

October 24-25, 2022

On Monday, October 24, 2022, Board President Clarence Crawford convened a roundtable meeting in the board room of the Washington County Board of Education and was joined by Vice President Susan Getty, Chip Dashiell, Jr., Shawn Bartley, Gail Bates, Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, Vermelle Greene, Jean Halle, Joan Mele-McCarthy, Rachel McCusker, Lori Morrow, Warner Sumpter, Holly Wilcox, and student member Merin Thomas, from Wicomico County. The State Board engaged in a series of work sessions with the Washington, Allegany, and Garrett County boards of education.

Initially the State Board was joined by members of the Washington County Board of Education and Dr. David Sovine, Washington County Public Schools Superintendent. President Crawford asked Board President Melissa Williams to share challenges and success stories. She highlighted the system's Prekindergarten program which is comprehensive for all eligible four-year-olds; she shared that a concern is the capacity to expand PreK programs for three-year-olds through partnerships with a very limited number of private providers. Superintendent Sovine echoed the need for additional state efforts to address this challenge for Washington County and other school systems. Board members engaged in a lengthy discussion of the teacher shortage and the Maryland Leads grant funding for grow your own teachers programs. Board member April Zentmeyer shared that 32 student apprentices are participating in such a program through a partnership with Frostburg University. Superintendent Sovine highlighted the challenge to reduce from 80% to 60% the amount of time teachers spend in the classroom, and the need for 80 to 90 new teachers to achieve this Blueprint requirement. Board President Williams and others also requested relief from the regulatory, reporting, and planning burdens imposed on staff. Board member Darrell Evens and State Board members also discussed student behavior, the need for behavioral health supports, and the role of the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports which is expanded and funded under the Blueprint.

The series of work sessions continued with members of the Garrett County Board of Education, including Board members Jason VanSickle, Monica Rinker, and Rodney Glotfelty. Board member Glotfelty began by urging the State Board to consider the impacts of regulations and policies on rural school systems, the role of declining enrollment for systems that are already small, and the eventual expiration of federal Covid relief funding. Board member VanSickle highlighted the need for virtual snow days, and the need for improved parent engagement and education on why and how the school system is administering student discipline under state regulations and guidelines. He shared his support and excitement for the Blueprint, but also frustration that he knows staff shares regarding all of the unknowns as the new law is implemented. Board members also addressed the negative consequences for student learning presented by community drug abuse, poverty, and bullying and other behaviors of the very few disruptive students. Mr. Glotfelty focused on the need for less restrictive Blueprint funding formulas and additional resources to better serve

schools in in Garrett County in which high percentages of students are living in poverty but not high enough to qualify for community schools funding. The State Board's discussion with the Garrett County board members also covered the need for behavioral health and school health supports and the role of the Maryland Consortium. Board members shared their appreciation for the Western Maryland visit and meeting.

Allegany County Board President Crystal Bender, Vice President Bob Farrell, and members Debra Frank and Tammy Fraley introduced themselves and highlighted a number of issues and concerns. Board member Fraley described the school system's Chinese immersion program, and the need to support the investments in high-speed internet and educational technology to prepare students for the future. She highlighted her active participation in MABE, including as President in 2020. Regarding the Blueprint, Ms. Fraley stressed the need for information from MSDE to be communicated to all members of local boards of education and she and Ms. Frank stressed the need for outreach on the Blueprint with clearly understandable information for parents and the general public. Board members also discussed challenges in providing adequate numbers and ratios of mental health professionals in rural schools, school safety and the role of school resource officers, and the need to create CTE opportunities for students when large employers are no longer located in the county but do exist regionally across state lines.

Board President Crawford concluded the work sessions by reiterating the opportunity presented by the Blueprint to significantly change the learning and career trajectory of Maryland students for generations. He thanked the Western Maryland boards, superintendents, and staff for their candor and enthusiasm in highlighting their successes and challenges.

[Link to Oct. 24, 2022 meeting agenda and video](#)

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On Tuesday, October 25, 2022, Board President Clarence Crawford convened the State Board's monthly meeting in the board room of the Washington County Board of Education and was joined by Vice President Susan Getty, Chip Dashiell, Jr., Shawn Bartley, Gail Bates, Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, Vermelle Greene, Jean Halle, Joan Mele-McCarthy, Rachel McCusker, Lori Morrow, Warner Sumpter, Holly Wilcox, and student member Merin Thomas, from Wicomico County.

[Link to Oct. 25, 2022 meeting agenda, materials, and video](#)

## **Public Comments**

Public comments were delivered by the following individuals: A parent of a student with autism spectrum disorder described the outstanding services being provided to his son through the benefit of an assistive device and special educators. Cheryl Bost, President of the Maryland State Education Association, described MSEA's adoption of a Bill of Rights for Educational Support Personnel (ESPs) featuring expanded collective bargaining rights, job security, career advancement, and prohibitions against privatization. Baltimore City Schools CEO Dr. Sonja Santelises spoke in favor of providing support pathways for pre-college and career ready students

and new dedicated funding, which is not included in the Blueprint, to support these programs for students who are not on track or have not yet met the CCR standard. An individual raised concerns about the Anne Arundel County School System's insistence on the use by students of Chromebooks, which provide students access to the internet and non-instructional websites and materials. A representative of Celebree Schools spoke in support of legislation and regulations to expand the law passed in 2021 (SB 436/HB 597) to provide additional flexibility for child care centers in hiring staff and administrators. A representative of a civic education coalition spoke in support of the Blueprint law as a product of a grassroots and inclusive process, and urged support for additional mandates to embed civic education throughout the K-12 curriculum. A parent raised concerns with the data mining of student data and educational activities by Power School and Schoology and requested the choice to opt out her child's use of these systems. The Maryland Association of Student Council (MASC) representative for Garrett, Allegany and Washington County advocated for raising the profile of high-quality public schools in Western Maryland, thanked the State Board for conducting their meeting in Washington County, and thanked Superintendent Choudhury for the benefits of Maryland Leads grants. A representative of the Family Childcare Alliance of Maryland spoke in favor of regulatory changes to support a robust early childcare system by expanding the eligibility of family childcare operations to participate in the State's PreK program.

### **Consent Agenda**

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

### **Blueprint Deep Dive: College and Career Readiness Pathways – Apprenticeships in Washington County Schools**

Dr. David Sovine, Washington County Public Schools Superintendent, credited the previous school administration and team for creating a Career Technical Education (CTE) and apprenticeship program that excels at student recruitment, high quality programming, and onboarding of students in employment opportunities. He introduced a panel of students and staff who presented detailed descriptions of experiences as students in apprenticeships, and staff presentations on school systems partnership with the regional Workforce Development Board, the role of the school system's apprenticeship coordinator, and the need for sustained investments in staff and programs. Presenters highlighted the hiring of 32 tutors and the school system's expansion of apprenticeship programs through the Maryland Leads grant funding. Students enrolled in a variety of apprenticeship programs described the unique opportunities to learn soft skills, leadership skills, and employment-related training. Staff also emphasized the relationships built with employers to ensure them that students are gaining valuable instruction in these skills prior to coming to the workplace. Board members thanked the student presenters and praised the school system's apprenticeship program, which they had the opportunity to tour the day before the meeting.

Jim Aleshire, Apprenticeship Program Supervisor, highlighted that the school system began participating in the State's apprenticeship pilot program in 2016, with over 90 apprenticeship students in the current school year, and that number expected to double next year. Students Wonder Herrera, a healthcare facility security apprentice, Arionna Barnett, a school system reading tutor apprentice, and Justin Wingfield, an HVAC apprentice with a private company, each presented

on the benefits of their apprenticeship experiences. Apprenticeship Coordinator Wendy Moore described the role of employers in partnering with the school system to provide these opportunities.

## [Memo](#)

### **State Board and MSDE Strategic Plan Release**

President Crawford introduced the release of Phase I of the Strategic Plan and Engagement Report, requesting that the State Superintendent explain why the strategic plan is important and needed, and how it relates to the Blueprint, particularly in the context of the recent NAEP scores that show marked learning loss and gaps in reading and math. He noted that while the Blueprint is a long-term initiative it will not take seven to 10 years to see that it is actually working or making a difference.

Superintendent Choudhury began by emphasizing that every high-performing public or private sector organization has a strategic plan to identify priorities and performance benchmarks. He also reiterated that the strategic plan should reflect that we need to be bold to move well beyond a return to normal post-Covid and instead accelerate student learning.

#### Why Do We Need a Strategic Plan?

- Developing a Strategic Plan creates an opportunity to identify the key priorities for transformative change, and to align organizational structures and resource allocation to accomplish those priorities. Successful organizations use a strategic planning process to ensure focused progress and alignment around clear priorities and goals.
- Educational experiences in Maryland before the COVID-19 pandemic did not prepare all students for postsecondary success. Deep achievement gaps were prevalent prior to the pandemic in opportunities and outcomes for historically underserved groups. As we work to recover from documented learning loss, moving towards the pre-pandemic status quo is not enough; we must rebuild with an eye on equity.
- We need to move with urgency to actualize the bold, transformative change that will be necessary to achieve the excellent and equitable outcomes our students deserve.
- Creating a Strategic Plan will also anchor and reinforce the Blueprint legislation into the organizational fabric of the department and its everyday work. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, enacted by the Maryland Legislature in 2021, is intended to transform the state's entire education system, from childcare through graduating high school, into a world-class system that prepares all students for success.

The Superintendent outlined the elements of Phase 1, 2 and 3 of the strategic planning process. Phase 1, being released today, includes the mission, vision, values, priorities, and enablers for priorities to be achieved. He outlined the five major policy areas and pillars of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the alignment of the strategic plan with the Blueprint. Board member Chip Dashiell, Strategic Plan Subcommittee Chair, praised the outstanding work of the strategic planning subcommittee, MSDE staff, and the Superintendent's leadership and vision in conducting the

outreach and stakeholder engagement essential to the transformative change and equitable and excellent outcomes for students intended by the Blueprint. Mr. Dashiell described the numbers of survey respondents, event participants, and roundtables and listening sessions conducted by the subcommittee and MSDE staff. The Superintendent described the scope of survey outreach and the survey results and presented a detailed explanation of each of the following strategic plan priorities.

- Priority 1: Ready for Kindergarten All Maryland students are prepared socially, emotionally, and academically for success in kindergarten.
- Priority 2: Ready to Read All Maryland students are proficient in reading by the end of third grade, and those who are not have the necessary supports to become proficient.
- Priority 3: Ready for High School All Maryland students enter high school on track to meet the college and career readiness standard by the end of 10th grade, and are engaged socially, emotionally, and academically to succeed in progressively challenging and advanced level coursework aligned to college and career pathways.
- Priority 4: Ready for College and Career All Maryland students graduate from high school college and career ready, and with an individualized plan to succeed in college, career and life.

The presentation concluded with commitments to continue to promote the strategic plan and conduct the next planning processes in Phases 2 and 3.

[Strategic Plan Presentation](#) and [Strategic Plan](#)

## **Western Maryland Gallery Walk & Reflections**

Superintendent Choudhury shared the gallery walk maps and data sets for Allegany, Garrett and Washington County school systems noting that these are the same maps presented at the recent MABE conference for all school systems. He noted that all of this information is available on the MSDE website and accessible via QR Code. He briefly reviewed school enrollment data for Western Maryland school systems. Following the brief presentations described below attendees participated in the Gallery Walk and shared their reflections. Washington County Superintendent David Sovine and Allegany County Superintendent Jeff Blank shared their focus on the role of expanding offerings of full-day prekindergarten to improve school readiness, which the Washington County school system already provides for 4-year-olds. Both Superintendents spoke to their enthusiasm for the additional funding and supports from the State and MSDE for the reforms contained in the Blueprint.



## **School Finance**

Justin Dayhoff, Assistant Superintendent for Financial Planning, Operations, and Strategy, presented an overview of Blueprint for Maryland's Future funding formulas. He explained that the resources associated with the Blueprint are not all provided in year one of the law and that the moving parts of the phase-in mean formula amounts, per-pupil, will differ each year. The Blueprint formula is phased in and occurs in three ways: 1. Changes to the target per-pupil foundation

amount; 2. Changes to formula weights; and 3. Changes to formula weight eligibility criteria. He emphasized that the base per-pupil amount and targeted weighted amount for students in specific subgroups provide, when combined, the adequate amount of funding to support the education of all students. Mr. Dayhoff then reviewed examples of the projected changes in these funding amounts.

Superintendent Choudhury and Mr. Dayhoff reviewed the state and local share of per pupil funding being provided in Allegany, Garrett and Washington counties and explained the operation of wealth equalization of the state share of education aid.

Board President Crawford inquired on the recent court decision on the constitutionality of taxing online advertising and the potential impact on mandated funding under the Blueprint. Mr. Dayhoff responded that the Blueprint Fund has several dedicated revenue sources and that the availability of the revenues in question would not affect the mandates under the law. Board member McCusker asked about the role of local funding and remedies for inadequate local funding. Mr. Dayhoff responded by explaining that the Blueprint requires local governments provide the greater amount of maintenance of effort and the combined local shares of the separate categorical programs under the Blueprint. He also explained that historically the state provided local school systems with a funding “pie” and allowed each local school system to cut this pie into slices of their choosing; under the Blueprint, school systems are receiving pies with pre-cut slices for accountability purposes.

## The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Funding Formula

The formula for the Blueprint is a weighted-student formula. That means, the formula provides resources to local education agencies (LEAs) based on total student enrollment and on the enrollment of certain student subgroups. The formula also provides program funding for Blueprint-mandated programs.

### Base Per-Pupil Amount

- The target per-pupil foundation provides for the costs of providing adequate educational services for an average student. All eligible full-time equivalent students receive this formula aid.
- Any formula weights amount refer back to this program. For example, a weight amount of 85% means 85% of the target per-pupil foundation.

### Weighted Amounts

- Weighted amounts provide additional resources to a LEA based upon enrollment of specific subgroups.
- This funding reflects the fact that some student groups may require more resources in order ensure the provision of adequate educational services. For example, an English learner (EL), on average, requires more resources than a non-English learner.

### Program Amounts

- Program amounts are allocated to LEAs at a flat, non per-pupil amount. For example, the Guaranteed Tax Base Aid program provides additional State aid to LEAs that 1) have less than 80 percent of the statewide average wealth per pupil, and that 2) provide funding above the local share required by the Foundation Program. The program encourages less wealthy jurisdictions to maintain or increase local education tax effort.

## Indicators and Measures of Poverty

Superintendent Choudhury reviewed the operation of using census block groups and socioeconomic tiers to develop a more nuanced measure of concentrated poverty in communities. He outlined MSDE’s work with Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MDLS) Center to develop a neighborhood indicator of poverty to support the funding and operation of the community schools grant program under the Blueprint.

## Maryland Leads Grants

Superintendent Choudhury highlighted that his Maryland Leads grant program is providing more than \$6.6 million to the three Western Maryland school systems for the Science of Reading portion of their total Leads grants. He also presented the Grow Your Own Staff and Staff Support and Retention portions of Leads grant funding. Superintendents Sovine and Blank shared that this funding is being utilized to make tangible improvements in teacher retention. Superintendent Choudhury stated his support for permanent funding for these critically important programs.

[Western Maryland Gallery Walk & Presentation](#)

## Board Opinions

The State Board issued legal opinions for the following cases:

- *S. L. v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education*, affirming the local board student residency decision.
- *Craig Dunkleberger v. Carroll County Board of Education*, denying the appellant's request for reconsideration.
- *Patrick McHugh v. Harford County Board of Education*, affirming the local board decision to decertify a school bus driver for misconduct.