

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

October 25, 2010

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Recommended Fiscal Year 2011 Supplemental Appropriation for the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Program

Recommendation in Brief

Authorization is requested to receive and expend, subject to County Council approval, a Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 supplemental appropriation of \$599,722 for the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Grant Program from the United States Department of Education (USDE). REMS grants are awarded to school districts to improve and strengthen their emergency management plans.

Background Information

In the early 1990s, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) adopted a series of emergency management practices that were appropriate given the threats anticipated at the time, the student population, and the numbers of staff and educational facilities. The school system's approach to emergency preparedness includes a systemwide emergency response plan and individual emergency/crisis plans for all schools and facilities.

In 2004, the United States Department of Homeland Security issued the National Incident Management System (NIMS) guidelines to provide a consistent nationwide template to enable all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work together. NIMS goals are to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents that threaten safety and security. NIMS benefits include a unified approach to incident management, standard command and management structures, and resource management.

While the emergency management procedures currently used in MCPS provide concrete steps for school officials to follow in the event of emergencies, the system falls short of NIMS compliance because it is based on the two-tiered Code Red/Blue system, utilizing these color

codes rather than “plain language.” In the event of an emergency, the ability of responders from different jurisdictions and disciplines to work together depends greatly on their ability to communicate with each other. Color codes currently are defined differently by various Montgomery County emergency responder agencies. The guidelines provided by NIMS will be used to develop and produce new, plain-language (NIMS-compliant) print and video training materials for use by staff, students, parents, and nonpublic school personnel.

Support of Board of Education Policy

This project supports the Board of Education’s commitment to provide for the safety of all persons in MCPS sites (MCPS Regulation EKA-RA, *Emergency and Disaster Preparedness*).

Relationship to Ongoing Program

The MCPS Department of School Safety and Security strives to implement the best practices and training used by incident managers at all levels across the United States. As other county agencies transition to the use of plain language, MCPS also must adopt NIMS-compliant plain language to prevent miscommunications with its partner agencies. Developing multiple training DVDs and written materials, training students and staff, and presenting information to different audiences in a variety of public meetings is a major undertaking. Without this supplemental appropriation, MCPS will not be able to adopt a security plan that is NIMS-compliant.

Evaluation

The Safe School Steering Committee, which includes safety and security experts from partner organizations, will conduct general oversight of the project, reviewing the district’s progress toward project goals and adherence to grant requirements. Each month, the committee will evaluate the new training program based on the number of sessions held, participants completing these sessions, and scores recorded on written and computerized post-training tests.

Use of Funds

Funds will be used to provide training stipends and related benefits for teachers and support professionals, required travel expenses, training materials, portable two-way radios, contractual services for emergency preparedness training films, and indirect costs.

Recommended Resolution

Resolved, That the superintendent of schools be authorized to receive and expend, subject to County Council approval, a Fiscal Year 2011 supplemental appropriation of \$599,722 for the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Grant Program from the United States Department of Education in the following categories:

| <u>Category</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Administration | \$ 20,672 |
| 10 Operation of Plant and Equipment | 565,490 |
| 12 Fixed Charges | <u>13,560</u> |
| Total | <u><u>\$599,722</u></u> |

and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the county executive and County Council; and be it further

Resolved, That the county executive be requested to recommend approval of this resolution to the County Council.

JDW:LAB:MCS:jp