

July 18, 2017

[Agenda](#)

Executive Session & Election of Officers

The State Board convened briefly to announce it would hold a closed executive session, which was followed by the election of officers. The board unanimously approved the motions to reelect Andy Smarick as Board President and Chester Finn and Board Vice President.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan

Dr. Mary Gable, MSDE Assistant State Superintendent, presented a brief summary of feedback received by MSDE to date on the [draft ESSA Consolidated State Plan](#) which was approved by the State Board at its June meeting. She described the responses to the [survey](#) posted on the MSDE website and letters received. She highlighted that most responses have been favorable to the proposed State Plan.

Specific issues addressed include differences of opinion on the number of years recently exited English learners (EL) should be counted as EL students; and the request that the Plan more clearly reference Gifted and Talented students. Board members discussed their interest in posting on the MSDE website the written comments received.

Board vice president Chester Finn asked whether the State Board would have only one remaining meeting on August 22 prior to the deadline for submission to the U.S. Department of Education. He noted that several comments raise complex questions which may, if accepted, require major revisions to the plan. The board discussed with Dr. Salmon the need for an additional meeting, and Dr. Salmon proposed that the State Board consider the need to schedule a work session on August 21 prior to the decision meeting on August 22. Dr. Finn suggested in the alternative a meeting date after Labor Day. Following discussion, the State Board agreed not to meet on August 21 but rather select a September meeting date in advance of the deadline.

[Cover Memo](#) & [Report on ESSA State Plan Feedback](#)

PSSAM Presentation

Dr. Salmon introduced representatives from the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) and Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM), including Joy Schaefer, MABE President and Frederick County board member, Dr. D'Ette Devine, PSSAM President and Cecil County Superintendent, and Dr. Terri Alban, Frederick County Superintendent. Dr. Salmon thanked MABE for its letter, which had been provided to the State Board members. Following introductions, Board President Smarick acknowledged the critical role of local boards of education and local superintendents in implementing the State Plan.

Superintendent Devine identified PSSAM's concern with the five-star rating system and support for a more descriptive approach to identifying school performance and the need for interventions and supports. She and Dr. Alban questioned whether there is a substantive difference between letter grades, which the law

prohibits, and the five-star rating system. Superintendent Alban emphasized her concern with the stigma associated with any labeling of a school as failing, based on experience under the No Child Left Behind Act. Rather than a simple grading system, she suggested the State Board consider the descriptive categories Massachusetts has developed for their State Plan. She also pointed to Illinois' system of indicators of need for growth and improvement. Dr. Devine further voiced concern with the identification of lowest performing schools and raised questions about the alignment of the rating system and the availability of resources for supports and interventions for the schools identified.

Dr. Alban commented on the national discussion around the role of assessment results in determining a school's performance and rating. She also noted the absence of a separate identification of low-income students within schools and the availability of comparisons of like-schools in terms of successful strategies being employed in schools with similar student characteristics.

Regarding the proposed definition of a well-rounded high school education, Dr. Alban shared that educators know the power of fine arts and other pieces of what makes schools special places that support and nurture children. She criticized the proposed plan for instead emphasizing courses that looks like the College and Career Readiness Act all over again, and that she believes that the State Board is missing an opportunity to an opportunity to more broadly consider this definition.

Regarding the measure of student growth, Dr. Alban suggested a need for greater clarity for parents and that the State Board needs to consider that reporting on 50% growth measure may look like a failing grade when communicated to parents. Dr. Devine also questioned the rationale for moving from the use of a school's attendance rate to the rate of chronic absenteeism, and whether excluding students absent for chronic illness has been considered.

Drs. Devine and Alban concluded by informing the State Board that PSSAM's letter would be forthcoming in several days.

Following the superintendents' remarks, Board President Smarick asked Dr. Mary Gable take note of the comments regarding the need for ability to compare like schools. Board member Dr. Guyton also thanked PSSAM for making the point about the need for the attendance methodology to account for medically fragile students and the suggested need for the comparison of like schools. Board vice president Finn shared that he believes Maryland is defining chronic absenteeism as 20 days per year compared to the 15 days used by the federal Office of Civil Rights, and he suggested that Maryland should be consistent with the federal definition.

Board member Hartings cited discussion in his community as to whether attendance should even be considered given the limited ability of schools to control this factor. Dr. Devine responded she believes school systems do have the ability to impact attendance, but that it is frustrating to move that needle in some communities and cases. Dr. Alban responded that there are very positive outcomes, such as with an elementary student who had chronic absenteeism but when the school instituted an arts integration program it motivated that student to attend. By contrast, a high school student who may be working until 2 or 3 in the morning and chooses to sleep in rather than attend school may present a very difficult situation. Dr. Guyton shared that she believes there is much research finding that chronic absenteeism is a strong evidence-based measure.

Separately, Board member Dr. Steiner commented that, with all due respect to PSSAM, Maryland has lowest percentage of overall accountability system based on student assessments among the 30 state plans reviewed by his institute.

MABE Presentation

MABE President Joy Schaefer began by thanking the State Board for the opportunity to present and for the ongoing strong partnership between MABE on behalf of local boards and the State board and MSDE. She highlighted the value of Dr. Salmon's and board president Smarick's meetings with MABE's Board of Directors as well as MABE's ESSA Ad Hoc Committee meetings with Dr. Mary Gable and Dr. Dara Shaw. She noted that MABE has developed its comments on the proposed ESSA State Plan through the ad hoc committee and that these meetings have informed board members and greatly assisted MABE in developing the Association's comments.

Ms. Schaefer addressed the State Board on [MABE's letter](#) of July 12 outlining the Association's priorities and concerns regarding the draft ESSA State Plan, including concerns with the proposed five-star school rating system, the timing and definition of schools identified for interventions and supports, and the definition of a well-rounded high school education. She shared that MABE is concerned that the proposed five-star rating system would not include enough descriptive information about individual school characteristics. She noted that MABE even discussed, with some levity, the use of crabs or bushels of crabs, to depict the amount of need for additional resources among schools.

Ms. Schaefer emphasized that local boards are requesting a system that indicates more than a snapshot of where a school is and instead describes where a school needs to be and the resources attached to improving student learning at the school. If the star system is retained, MABE's letter also encourages the State Board's consideration of a rating system which reserves any 1 star designation for the subset of lowest-performing Title I schools; the schools in the lowest performing five percent of all Title I schools. Ms. Schaefer also highlighted that the State Board has been proactive in encouraging innovation at the local level and suggested that the rating system could include a measure of how innovative schools are being, in terms of scheduling and other areas, to encourage other school systems and schools to be innovative as well.

Regarding targeted interventions, Ms. Schaefer noted that MABE's letter requests that a third year of data is included in the basis for identifying schools for interventions and supports.

Regarding the definition of a well-rounded curriculum, she praised the State Board for doing a great job of alignment with curriculum in elementary and middle schools, but at the high school level the definition should reflect the breadth and depth of opportunities students are offered.

Regarding the climate survey required under state law, she requested accommodation of local school system surveys and the ability to fold in the state and local questions to avoid over-surveying parents and teachers.

Ms. Schaefer also requested that MSDE continue to convene the stakeholder meetings to provide the forum for all to stay engaged as the State Plan is implemented. She concluded by highlighting MABE's encouragement of forthcoming letters from local boards and school systems.

Board President Smarick noted that, regarding innovation, the State Board does have an interest in granting waivers based on innovative practices. Board members also discussed the suggestions regarding a color coding system to enhance the descriptive information provided by the rating system. While board members noted some difficulty distinguishing between certain colors, Dr. Steiner spoke favorably to the idea of using different colors so that three stars of one color could indicate performance and another color could be used to indicate growth. Ms. Schaefer reiterated the interest in this type of approach to help parents and communities better understand the special opportunities being offered at their child's schools.

Because she in attendance to make a presentation later in the meeting, Board President Smarick asked Baltimore City Public Schools CEO, Dr. Sonja Santelises, if she would share her input on the draft ESSA plan. Dr. Santelises emphasized the very negative outcome for schools and communities if the accountability system does not depict the significant growth occurring in even low-performing schools. She noted that there are schools in which only 8% of students are scoring a 4 or 5 on PARCC and how deflating it would be to not show and give credit for the 15 or 20 percent improvements in performance being achieved within that school. Therefore, Dr. Santelises urged the State Board to take in to account nuances in the evaluation system as described and advocated by the MABE and PSSAM presenters.

[MABE Letter](#)

District Spotlight on Innovation: *Baltimore City Lab School Turnaround Strategy*

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises, CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, presented a detailed overview of the school system's framework for school improvement at its Priority/School Improvement Grant (SIG) Schools and highlighted the Lab School Turnaround Strategy developed at Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/Middle School. She emphasized that the school system is committed to changing the culture and implementing a new vision for accelerated school improvement in Priority/SIG Schools.

In her presentation, Dr. Santelises described the Commodore John Rodgers Lab School Model as being based on the following principles: strong leadership, effective teachers, additional time for learning, instructional program, safe and supportive school, family and community engagement, and data. Under this approach, the expected outcomes after five years as a turnaround school include improvements in academic outcomes in literacy and mathematics, increased student enrollment and attendance, improvements in student belonging and safety, and increased school-family partnerships.

Dr. Salmon and board members thanked Dr. Santelises for her presentation and then engaged in further questions and dialogue on successful turnaround strategies. Dr. Salmon noted the success of school restructuring and zero basing of staff; a strategy implemented by then Superintendent Maxwell in Anne Arundel County's Annapolis High School. Dr. Santelises shared that a relatively small percentage of teachers were retained at these turnaround schools and that this is reflective of the need to replace teachers whose expectations for students have drifted and are no longer aligned with the needs for school improvement in their schools.

Board member Stephanie Iszard inquired about how the use of this model will be expanded to other schools in the system, and Dr. Santelises responded that she and board hope so but that it will be a matter of funding, collaboration and state involvement. Board member David Steiner and Dr. Santelises discussed the toolkit of strategies and financial incentives for recruiting high quality principals and teachers. Dr. Finn and Dr. Santelises discussed the pivotal role of the principal and the need, at times, to make personnel changes in that position as well.

Baltimore City Schools – School Year Calendar Waiver Request

The State Board granted the request by Baltimore City Public Schools to waive the post-Labor Day school start date for Harford Heights Elementary School; James McHenry Elementary/Middle School; and Mary Rodman Elementary School and deny the request for Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/Middle School for the 2017-2018 school year.

[School Calendar Waiver Request](#)

Innovative School Scheduling Workgroup Recommendations

Tiara Booker-Dwyer, MSDE's Director of the Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement, presented the findings and recommendations of the Innovative School Scheduling Workgroup formed by the State Board. State law, under Education Article §7-103.1, directs the State Board to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in instructional time in low-performing or at-risk public schools. The State Board had received a draft of the workgroup's report in April of 2017, which included the recommendation to extend the school year rather than the school day or week. The final report's recommendations differ primarily in the first recommendation's focus on year-round schooling.

Recommendations

1. Implement year-round schooling or extend the school year.
2. Provide funding for school systems to plan, pilot, implement, and sustain innovative schedules.
3. Provide leadership, guidance, and technical assistance to local school system leaders on the implementation of innovative school schedules.
4. Define metrics and an accountability structure to assess effectiveness of strategies implemented as part of innovative schedules.
5. Include a significant amount of high-quality, structured time beyond the traditional school schedule.
6. Focus innovative schedules on advancing academic studies in core content areas, enrichment opportunities, and health services for students.
7. Provide time for educators to enhance their professional practice.
8. Utilize certificated educators to facilitate academic instruction when implementing additional time in core content areas.
9. Include digital learning as an option to engage students in learning experiences as a part of innovative school schedules.
10. Include opportunities for community partners and institutions of higher education to engage students in enrichment opportunities and health services.

Ms. Booker-Dwyer informed the Board that the post-Labor Day start date results in an extended summer break, and that the summer learning loss known to occur following this break disproportionately impacts students from low-income families and negatively impacts their academic performance over time. She shared that workgroup members strongly favored the year-round school model over extending the traditional school year. In addition, she emphasized that both approaches, extending the school year by 200 to 300 hours or adopting year-round school schedule, achieve proven benefits to addressing the summer learning gap. She described the traditional year-round model as 45 days on and 15 days off, throughout the calendar year.

Ms. Booker-Dwyer and the Board discussed the provision of the Governor's Executive Order concerning the post-Labor Day/June 15 school year as identifying three types of schools eligible for waivers: charter

schools, low performing schools, and at-risk schools. However, whereas low-performing and charter schools are defined elsewhere in the law, at-risk schools are not. Ms. Booker-Dwyer clarified that the calendar waiver the State Board granted for four Baltimore City Schools earlier in the day was based on a definition of focus schools which are defined as schools in the top 10 percent of Title I schools with the largest within-school gaps between the highest achieving subgroup and the lowest achieving subgroups.

Board member Finn spoke in favor of establishing a clear definition of at-risk schools, and questioned whether legislation would be needed to do so. Board President Smarick indicated that the State Board had the authority define such terms. Following the Board's discussion, Dr. Salmon directed staff to further explore a working definition of at-risk schools to facilitate decision-making on innovative scheduling. In addition, Board member Justin Hartings spoke in favor of pursuing how to broaden options for school systems to use digital learning to address gaps in classroom instruction. Dr. Salmon also noted the innovative school scheduling being offered in the LYNX school in Frederick County.

[Innovative School Scheduling Memo](#), [Final Report](#) & [Website](#)

2015-2016 Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Ratings

Dr. Carol Williamson, MSDE's Deputy State Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and Tiara Booker Dwyer, presented the report and described the requirements and definitions included under Race to the Top program and the Education Reform Act of 2010. Under the Act, each local school system must develop an evaluation system in agreement with their local educators' associations. In addition, the State adopted a model evaluation system which includes a 50/50 approach to professional practice and student growth. The report being presented is for the 2015-2016 school year, and the department is now compiling the 2016-2017 data which will be available in September.

Dr. Williamson stressed the definitions of effective and highly effective vary greatly from one school system to another, reflecting locally agreed upon values, priorities, and professional development programs. For example, she noted different amounts of emphasis on planning and preparation in rating a teacher's performance. She also emphasized that being effective is perfectly acceptable; and that teachers are not expected to "live in highly effective land."

Ms. Booker-Dwyer described the evaluation methodology and tools including the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching, Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MdILF), and Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. She shared that principals have been evaluated across both domains, MdILF and ISLLC, but that these domains will soon be replaced by Maryland's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders for the 2017-2018 school year

The board engaged in a lengthy discussion which was highly critical of the methodologies and value of the local effectiveness reports, focusing on the fact that 98% of teachers and principals are identified as effective or highly effective. Staff noted that even the student performance portion of the evaluation criteria is based goals developed by the teachers and principals themselves. Dr. Steiner shared that in New York they saw a huge difference between teachers rated effective based on SLOs, which was very high, and based on PARCC growth, which was much lower because it uses a much more rigorous growth metric. The comparability of the data was also critiqued, as staff pointed out that some districts define 98% of teachers as highly effective and another may identify only 2% as being highly effective. More broadly, Drs. Finn and Steiner agreed that this methodology is out of synch with the state's revamping of the state accountability system. Board member Hartings cautioned that, as a former local board member, his

understanding was that the State's policy reflected deference to local systems to define how they evaluate teachers and principals, but to hold local systems accountable for how our students perform. For this reason, he would hesitate to support State Board direction to local school systems in this area. State Board counsel Liz Kameen informed the Board that the Education Reform Act also requires the local autonomy model being discussed, and therefore any alternative system would require legislation. Board President Smarick identified the fundamental question as to whether the State is holding school systems accountable for inputs or outcomes.

Dr. Salmon stated her intention to make this presentation to the local superintendents to hear from them and look at the possibilities of revamping the state framework. She will seek agreement on data that better reflects what is effective and not effective across local school systems, while reflecting differences in approaches to responding to teacher evaluations with supports and/or decisions to not renew contracts. Ms. Booker-Dwyer noted that MSDE is working with the Sothern Regional Education Board (SREB) and Education First to propose significant changes to the educator evaluation system. Dr. Salmon concluded by sharing her very strong feelings about the need to put this report on hold and to meet with the local superintendents and then proceed to propose significant changes.

[Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Report](#)

Procedures for the Removal of Professional Assistants and Special Appointment within MSDE

Kristy Michel, MSDE's Chief Operating Officer, requested approval of changes to the department's procedures for removing professional assistants and special appointments in order to better align MSDE's procedures with other State agencies and to fully comply with State law.

[Memo and Procedures](#)

Lead Higher

Dr. Williamson presented update on Lead Higher, which she described as an initiative to close equity gaps for lower income students and students of color in Maryland's Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs.

In 2016, the Lead Higher Initiative chose Maryland through a competitive national process as the second state (after Illinois) to commit to closing access gaps by 2020. Lead Higher is The Lead Higher Initiative is a consortium created in April 2015, and includes Equal Opportunity Schools, College Board, International Baccalaureate, and the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

The initiative began in Maryland as pilot in six Montgomery County schools in the 2016-2017, and will expand to 22 schools in six of Maryland's local school systems in 2017-2018. EOS will provide onsite technical assistance to analyze data, create a strategy to reach and recruit students, and provide ongoing planning support, data tools, and enrollment tracking. MSDE will continue to identify and engage school systems and schools to participate in order to close the statewide race and income participation gap in AP/IB by 2019-20 and raise AP/IB performance by spring of the 2020-2021 school year.

Dr. Williamson highlighted the affordable cost structure of the program, which totals \$54,000 per school, but only costs local school system's \$17,000 per school with the support provided by EOS and MSDE grants. Dr. Salmon stated that she is very impressed with this equity initiative and that data from Maryland other States will demonstrate all students with access to these courses perform well on the assessments.

[Lead Higher Initiative Report](#)

Superintendent's Report

Tiara Booker-Dwyer, MSDE, presented a report on MSDE's "Customized Support for School Improvement: A Focus on Baltimore City Public Schools" and described the goal of the program to provide continuous, coordinated supports for improvement in Baltimore City schools. She described the program as based on West Ed's four domains for rapid school improvement, including: Turnaround Leadership, Talent Development, Instructional Transformation, and Culture Shift. She described the department's "learning walks" and the intensive work involved in visiting schools to observe instruction and leadership to inform the identification of needed reforms. She was positive about the work MSDE is doing to gain an understanding of the schools the department is to serve, and also the leadership of Dr. Santelises in changing school climate and culture. Key learnings include demonstrated progress in family engagement and school climate, and the need for significant improvements in the rigor of content and quality of instruction, and leadership development.

Ms. Booker-Dwyer reported that the curriculum vetting procedure has shown the need to enhance the focus on literacy; and that MSDE's content experts will work to ensure better alignment with math and English/language arts standards. Regarding data analysis, she noted the City already has a culture/climate survey for parents and other stakeholders and that this is being tailored for an organizational assessment and building school profiles to facilitate collaboration on the school improvement plans. Regarding funding, she described sources including SREB, which is paying for professional development, Title I priority school funding, and a SEED grant which has been applied for but not yet awarded.

[Report on MSDE's Support for Baltimore City Schools](#)

Public Comment

One person presented public comments in support of high quality professional development and teacher training on reading instruction methods.

Opinions & Orders

The State Board issued legal opinions and orders in the following cases:

- R.L. v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, directing the school system to locate the student and report to the State Board on the plan to locate and return the student to school;
- Rodney Hudson v. Prince George's County Board of Education, affirming the local board's teacher nonrenewal decision;
- Gregory Sutton v. Somerset County Board of Education, staying the appeal of the local board's employee termination decision until the District Court rules on the discrimination claim; and
- Susan Twigg v. Montgomery County Board of Education, dismissing the employee's appeal.