March 22-23, 2021

Special Meeting of the State Board (March 22, 2021)

On Monday, March 22, 2021, Board President Clarence Crawford convened the hybrid teleconference and in-person meeting and was joined by members, including: Vice President Jean Halle, Warner Sumpter, Rose Li, Joan Mele-McCarthy, Gail Bates, Charles Dashiell, Jr., Rachel McCusker, Lori Morrow, Shawn Bartley, Susan Getty, Holly Wilcox, and student board member Jason Wu.

Link to meeting agenda, materials, and video.

Performance Metrics for Second Term of 2020-2021 School Year

Dr. Dara Shaw, MSDE Research Director, presented data on local school system performance metrics on 1. Student attendance, 2. Student grades, 3. Learning modes, and 4. System responses to student data. She noted that the second term refers to mid-November 2020 through the end of January 2021. School systems were asked to update the data collected during the first term (Fall 2020) and provide additional information about interim student grades.

Student Attendance

Dr. Shaw presented data on student attendance rates for all students, student services groups (English Learners, Economically Disadvantaged, Special Education), and race/ethnicity. Among the 24 local school systems, 6 reported 95-100% attendance; 13 reported 90-94%; 3 reported 85-89%, and 2 reported 80-84%. Significant attendance rate decreases of 3 percentage points or greater were reported for students with disabilities in 10 school systems and economically disadvantaged students in 14 systems. Significant decreases were reported for Black students in 10 systems, Hispanic students in 6 systems, and White students in 6 systems.

Student Grades

The State Board reviewed changes in the second term fail rate from 2019-2020 in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Failure rates approximately doubled in English in 11 school systems, in Math in 13 systems, in Science in 15 systems, and Social Studies in 12 systems.

Learning Modes

- As of the last day of the second term: 22 systems had all or nearly all of the students entirely virtual, two systems had 35-55 percent of students face-to-face, with the remaining students hybrid and/or completely virtual.
- By the end of March 2021: 3 systems will have most/all grades face-to-face, usually four days per week, with an additional system planned for April, 13 systems will have most/all grades hybrid; usually, two days per week, with an additional three systems planned for April • 4 systems will have a combination of face-to-face, hybrid, and virtual instruction depending on grade level.

System Responses to Student Data

School systems reported on whether they had administered an interim assessment after the start-of-year diagnostic and on their observations and responses to address these results.

- Systems reported employing interim assessments reported using them to: drive responsive instructional practices, moderate pacing, and scaffolding practices, streamline and rearrange school schedules, develop and deploy professional development, increase compensatory, intervention and alternative education opportunities, modify grading policies, bolster student supports for organization, motivation, and advocacy.
- Systems also reported employing several strategies to amend, improve, and supplement existing intervention structures such as purchasing new assessments (9 systems), procuring new or overhauling current curricula and materials (12), hiring new or reassigning support staff (7), designing or obtaining new interventions (21), and providing summer opportunities for struggling students (5).

[Second Term Performance Metrics, 2020—2021](#)

Survey to Combat Disrupted Instruction

Dr. Williamson presented the results of the department's "Survey to Combat Disrupted Instruction."

President Crawford requested clarification on the meaning of "evidence-based strategies" relating to tutoring. Dr. Williamson responded that MSDE had identified evidence-based strategies, including links on the department's website. Dr. Salmon emphasized that Dr. Williamson's team has been reviewing school system applications for federal ESSER funding to ensure the use of approved evidence-based programs and strategies. Dr. Shaw explained in greater detail the department's work to review specific programs as to whether rigorous research demonstrates that the specific program's benefits to student outcomes are achieved.

[Survey to Combat Disrupted Instruction](#)

Addressing the Impact of Interrupted Instruction

Tiara Booker-Dwyer provided a comprehensive overview of the department's plan to monitor local school system investments of federal COVID relief funding.

Dr. Salmon also described a regional model for behavioral health crisis intervention services that will be the subject of a briefing at the State Board's April meeting. She shared that the department plans to allocate a substantial share of the federal funding the department is authorized to retain to support this new program.

[Addressing the Impact of Interrupted Instruction](#)

Regular Meeting of the State Board (March 23, 2021)

On Tuesday, March 23, 2021, Board President Clarence Crawford convened the teleconference meeting and was joined by members, including: Vice President Jean Halle, Warner Sumpter, Rose Li, Joan Mele-McCarthy, Gail Bates, Charles Dashiell, Jr., Rachel McCusker, Lori Morrow, Shawn Bartley, Susan Getty, Holly Wilcox, and student board member Jason Wu.

Link to meeting agenda, materials, and video.

Public Comments

The State Board heard public comments from the following:

Shaun Rose, President of Rock Spring Children's Center, presented concerns that COVID relief funds intended for child care centers have not reached providers who continue to experience severe reductions in enrollment and lost revenue.

Dr. Michael Martirano, Howard County Superintendent, described the planned virtual learning center option for Howard County students and urged continued local flexibility to offer innovative virtual learning programs without legislative restrictions.

Dr. Jack Smith, Montgomery County Superintendent, requested attention to the alignment of state assessments and the Maryland Report Card with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation.

Cheryl Bost, President of the Maryland State Education Association, cautioned that the recently revised CDC guidance reducing social distancing in schools from 6 to 3 feet has additional conditions on reopening safely and emphasized the need to continue focusing on health safety conditions for returning to in-person learning. She also noted the Blueprint passage into law, urged support for the companion Blueprint bill and greater collaboration.

Thomas Warner, a Frederick County parent, advocated for an advisory group to review and recommend improvements to substance abuse education.

Margery Smelkinson, a Montgomery County parent, urged the reopening of schools and criticized the slow pace of returning to in-person learning.

Maryland Broadband Education Network

Rick Gordon, Director of the Governor's Office of Rural Broadband, provided an overview and update on the State's efforts to utilize available state and federal funding to ensure statewide access for school systems and students and families to high-quality broadband access. He highlighted the Governor's investments, including $15 million for a statewide wireless education network, and most recently through a $7 billion increase in funding for the federal E-Rate program. He updated the Board on the current status of efforts to expand access, including expanding the use of "vertical assets" such as water towers for signal transmission, noting challenges in areas such as Somerset County that lack infrastructure, including such vertical assets.

Mr. Gordon described the recent grant award to Collaborative Solutions Maryland, Inc., a nonprofit corporation established by the University of Maryland, to provide innovative solutions to the education community. He outlined the $15 million used to construct a statewide wireless network owned and operated by CSM with school systems sharing in the governance and costs of running the system.

He also noted ongoing efforts to ensure student data privacy and content controls as required by federal law. Also, Mr. Gordon described the need to collect student locations from all 24 local school systems and that only seven have responded to the request. Board President Crawford offered the State Board's support to ensure completed school system responses to these requests.

General Sumpter asked whether federal funding is available to assist families in paying for services provided through entities such as Choptank Electric which is expanding services in Somerset County. Mr. Gordon responded that there are many different funding sources, timelines, and conditions and that school systems will need to continue to work with providers to optimize services for students.

Presentation

Federal Accountability Waivers

Deputy Superintendent Mary Gable presented proposed modifications to the State Accountability Plan and its operation in the 2020-2021 school year. She reiterated that Maryland will not be sorting and ranking schools based on data from this school year. Secondly, she described the accountability measures for targeted support and improvement (TSI) schools and comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) schools. She described the proposed waiver requests, for U.S. Department of Education (USDE) approval, including not being required to: meaningfully differentiate schools (no star rating); identify new CSI and TSI schools, and administer science assessments. She highlighted continued attention to student attendance. Ms. Gable also described the technology survey administered last fall and the intent to distribute it again this spring, noting that USDE now requires reporting on student access to educational technology and broadband. She proposed that the State Board approve recommendations for public comment and scheduled for final State Board approval at its April meeting before submission to USDE. The State Board approved the posting of these recommendations on the department's website for public comment.

Memo & Presentation

State Accountability Waivers

Deputy Superintendent Mary Gable presented recommended waivers from State requirements for graduation, including assessments, service learning, and completer requirements due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures, virtual instruction, and hybrid schedules. The State Board approved the following recommendations.

- COMAR 13A.03.02.06 Maryland High School Assessments – Request a waiver for all students in the 2020-2021 school year (including fall 2021 per waiver from USED) from passing Algebra I, English 10, and the Maryland Integrated Science assessments. Taking the assessment will meet the graduation requirement. Students must still pass the respective courses.
- COMAR 13A.03.02.06 Maryland High School Assessments – Request a waiver for all students from taking and passing the American Government assessment in the 2020-2021 school year. Students must still pass the respective course.
- COMAR 13A.03.02.05 Student Service - Graduation Requirement – Request waiver of the Student Service requirement for seniors who have not met the requirements.
- COMAR 13A.04.02.03(G) Secondary School Career and Technology Education – Request waiver for seniors' requirements for supervised work-based learning experiences and industry-

mentored projects for seniors. Seniors would graduate as a CTE completer with at least four CTE credits and could complete work-based learning experiences beyond the school year.
- COMAR regulations governing Programs for Cosmetology, Nail Technicians, and Barbers.

[Memo & Presentation](#)

SAT and AP Test Results for the 2020 & Prior School Years

Dr. Dara Shaw, MSDE Director of Research, presented 2020 data on student participation and success on Advanced Placement (AP) exams and the SAT. College Board released the "AP Cohort Data Report: Graduating Class of 2020" on February 24, 2021, and MSDE's data on AP and SAT results are available at MDReportCard.org.

Dr. Shaw reviewed data for the test year 2020 and previous years, including student participation and success rates disaggregated by student group. The report compares Maryland's rate of at least one AP exam per student to national averages and displays results based on gender and race/ethnicity. The Board engaged in a lengthy discussion on equity and access issues relating to AP and SAT administration.

[Memo & Presentation](#)

2021 Session Legislative Report

Zachary Hands, MSDE's Director of Government Relations, provided the Board with a status report on the legislative session, highlighting that the legislature just passed the "cross-over" date by which bills must pass their House of origin to be guaranteed a hearing in the other chamber. He then updated the Board on two bills which they voted to oppose.

- SB 785, a bill modifying State Board membership and qualifications, has passed the Senate and is scheduled for a hearing in the House.
- HB 465, a bill requiring Senate confirmation of the State Board's appointed State Superintendent, has passed the House and is scheduled for a Senate hearing.

Mr. Hands also provided an update on the status of amendments to the Blueprint Revisions bill, HB 1372/SB 965, which was introduced to make technical and substantive policy revisions to the Blueprint bill passed by veto override earlier this session, HB 1300. The House recently passed the revisions bill with several amendments. The Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee voted to adopt a set of amendments earlier on March 23, with the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee scheduled to do so on the following day.

Board President Crawford addressed the Board's concerns with the specter of the overarching authority of the Accountability and implementation Board (AIB). Board Vice President Halle made a statement urging the General Assembly to recognize the role and authority of the State Board relative to the pending action to establish the AIB.

[Session Update](#)

Literacy Support for Older Students

Cecelia Roe, MSDE's Director of Instructional Assessment, Professional Learning, and English Language Arts, presented a comprehensive overview of evidence-based strategies to benefit older students who are not on track for grade-level literacy standards. The members will also receive an overview of the support that the Maryland State Department of Education has provided to local school systems and school-based educators to implement evidence-based literacy strategies for older students. The Maryland State Comprehensive Literacy Plan may be found on the state website at http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/ELA/MDKeysComprehensiveLiteracy.pdf

Ms. Roe highlighted that third grade is the final year children should be "learning to read," after which students are "reading to learn." She distinguished between the use of screening in grades K-2 to focus on predicting reading success. Practices in grades 3 and above diagnose to discover deficits, which can be due to weaknesses in decoding skills, including phonemic awareness and phonics; language comprehension skills, including word meaning; or both decoding and comprehension.

The Board heard details about implementing the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant, which was awarded in 2017 to provide $45 million over four years. Ms. Roe shared that all 24 local school systems received SRCL funding to enhance birth to grade 12 alignment and prioritize disadvantaged populations and evidence-based strategies and programs. She concluded by highlighting the success of grant-funded reading apprentice pilot programs.

Presentation

Prekindergarten Regulations

Deputy Superintendent Mary Gable reviewed the history of public comments and resulting amendments to initially the proposed regulations. The proposed regulations include the following revisions and updates:

- Updated definitions.
- Language to differentiate between prekindergarten for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds.
- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment language to reflect 2018 revisions to Maryland Code, Education Section §7-210 Prekindergarten and kindergarten assessments.
- Eligibility language to allow for other indicators of risk and universal access was added.
- Local School System Responsibilities were revised to add requirements for prekindergarten paraprofessionals, clarify class sizes, and reference licensing regulations for all childcare programs that could be considered qualified vendors for offering prekindergarten programs.

Memo & Regulations

State Board Member Reports

Board Vice President Jean Halle announced that the Board of Public Works approved the State contract to purchase Canvas/Instructure as the statewide learning management system. Ms. Halle described Canvas as a robust platform that can be expanded to meet local school system needs with additional licenses. Board member Vermelle Greene announced that the Task Force's final report on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys, which she chairs, will be presented at the Board's April

meeting. Board member Rose Li noted her support for the concerns raised during public comment on the child care provider community's needs. Board member Shawn Bartley thanked Dr. Salmon for her leadership in the reopening of schools, and the Board joined in praising her work on behalf of students.

Opinions

The State Board issued legal opinions in the following cases:

- K.N. v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, affirming the local Board's denial of a divorced parent's student withdrawal request.
- S.R. v. Montgomery County Board of Education (III-IV), dismissing certain claims and otherwise affirming the local Board's decision.