

My name is Nicole Levy and I am writing in regards to the Maryland Blueprint and the exclusion of various National Board Certified Teachers. I have been a literacy teacher for eleven years, and have been with Anne Arundel county for 23 years. I have chosen to work with Title One communities. I have always felt the knowledge I have gained as an educator in AACPS has been the reason I have been so successful in narrowing the achievement gaps of the students I work with.

Two years ago, when I received the letter from Human Resources that I do not qualify for the stipend enhancement that other NBCTs will be receiving I was disheartened. I asked, researched and even attended professional workshops provided by the county to understand why my work as an educator was not valued enough for the salary enhancement. I achieved National Board certification in 2011 and recertified in 2021, first as a classroom teacher and then again as a literacy teacher. I truly believe in the process and how it can support an educator in becoming more reflective to improve their pedagogy.

I was told I do not qualify simply because the job description provided by AACPS does not specify I am required to work with students. However, per Maryland Senate Bill 734 (the Ready to Read Act) I am required to work one on one with all students in grades Kindergarten thru 2nd grade to determine if they are at risk for reading difficulties. This occurs multiple times per year. I also pull small groups of students for intensive tier three reading interventions. This year I have two 30 minute groups and one 45 minute group. Other years I've had three to four groups. I, like others, in my role have gotten creative and pull small strategy groups first thing in the morning during breakfast to maximize instruction time and not disrupt classroom learning. Aside from working with struggling readers, I also pull out primary students who receive Phonics and Word Study foundational literacy skills, so the classroom teacher can focus on students receiving Foundations; a more multisensory, structured, systematic, cumulative and explicit program. I also co-teach daily in classrooms with general education teachers.

I moved to this position because I believe I can make an impact on an entire school of students opposed to a small set of students. I achieve this by attending/facilitating numerous meetings like collaborative planning with all grade level teachers, school improvement, attendance, collaborative decision making and leadership. During these meetings, I analyze school data and give guidance to make the best instructional decisions for the students.

Finally, I want to point out that the new Blueprint and decisions being made about qualifying NBCTs will also prevent me from getting the \$3,000 stipends I have been receiving since I achieved my certification. Since I chose to work at Annapolis Elementary School, (an identified School of Hope) I will be losing the current stipend and not qualifying for the \$17,000 salary enhancement. I was told that through negotiations between the county, our teachers association and the school board, educators like myself can be identified to receive the salary enhancement.

This decision is being left to each individual county. I ask that you fight for me and the others in the same situation.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the role of the literacy teacher, a role of utmost importance in the lives and educational growth of our students. I truly hope that our dedication and commitment to AACPS does not go unnoticed, as our passion truly exists in what we do to grow students as life-long readers.