

## **MABE Leadership Provides State Board Members Presentation on *The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Accountability Plan***

### [MABE Statement & Materials](#)

The State Board provided the opportunity for representatives from the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) to present the association's perspectives on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the development of Maryland ESSA Accountability Plan. Board President Andy Smarick welcomed MABE's representatives, and noted that the State Board had afforded the same opportunity to other major stakeholders including the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM) and the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA).

MABE's President-elect Joy Schaefer, who chairs MABE's Committee on ESSA and is a Frederick County board member, presented MABE's statement. She was joined by Ellen Flynn Giles, MABE's representative on the MSDE ESSA Stakeholder Committee, and a Howard County board member, who participated in the morning's dialogue with the State Board.

Ms. Schaefer opened her remarks by thanking the State Board for the opportunity and thanked Dr. Gable for meeting recently with MABE's Committee on ESSA. She directed the State Board's attention to MABE's Core Values and the shared values and vision that guide the work of the MABE, the State Board, and local boards across the state in building collaborative relationships to support our collective efforts to create and maintain excellent public schools for all of Maryland's children. She stressed that the State Board and local boards share and are accountable to the same stakeholders; and that this accountability demands clarity in terms of defining expectations for all students to graduate college and career ready.

Ms. Schaefer noted that major education reform initiatives have been undertaken through the collaboration of the State Board and the twenty-four local boards of education. She shared that MABE believes that it is time to renew our commitment to collaboration based on our shared core values and complimentary governance roles and responsibilities. She encouraged the State Board to consider that ESSA provides Maryland with a welcomed and long overdue opportunity to re-envision our approaches to establishing, communicating, and administering our local and state student performance accountability systems.

MABE has identified opportunities as including:

- Continued alignment with Maryland's College and Career Readiness Standards;
- Optimal flexibility for local school systems and local boards to pursue excellence in accordance with these standards;
- State support for innovative local approaches to teaching and learning;

- The ability to consider the “whole child” in the context of a balanced and well-rounded set of state standards and local curriculum;
- Focus on equity of opportunity for all students;
- Setting high expectations early for all students;
- A more comprehensive consideration of teacher quality and effectiveness; and
- An accountability system which clearly communicates performance standards, both in terms of meeting standards and also progress of schools and students toward meeting standards.

In addition, Ms. Schaefer reminded the State Board that just as they must adopt a state accountability plan, each local board must adopt its own local plan. A local school system’s plan must be “developed with timely and meaningful consultation with teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders (in a local educational agency that has charter schools), administrators ..., other appropriate school personnel, and with parents of children in schools served under this part.”

In light of these shared roles and responsibilities, she concluded that MABE and the boards we represent want to be continuous thought partners in a collaborative process to ensure the successful implementation of ESSA and a high quality education for all Maryland students. And that MABE is committed to the collective goal that every student has the opportunity to graduate from high school as college, career, and civic ready with the skills needed to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. She thanked the State Board for its leadership and vision in engaging MABE and all local boards in the process of transforming Maryland’s state accountability plan and statewide accountability system.

Board member Dr. Chester Finn asked for MABE’s position on accountability measures for schools already above state standards. Ms. Schaefer responded that local boards know that all students can grow and schools can continue to make progress based. She noted that PARCC provides opportunities to show improvement on items within subject areas. Ms. Giles also noted that high performing students can be offered access to other programs and the use of other assessments to set expectations that all students make progress.

Board member Dr. Michelle Guyton asked about the reference to the “whole child” and MABE’s position on the role of school culture and climate. Ms. Schaefer responded that MABE is open the discussion of academic and non-academic indicators which should be taken in account in measuring school performance. She also highlighted the need to consider career technology education (CTE) certifications, internships, and other student experiences as valuable indicators of student success.

Board President Andy Smarick asked about MABE’s position on the respective state and local roles in responding with interventions to the lowest performing schools, and on what timeline. Ms. Schaefer responded that school systems are already relying on proven methods of intervention and that these successful strategies should be available as a basket of options for school systems to choose from, and not specifically mandated. Similarly, she urged support for an approach that provided resources to school systems which are already working mightily to turn around low performing schools and address achievement gaps, rather than imposing punitive measures.

Student board member David Edimo asked Ms. Schaefer what she would consider to be a punitive measure. She responded that MABE and local boards are very concerned with the negative, stigmatizing consequences of labeling a school a “failing school”, as opposed to providing the resources and tools needed to be successful. Board member Laura Weeldreyer sought clarification on the distinction between the label and need for resources, and the need for transparency for parents to facilitate informed school choice. Ms. Schaefer emphasized the need for resources to ensure that schools addressing performance issues should receive supports so that they can improve and remain in place as the public school resource for that community.

## **MSDE Presentation on ESSA**

### [MSDE Presentation](#)

Following MABE’s remarks and responses to questions from the State Board, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Mary Gable presented an update on the work of MSDE’s Internal ESSA Committee, and requested the State Board’s guidance on specific elements of the ESSA Accountability Plan, in the area of Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools.” She outlined her objective to discuss the following topics of accountability: two Achievement Indicator Measures, including the approaches of using Proficiency Goals and an Index; and two Progress or Growth Indicator Measures, including the Value approach and Student Growth Percentile (SGP) approach. Specifically, she requested the State Board’s guidance on the determination of proficiency levels, long-term goals and the timeline.

Dr. Gable shared that student achievement measurers are described in three ways:

1. Status: A measure that compares student achievement to a target (long term and interim goals).
2. Improvement: A measure that compares student achievement across time using different groups of students ( e.g., 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math achievement in 2015 vs. 2016)
3. Growth: A measure that compares student achievement across time using the same students ( e.g., 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math achievement in 2015 vs. the same students’ 4<sup>th</sup> grade math achievement in 2016)

She described the optional approaches to determining long term goals under Option A (Annual Measurable Objective); or Option B (state determined target over time, e.g. a long-term goal of 90% proficiency). Option A would involve adopting long term and interim goals toward cutting in half the proficiency gap to target over time (AMO). She and the board engaged in a lengthy discussion focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of using Option A or B; the use of the 16 year timeline; and the table displaying student academic growth over time across the 5 proficiency levels on the PARCC exams. MABE’s representatives, Joy Schaefer and Ellen Flynn Giles, were also asked to respond to questions throughout the discussion.

Board President Smarick asked Ms. Schaefer to share her thoughts on the academic standards discussion. She responded that local boards would apply the standards adopted by the State Board in order to determine where improvements and corresponding resources were needed. Mr. Smarick shared that what haunts him is the responsibility of the State Board to set these standards given the impact they will have on local school systems.