

May 25, 2021

On Tuesday, May 25, 2021, Board President Clarence Crawford convened the hybrid teleconference and in-person meeting. He was joined by members: 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.

President Crawford noted that he and other members attending the meeting in person were not wearing masks following revised health guidance based on vaccination status.

[Link to meeting agenda, materials, and video.](#)

### **Public Comment**

The State Board received public comments from the following individuals:

Lisa Cline, a Montgomery County parent, voiced concerns regarding the adverse health effects of excessive screen time resulting from virtual learning.

Dr. Jennifer Linton Reesman, a psychologist, urged a return to in-person learning under a mandate to do so without granting waivers to local school systems to provide fewer than 180 days of in-person learning in the coming school year.

Cheryl Bost, President of the Maryland State Education Association, shared MSEA's frustration with the delay in submitting the American Rescue Act plan to the U.S. Dept. of Education from June 7 to July 30 and urged greater teacher representation on stakeholder groups.

Carol Vidal, a Baltimore County parent, urged the State Board's action to ensure the opportunity for all students to return to in-person learning this school year. She also recommended a commission to study the governance structure of Maryland's public schools that led to the long-term and ongoing school closures.

Karleen Spitulnik requested amendments to the proposed reading screening regulations by expanding the universal screening mandate to include first grade in addition to kindergarten.

Betty Ball, a Montgomery County parent of students receiving special education services, urged the State Board to require full-time in-person learning in the fall without granting any waivers to local school systems to provide fewer than 180 days of in-person learning.

Melissa McDonald, a Baltimore City teacher and union representative, shared concerns with the Office of Human Capital’s administration about the teacher certification system.

Mondi Kumbula-Fraser, a Montgomery County parent, requested the State Board’s action to require the availability of full-time, in-person learning for all students and emphasis on the recovery of learning loss by extending the school day and/or school year, and the need for robust mental health services to address the social-emotional learning needs of students.

Sharon Saroff, a special education consultant, shared her support for ongoing opportunities for students with disabilities who have benefitted from virtual learning.

### Federal Funding Set Aside Plan Approvals

Dr. Salmon began by clarifying that local school systems have already received \$1.2 billion in federal aid and that the American Rescue Plan Act plan involves only the remaining third of the federal funding that is being provided. The State Board received a presentation from Amalie Brandenburg, MSDE’s Chief Financial Officer.

Ms. Brandenburg began by outlining the department’s proposed plan for spending the federal funding provided through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief II (ESSER II) Fund Set Aside. The Board unanimously approved the recommendation.

Ms. Brandenburg then outlined the department’s proposed spending plan for the ESSER III State Set Aside funds. The Board unanimously approved the recommendation.

[Memo & Presentation](#)

<b>ESSER II State Set Aside</b>	
Maryland Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams	30,000,000
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	6,840,684
MVLO Pilot and Evaluation	4,532,114
Monitoring Teams	16,500,000
Expand AP for Low Income Students	2,069,550
MSD, MSB, SEED	707,890
Technology Integration	750,000
Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys Task Force Initiatives	1,000,000
Academic Acceleration for At-risk	
<b>ESSER III State Set Aside</b>	
Interventions to Address Learning Loss	97,556,840
Summer Enrichment Programs	19,511,368
Afterschool Programs	19,511,368
Maryland Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams	10,000,000
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	3,159,316
Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys Task Force Initiatives	2,000,000
Hold Future Use	33,619,104
Administration	9,755,684
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$195,113,680</b>

## **Maryland Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams**

Assistant Superintendent Mary Gable presented on the department's proposal to use a portion of the federal state set-aside funds to meet the needs of students through the establishment of Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams. She acknowledged the leadership and contributions of the Mental Health Committee established by Dr. Salmon under the leadership of State Board Member Dr. Holly Wilcox and numerous stakeholders. She described the Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams proposal to serve six regions across the State. The Teams will work closely with the local Superintendents to provide clinical support, meet crisis needs within the school systems, and provide professional development.

Ms. Gable described the purpose of the program and intended services, the composition of the teams, and the tentative regions. Teams would include: Clinical Psychologist, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, Licensed Certified Social Worker (Clinical), School Nurse, Family Navigator(s) (tentative 2 per team).

The purpose of these Crisis Support Teams is to: Improve behavioral health services for Maryland's children and youth; Meet the needs of children/youth and their parents/caregivers; Provide support and assist in the implementation of prevention strategies; De-escalate and ameliorate a crisis before more restrictive and costly interventions become necessary, and provide direct clinical support.

The composition of the six regions is proposed:

- Western (Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Washington)
- Upper Chesapeake (Baltimore County, Cecil, Harford, Kent)
- Central West (Howard, Montgomery)
- Central East (Anne Arundel, Baltimore City)
- Southern (Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, St. Mary's)
- Eastern Shore (Caroline, Dorchester, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, Worcester)

Board members asked several clarifying questions, expressed their strong support for this initiative, and unanimously approved the department's proposal.

### [Memo & Presentation](#)

## **Impromptu Update on School Reopenings**

Dr. Salmon shared a run-through of the status of school reopenings and the rate of return to in-person learning among the 24 local school systems. She concluded by stressing that the situation persists that 400,000 students who have not been in school since March 2020 remain in virtual learning. She referred to the public comments and other input the State Board has received urging

action to reopen schools. Board President Crawford indicated that he wanted the Board to consider how to “lean in” to accelerate local efforts to return to in-person instruction.

### **Performance Metrics for the Third Term of the 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. In addition, school systems were asked to report on the number of students choosing to remain in virtual learning and teacher location. She noted that the third term refers to approximately January 28<sup>th</sup> to April 9<sup>th</sup>, varying by the school system.

Regarding student attendance, Dr. Shaw highlighted that 19 systems reported at least 90% attendance, with 16 systems either improving or maintaining their attendance rated from the second term. She described the ongoing high rates of failing grades in the third term of this school year as consistent with the dramatically higher failure rates seen in the second term of this school year than the pre-pandemic second term of the prior school year.

Regarding modes of instruction, 23 systems reported that most teachers are teaching from within the same room they would be teaching their traditional in-person classroom where they would be teaching if they were in-person, hybrid, or virtually. In addition, a high percentage of parents continue to respond that they are opting at this time for virtual learning.

Board member Morrow asked about the six systems where more than 50% of parents have been offered in-person instruction and chose to remain virtual. Dr. Salmon referenced a recent town hall hosted by Governor Hogan, the State Board’s Resolution calling for a return to school, and the need to continue to message families the assured safety of returning to school. She predicted that the high rates of vaccination and low positivity rates, combined with outreach to parents to encourage the return to in-person learning, will see a dramatic return to normal in the fall. She also recommended offering tours of school buildings to demonstrate the safety of returning. She also reminded the Board of the weekly Friday postings of the rates of in-person learning by grade level for each school system ([5/21/2021 Report](#)).

Dr. Shaw presented school system responses to the following questions.

- As students have returned to in-person instruction, what have you observed about the social-emotional health of students? How are you addressing what you have observed? Where would you like additional support?
- Is your school system planning on providing extended day instruction during the fourth term?
- Is your school system planning on providing summer learning opportunities?

### **Summer School Requirements, Options, and Accountability**

Deputy Superintendent Dr. Carol Williamson presented on summer school utilizing the provisions of the recently enacted Blueprint Revisions legislation, House Bill 1372. She empathized the mandated provisions of the law, including requirements to:

- Establish and implement a summer school program for public school students, including students who will be in kindergarten in the upcoming school year and were eligible to attend a publicly funded prekindergarten program;
- Include daily academic instruction in reading or math that is aligned with the county board's or public school's curriculum;
- Incorporate the county's program for providing free and reduced-price meals in the summer; and
- Offer student transportation services to students who need transportation to participate in the program.

In addition, the law requires that school systems administer an educational assessment to each student before and after completion of the summer school program and evaluate the program's effectiveness. Lastly, Dr. Williamson outlined each local Board's requirements to report on summer school programs to the new Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) by January 1, 2022.

President Crawford focused on his two primary concerns regarding the effectiveness of school systems to reopen schools and the evidence of educational outcomes for students. He voiced his concern that systems with high rates of virtual learning also appear to have high failure rates in terms of student performance and that the State Board needs to have school systems explain what their plans are to get students back in September. He also asked about evaluating the effectiveness of school system programs to address learning loss and meeting students' social/emotional learning needs. Dr. Salmon responded that the department's monitoring teams would be working on these issues.

Dr. Salmon and the Board engaged in a lengthy discussion about the slow pace of the return to in-person learning, particularly in light of the State Board's Resolution ordering the availability of 180 days of in-person instruction for all students in the 2021-2022 school year. And hurdle that local boards would need a waiver to avoid this requirement.

Dr. Salmon explained that school systems should not be surveying parents regarding their preference for virtual or in-person learning because that choice is not intended to be available in the 2021-2022 school year. The virtual option is designed only for a small number of students based on health needs and other limited family circumstances and should be based on a student's success in virtual learning. President Crawford concluded by reiterating his concern that 400,000 students are not receiving in-person instruction. For large percentages of these students' school systems, he wants to have the local system explain to the State Board their plan for compliance with the Resolution and whether the current situation is due to school system capacity or parental preference. Dr. Salmon agreed to report on these initiatives at the Board's June meeting.

[Report on Third Term Performance Metrics, 2020-2021](#)

### **Updating Equity Regulations & Guidance to Reflect the Recommendations of the Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys**

Board President Crawford began by thanking board member Dr. Vermelle Greene for her leadership in chairing the Task Force, culminating in the [final report](#) presented at the previous

Board meeting. Dr. Salmon introduced the presentation and shared that the proposal to amend regulations would be presented at the June meeting. Susan Spinnato, MSDE's Director of Instructional Programs, presented the proposals to incorporate the Task Force's recommendations into the Educational Equity regulation and the implementation guide for local school systems.

### [Memo & Presentation](#)

## **High School Graduation Regulations**

Dr. Salmon introduced the proposed revisions to the regulations governing high school graduation requirements. She also thanked the State Board for its work in leading the process by considering and endorsing specific elements of the proposed changes. These amendments resulted from the recommendations of the Maryland High School Graduation Task Force as reviewed and accepted by the State Board.

Assistant Superintendent Gable presented regulations for final adoption, explaining that the regulations in the proposed form came before the Board in January of 2021. They were approved for publication in the Maryland Register and shared with the Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review (AELR) Committee, with a minimal number of comments or questions.

She highlighted that comments endorsed increasing the health credit requirement from one half to one full credit. She also noted that several questions were raised about incorporating the high school assessments into end-of-course exams. She responded by explaining the detailed implementation process is not in the purview of the regulations but will be worked out in the coming school year. She also emphasized that this a proposal that local superintendents strongly support.

The State Board unanimously approved the final adoption of the amendments to COMAR 13A.03.02 - Graduation Requirements for Public High Schools in Maryland, COMAR 13A.04.01 - Requirements for Computer Science, Engineering, or Technology Education Instructional Programs, and COMAR 13A.04.09 - Program in Science.

### [Memo & Regulations](#)

## **Opinions**

The State Board issued legal opinions in the following cases:

- Matthew L. v. Somerset County Board of Education, affirming the local Board's curriculum decision.
- Andrea Martin v. Prince George's County Board of Education, affirming the local Board's teacher non-renewal decision.
- Lynn Nash, et al. v. Montgomery County Board of Education (II) and (III), dismissing the school siting appeal.
- Angelita Thomas-Crawford v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, affirming the local Board's teacher non-renewal decision.