

June 28, 2022

On Tuesday, June 28, 2022, Board President Clarence Crawford convened the meeting and was joined by Vice President Charles Dashiell, Jr., Shawn Bartley, Gail Bates, Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, Vermelle Greene, Jean Halle, Rachel McCusker, Lori Morrow, Warner Sumpter, and student member Kevin Bokoum.

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

Consent Agenda

The Board approved the consent agenda including personnel actions and budget adjustments.

Public Comments

Public comments were delivered by the following individuals: Cecil County Superintendent Jeff Lawson presented highlights of his school system's Maryland Leads grant including initiatives such as the "grow your own" program to promote students becoming educators, and innovative partnerships such as participating in the Teachers Academy of Maryland (TAM) and working with Towson University to enable teachers to become school psychologists. Ms. Sharon Saroff spoke to her continued frustration with the failure to allow more students receiving special education services to continue to engage in virtual learning, with the return to in-person learning being detrimental to many of these students. Elim Ephrame spoke to the need for increased mental health services for Maryland students. MiaVashe James, a Prince George's County conditional teacher, raised concerns and urged a solution to her pending termination and that of 700 other conditionally certified teachers in Prince George's County. Cheryl Bost, President of the Maryland State Teachers Association, spoke to the "five alarm crisis" of the teacher shortage and praised the role of the LEADS grants and bonuses for support staff, but urged more permanent programs.

Request for Waiver of Graduation Requirements (COMAR 13A.03.02)

Superintendent Choudhury presented his request for a waiver in the 2022-2023 school year from the current requirement that under the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program, the results of each of the four high school level assessments are to count for 20% of the student's final grade in the respective courses: English 10, Algebra 1, Science, and Government. State Board members clarified that the assessments would continue to be administered, but that results would not be mandated to be incorporated into a student's final grade in the respective course. The State Board unanimously approved the waiver request.

[Handout](#)

Covid Transmission Rates and School Logistics

Superintendent Choudhury presented recent data for the monthly update on state logistics and transmission rates related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including data on the number of students and staff who have needed to be quarantined, positivity rates, 7-Day moving average case rates per 100K by jurisdiction, community transmission levels, and statewide hospitalizations.

Highlights of the presentation include:

- Coordination with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to identify and reach out to parents of students lacking any of their required routine vaccinations required for school admission.
- The MDH/MSDE issued new interim COVID-19 guidance for K-12 school and child care settings on March 3, 2022.
- The Governor's 5-prong strategy announced on June 9, 2022 for the State's long-term approach to current and future pandemic conditions.
- The FDA and the CDC have approved COVID-19 vaccines for children under the age of 5 (6 months or older). There are approximately 358,000 Maryland children in this age group.

[Presentation](#)

Maryland Chamber of Commerce Civics Bee

Mary Kane and Whitney Harmel, President and Vice President of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce (MDCC), described the Chamber's National Civics Bee essay contest and introduced the finalists and winner of the contest, an eighth grader from Franklin Middle School in Baltimore County, who received a \$1,000 prize. Students briefly described their essays and had photos taken with the Superintendent and Board. Board President Crawford, who served as a judge and keynoted the awards ceremony, thanked the Chamber for their leadership in conducting the Civics Bee.

[MDCC Press Release](#)

Stakeholder Engagement

Board President Crawford described the State Board's initiative to engage with major stakeholders through roundtable discussions and presentations such as one today. He introduced Addie Kaufman, President of the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) who led the presentations and remarks from secondary principals including:

- Michael Brown, Principal, Winters Mill High School, Carroll County Public Schools
- Marc Cohen, Principal, Seneca Valley High School, Montgomery County Public Schools
- Deborah Dennie, Principal, Leonardtown Middle School, St. Mary's County Public Schools

Secondary principals highlighted successes and sources of pride, including:

- Returning to in-person learning including the activities and traditions such as sports, dances, plays and graduations.
- Reviving and building new meaningful relationships with students and families.
- Creating meaningful wellness opportunities for students and staff.

Secondary principals also outlined serious concerns, including:

- The critical shortages of teachers and administrators, exacerbated by the “poaching” of teachers by the private sector as the economy reopened.
- Severe vacancies of not only teachers and administrators but also paraeducators, administrative assistants, bus drivers, food service staff, etc.
- Dealing with small ratios of principals and counselors to students.
- Supporting staff through increased demands on workload and time.
- Handling the increased number of disruptive student behaviors, lack of social skills, and physical violence.
- The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future providing pay raises and career ladder for teachers but not principals.

A key concern and request from the panel was for a seat at the policy and decision-making table as a major stakeholder in Maryland public education, with the breadth and scope of federal and state advocacy and school-based experience to be of great value to the State Board in its role.

Principals representing the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP), led by Ms. Ryan Daniel, Principal, Fort Foote Elementary School, Prince George’s County Public Schools, highlighted successes and concerns arising from the 2021-2022 school year and coping with the impacts of the COVID pandemic.

- Tracy Hilliard, Principal, Urbana Elementary School, Frederick County Public Schools
- Glen Messier, Principal, Linton Springs Elementary School, Carroll County Public Schools

Elementary school principals highlighted very similar issues as the secondary principals, with special emphasis on the additional challenges arising from young students simply not having experience in group settings and the impacts on classroom, school, and playground management.

Board members and principals discussed strategies to address the teacher and principal shortage, focusing on the need for enhanced partnerships with higher education teacher preparation programs. The panel urged a solution to the unintended consequences of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future law providing no career ladder for school administrators, while it does require career ladders for teachers as well as providing guaranteed pay raises for classroom teachers. The associations requested additional opportunities for engagement and their desire to have a school principal representative on the State Board, aligned with the recent addition of a teacher and parent representative.

Strategic Planning Update

State Superintendent Choudhury introduced Mike Herschenfeld, MSDE’s Senior Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Continuous Improvement, who provided an overview and updates on the department’s adopted strategic planning process. Superintendent Choudhury highlighted his

engagement in the past year through shadowing students and principals in each of the 24 school systems. Mr. Herschenfeld outlined the results of the statewide strategic planning survey, with 23,168 responses to date. The top priorities identified through the survey include:

1. Improving reading and writing in the early grades
2. Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports
3. Improving math and science schools
4. Developing more excellent teachers
5. Improving critical thinking, problem solving, and collaborative teamwork skills

Superintendent Choudhury shared that expanding early education and improving career and technical education (CTE) are close behind as the 6th and 7th top priorities being shared by Marylanders.

MSDE has conducted 17 Roundtables with 232 Participants

- Arts Education Round Table
- Business Leader Round Table
- CTE Round Table
- Early Career & Rising Educator Round Table
- Early Childhood Education Round Table
- Educator Diversity Round Table
- English Learner Education Round Table
- Family Round Table
- Higher Education Round Table
- Mental Health Round Table
- School Leader Round Table
- Special Education Round Table
- Student Round Table
- Teacher Round Table
- Virtual School Round Table
- Local School Board Round Table(s)

MSDE has held 23 Listening Sessions with 1,500 Participants

- Parent and Family Engagement Express
- Special Education Family Support Coordinators (4)
- Special Education Service Provider Collaborative Steering Committee
- CTE Local Directors and Postsecondary CTE Meeting
- State Interagency Coordinating Council
- Principal Supervisory Meeting
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Alignment
- Gifted and Talented Advisory Council
- Nonpublic School
- Maryland Association of Student Councils Convention (MASC)
- Free State PTA
- Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) Conference
- Greater Salisbury Committee
- MCCACET Community College Meeting
- Special Education State Advisory Committee and Special Education County Advisory Committee Joint Meeting (SESAC/SECAC)
- Teach In Maryland
- Community W.E.L.L.
- The Council of Educational Administrative and Supervisory Organizations in Maryland (CEASOM)
- Black & Brown Coalition

[Presentation](#)

Financing the Future: Covid Relief Funds, Maryland Leads, and Blueprint State Aid

Superintendent Choudhury opened the presentation by emphasizing that he believes in making school finance transparent and clearly understandable for parents, teachers and advocates. Justin Dayhoff, MSDE's Assistant Superintendent of Financial Planning, Operations and Strategy, presented the uses and status of the three major sources of federal funds, including: the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Coronavirus Response & Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. Each of these three initiatives include designated tranches of funding for public schools, the "Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund" (ESSER), referred to as ESSER I, II, and III.

Mr. Dayhoff described the magnitude of the overall federal funding as enormous, but also noted that the relative federal contribution amounts to an additional \$500 in annual per pupil funding over five years. He also stressed the need for local school systems to avoid creating fiscal cliffs by investing one-time funds in recurring spending obligations and to plan diligently to create gradual slopes regarding the role of these federal funds.

In response to a board question, Mr. Dayhoff also noted that the ESSER funds are basically unrestricted without the typical supplement/not supplant restrictions or authority for MSDE to control the local use of ESSER funds. He described this flexibility as essential to school systems struggling to shift to virtual learning and provide devices and connectivity; clean schools and improve indoor air quality; and provide mobile and universal school meal programs. Superintendent Choudhury highlighted that ESSER was responsible for moving the entire nation to a one-to-one tablet/laptop system that may have been planned over several years. The board raised the concern that this is one potential source of a funding cliff as all of these devices need replacing at the same time.

Mr. Dayhoff described the "first in/first out" priority to spend ESSER I funds first, then ESSER II, and then ESSER III funds. He presented the overall share of local investments of ESSER I funds in supplies and materials at over 50%, with large shares also spent on contractual services largely related to supporting the expansion of devices, and on teacher salaries, teacher stipends, and other staff salaries and benefits. By contrast, the spending of ESSER II and III funds has been largely on teacher, administrator and staff salaries and contractual services, and relatively less on materials and supplies. He noted that within these broad trends local school systems have taken different and nuanced approaches to using these three sources of federal funds. Examples were presented from Baltimore City and Howard, Talbot and Washington Counties. Mr. Dayhoff also reflected the deep equity issues among school systems regarding the status of their HVAC systems, teacher pay, and many other challenges that informed their decisions on investing ESSER funds.

The presentation included a detailed overview of the department's uses of the amounts of State set aside funds under ESSER I, II, and II, totaling \$20 million, \$86 million and \$195 million, respectively. Mr. Dayhoff also provided an in-depth explanation of the Maryland Leads grant program. Maryland Leads is a new grant initiative designed to support local school systems in utilizing federal funds to overcome learning loss resulting from the pandemic, accelerate student learning to narrow opportunity and achievement gaps, and provide targeted support for historically underserved students and their communities. Leads grants are funded by more than the \$165 million in ESSER II State set aside funds. Leads grants provided substantial funding to local school systems to pursue the objectives identified in their applications, including through partnerships with dozens of MSDE-approved organizations from across the country.

Mr. Dayhoff described the goal, structure of the formula, and programs and activities supported by Leads grants, which are available on a non-competitive but rigorous selection process to school systems in up to seven program areas, including 1. Grow your own staff, 2. Staff support and retention, 3. The science of reading, 4. High-quality school day tutoring, 5. Reimagining the use of time, 6. Innovative school models, and 7. Transforming neighborhoods through excellent community schools. MSDE has awarded \$170.5 million and generated \$25 million in additional local matching funds, with the majority of funding invested in the first three program areas. 23 of 23 systems who applied are receiving grow your own staff funding; 22 systems are receiving staff support and retention funding; and 22 systems are receiving grant funds to support teacher instruction in the science of reading. Superintendent Choudhury noted that while other states have mandated such training, and retraining of current teachers, Maryland is using these grants as a carrot to incentivize significant evidence-based reforms in the use of phonics and reading comprehension. In response to a board question, the Superintendent shared that 2 school system applications were denied, following numerous unsuccessful revisions, and so the reforms in literacy are not statewide. He referred to the Ready to Read Act which does mandate statewide reforms in early grade screenings that are aligned with and supported by the Leads grants.

Lastly, Mr. Dayhoff presented the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act state aid amounts of funding, and the school-level per-pupil expenditure data required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and reiterated that just as the Leads grant applications and data all are online, so are the Blueprint and school-level data.

[Presentation](#) & [MSDE ESSER Funding Transparency Webpage](#)

Board Member Recognition

The State Board recognized student member Kevin Bokoum from Washington County for his year of service and participation on the Board, and wished him well as he begins his college studies at Harvard University.

Board Opinions

The State Board issued legal opinions for the following cases:

- *P.C. v. Montgomery County Board of Education*, affirming the local board's denial of a student change of school assignment request.
- *Exquisite Limousine Services, LLC, v. Prince George's County Board of Education*, dismissing the appeal because the arbitration clause in the contract provides the sole legal procedure for resolving disputes under the contract.
- *Jason Guarino v. Harford County Board of Education*, affirming the decision of the local board upholding the issuance of the letter of reprimand.