montgomery County Public Schools	\$323,994.84

Funding Source

State Grant

Finding

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #26-3 System of Professional Learning Grant is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County, as grant requirements specifically require that program design and implementation utilize racial equity and cultural competency principles and best practices. In addition, ORESJ notes that processes related to system rollout and establishing indicators to measure progress could help ensure equitable implementation of the System of Professional Learning.

Background

Purpose: The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #26-3 System of Professional Learning Grant (\$323,994.84) is to allocate State funds from the System of Professional Learning (formula) Grant to MCPS to enable the design and implementation of a system of professional learning that is “tied to the career ladder for teachers to build their capacity in various educational areas to advance the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future”¹. This grant program directly supports Blueprint Pillar 2: High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders and indirectly contributes to the Blueprint’s overarching goal of transforming the quality of education in Maryland and narrowing and closing opportunity and achievement gaps².

According to the System of Professional Learning Grant Program Requirements³, proposals must provide “state-of-the-art training” and use a “train-the-trainer” model on how to:

1. Lead and mentor teams of professionals to promote professional learning among colleagues;
2. Collaborate with colleagues to improve student performance;

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3. Design and support collaborative professional learning for teachers pursuing National Board Certification;
4. Provide advanced training in the science of learning specific to individual disciplines;
5. Provide instruction and school-based services utilizing racial equity and cultural competency principles and best practices;
6. Select and implement evidence-based instructional practices for students with disabilities and multilingual learners;
7. Implement restorative practices and trauma-informed responses; and
8. Implementation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) at the classroom level.

In a July 2, 2025, memo from County Executive Marc Elrich to County Council President Kate Stewart, the envisioned system will:

“[I]mplement a cascade model of professional learning in which learning begins with central leadership and cascades through school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers leading to enhanced instructional quality and improved student outcomes. MCPS will create Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Aspirations, and Beliefs frameworks, engage with district and school-based leadership, and utilize the cross-functional teams to provide professional learning that advances the goals of the Blueprint. The grant funds will support costs related to stipends and substitute teacher salaries for teachers and teacher leaders attending professional learning activities, program supplies, and contractual services for consultants to support the design and implementation.”

To ensure accountability to the learning goals, the grant requires that “annual staff data collection will have a flag to indicate that the teacher has been provided with the eight system of professional learning topics”⁴.

Relevant REIAs and Other Assessments

ORESJ has conducted REIAs since 2021. The following REIA(s) are relevant to supplemental appropriation #26-3 System of Professional Learning Grant

- Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriations (SA) #24-49 MCPS Blueprint Career Advising Program (\$2,122,529) and #25-50-MCPS Blueprint Community Schools Program (\$2,219,085)
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/25-49-50.pdf>

Analysis

ORESJ Research & Analysis: According to information provided in the RESJ template that accompanied this supplemental appropriation request, the professional learning system is undergirded by the belief that “better leaders support the development of better teachers, which results in improved student learning and outcomes⁵”. One of the primary goals is to develop instruction that is aligned with the principles of cognitive science and build teachers' knowledge about “how we learn” and how to remove barriers to learning, particularly for the most underserved student groups, including Students with Disabilities (SWD), Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLs), African American/Black students, and Hispanic/Latino students⁶. Based on the following system requirements articulated in the grant program overview:

- Provide advanced training in the science of learning specific to individual disciplines;
- Provide instruction and school-based services utilizing racial equity and cultural competency principles and best practices;
- Select and implement evidence-based instructional practices for students with disabilities and multilingual learners;

It is clear that the system’s design—from the outset—will seek to address the inequities that widen educational disparities.

Implementation of the System of Professional Learning will involve teachers and administrators from across MCPS. At the time of this analysis, there was no publicly available information about the anticipated process of rolling out the system. Prioritizing schools with disproportionate rates of SWDs, EMLs, Black, and Hispanic students in the rollout of the system will help ensure the benefits of the system are equitably distributed. In addition to the reporting requirement mentioned in grant materials, it will be important to establish additional indicators to assess competencies and gaps in administrator and teacher learning, as well as relevant practice-related student outcomes. This may already be included in MCPS’ scoping for the system, but details were not publicly available.

Caveats

This REIA has been conducted with the best available information at the time of writing, including department responses to the Racial Equity and Social Justice template and research conducted by ORESJ Policy Team Analysts. While the assessment examines specific racial equity and social justice impacts of the funding request, it cannot fully address all systemic

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inequities that affect the communities in question, nor do we seek to examine impacts outside the scope of the funding request. We recommend using this assessment as a starting point for discussions about the impact of the program on advancing racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County.

References

¹ Maryland State Department of Education. System of Professional Learning Grant.

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

² Blueprint for Maryland's Future. "About us". Available at:

<https://blueprint.marylandpublicschools.org/about/>

³ System of Professional Learning Grant Information Guide. Available at:

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/OFPOS/GAC/GrantPrograms/SystemofProfessionalLearning/System-of-Professional-Learning-Grant-GIG-A.pdf>

⁴ System of Professional Learning Grant FAQ. Available at:

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/OFPOS/GAC/GrantPrograms/SystemofProfessionalLearning/System-of-Professional-Learning-Grant-FAQ-A.pdf>

⁵ RESJ Template Response.

⁶ RESJ Template Response.