

March 26, 2024

On Tuesday, March 26, Board President Clarence Crawford convened the State Board of Education's regular monthly meeting. Members in attendance included: Vice President Joshua Michael, Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, Susan Getty, Monica Goldson, Nick Greer, Irma Johnson, Joan Mele-McCarthy, Rachel McCusker, Samir Paul, Holly Wilcox, and student member Abisola Ayoola from Howard County.

[Link to March 26, 2024, meeting agenda, materials, and video.](#)

## Public Comments

Public comments were delivered by:

- Peter Boyco, a student at Northwestern High School, shared his concerns with the difficulty for English Learners to complete the current high school graduation requirements. He recommended removing the Technical Education class requirement to provide additional time on the course schedule for English literacy, and the substitution of one semester of the year-long Health requirement with a semester of Financial Literacy.
- Sharon Saroff, a special education consultant and advocate, shared her concerns that students with disabilities are being dumped in general education classrooms without individualized attention to recovery of learning loss.
- Joseph Cormier, a Calvert County parent and advisory committee member, shared his concerns with the challenges Calvert County is experiencing due to an unanticipated reduction of more than \$22 million in state education aid, and the negative impacts funding cuts would have on many educational programs and services and Blueprint implementation.
- Trish Brennan-Gac, representing Maryland Reads, urged continued action to address Maryland's very poor performance on reading literacy. She references Maryland Reads' action plan and the vital role of stakeholder engagement and partnerships to achieve the much-needed improvement in reading literacy levels in Maryland.
- Caroline County Superintendent Dr. Derek Simmons, representing the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM), called for alterations and improvements to the implementation of the Blueprint, including legislative changes and actions by MSDE and AIB. Dr. Simmons outlined specific concerns with the funding system and resulting unfunded costs to local school systems to support dual enrollment.
- Darryl Williams, Research Faculty/Asst Director: NCEED in the School of Education at Morgan State University, and former Baltimore County School Superintendent, highlighted the mission and programs provided by the National Center for the Elimination of Educational Disparities (NCEED) to elevate the teaching profession through an equity lens.

- Thornell Jones, President of World Class Grads, highlighted his organization’s focus on the success of the Blueprint, and voiced concerns about the role that artificial intelligence (AI) in public education and the labor market. He also emphasized the negative role that uncivil behavior online has on the behavior of students, and the need for restorative practices in all schools.

## **Consent Agenda**

The Board approved the consent agenda including prior meeting minutes, personnel actions, and budget adjustments.

## **Principals’ Associations Stakeholder Engagement**

President Crawford welcomed representatives from the Elementary and Secondary School Principals’ Associations. Addie Kaufman, Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), introduced a panel of principals representing both of the associations. Tracy Hilliard, Principal of Urbana Elementary in Frederick County, provided an overview of the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP), including professional development programs and networking opportunities. Chris Hemstetter, Principal of Kent County High School, highlighted the similar role of MASSP. Dr. Kaufman shared the establishment of the Maryland Next Level Leaders Academy for aspiring assistant principals and principals. She noted the program was funded through a U.S. Department of Education grant, and that the demand for the program exceeded capacity by 30 applicants. Dr. Josh Fine, Principal of Flower Hill Elementary in Gaithersburg, Montgomery County, described the association’s visits on Capitol Hill urging support for federal funding to support professional development, student mental health services, and many other programs.

Board members Getty, Michael, Goldson, and others commended the work of the principal associations and asked for their ongoing collaboration and support in making the Blueprint a success.

- [Presentation: Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals \(MAESP\)](#)
- [Presentation: Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals \(MASSP\)](#)

## **Priority Issues**

State Superintendent Wright introduced Assistant Superintendent Chandra Haislet who presented a report on graduation rates, including: 2022-2023 high school diploma and certificate counts; Adjusted Cohort 4-year Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate; 2021-2022 Adjusted Cohort 5-year Graduation Rate; and Postsecondary enrollment data for the 2022 graduating class. Board members raised many questions regarding the data and Board Vice Chair called for much more detailed analysis, specifically on the approximately 20% drop out rate for Latinx students.

- [2023 Cohort Graduation Rate Data](#)

## **Educate to Stop the Hate Committee**

State Superintendent Wright announced her decision to establish the Educate to Stop the Hate Committee within the Department, and referenced legislation pending in Annapolis with the same title. Deputy Superintendent Dr. Deanne Collins and Peter Ramsey, MSDE's Director of Social Studies, presented an overview of the distinction between state content standards and frameworks. He also reviewed specific examples of performance indicators in the current frameworks that reference historical incidents of racism, but noted that much work remains to be done on standards and frameworks. Mr. Ramsey presented the structure and workflow of the committee. Board Vice President Michael reviewed the role of content standards and required and the role of frameworks are more guidance. He asked that the committee make recommendations on whether the revised expectations should be located in the standards or the frameworks. Dr. Wright agreed that these items should not be optional pieces of information that a local school system could choose not to include.

- Educate to Stop the Hate Committee

## **State Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Wright began by recognizing that March is National Arts in Our Schools Month and noted the ongoing work to develop arts pathways aligned with the Blueprint's focus on creating a broad set of career pathways. She congratulated Rain Diederichs, a senior at Kent Island High School for being honored with the 2024 National Rising Star Award by the National Art Education Association. The Superintendent then shared a video featuring students and staff from the Crisfield High School & Academy music programs. Board member and music educator Rachel McCusker spoke to the essential role of arts education in brain development and a well-rounded education.

Superintendent Wright updated the Board on the department's request for an expedited RFP to seek a replacement for the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) following the decision at last month's State Board meeting to cease administering the current KRA.

## **Regulations for Discussion and Action:**

The State Board discussed and approved the following requested actions on proposed policies and regulations:

- COMAR 13A.07.02.01 Contracts – Permission to Publish The State Board approved the request to publish proposed technical amendments to replace the term "certificated" with "licensed" throughout these regulations.
- COMAR 13A.15 Family Child Care, 13A.16 Child Care Center, 13A.17 Letters of Compliance, 13A.18 Large Family Child Care Homes (Safe Sleep) – Permission to Adopt with Non-substantive Changes The State Board approved the request to adopt proposed amendments to prohibit the practice of swaddling.
- COMAR 13A.08.01.17 School Use of Reportable Offenses - Permission to Republish The State Board approved the request to republish proposed amendments to regulations governing reportable offenses. Assistant Superintendent Mary Gable described public

comments submitted last fall on the initially proposed regulations and the department's agreement with requested changes in three areas.

- Adding language to clarify that a student may not be removed solely on the basis of the reportable offense charge.
- Amending the language to require LEAs to provide students' parents/guardians notice of appeal rights and procedures.
- Revising this provision to make clear that students with Section 504 plans are also entitled to manifestation determination reviews.
- The State Board adopted the recommendations by MSDE's Ombudsman, Teresa Dantzler, to approve the requested calendar waivers.
  - Queen Anne's County Calendar Modification The State Board
  - St. Mary's County Calendar Modification The State Board

## Legislative Update

President Crawford began by touting how pleased he is with the work of the Board, through the Policy Committee chaired by Ms. McCusker, and the Zach Hands, the Board's Executive Director. Akilah Alleyne, MSDE's Executive Director of Government Affairs, updated the Board on the department's concerns with a bill regarding criminal background checks for child care providers, with the agreeing to oppose the bill (SB 1254). Ms. Alleyne was joined by Mr. Hands, who discussed the AIB's departmental bill regarding Blueprint alterations (HB 1426/SB 1102) which the State Board has already voted to support. He outlined recently adopted amendments to the bill. In addition, he updated the Board on a bill making alterations to the Community Schools program (HB 200/SB 161). Ms. Alleyne provided an update on HB 945/SB 771 regarding initial teacher certification, and a bill to establish a rental assistance program within the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which she highlighted is an amendment to the bill as introduces that would have had MSDE administering the program (HB 428/SB 370).

## FreeState PTA Stakeholder Engagement

President Crawford welcomed representatives from FreeState PTA including President Gerrod Tyler and Vice President for Leadership Marla Posey-Moss. Mr. Tyler shared the organization's mission, vision, programs, and legislative agenda. He highlighted programs including an arts education program and a family literacy program.

- Free State PTA is a state-level branch of National PTA, representing parents, teachers, students, and community members.
- Free State PTA works to promote the welfare of children and youth, fostering collaboration between parents, educators, and stakeholders to enhance education and well-being.
- Free State PTA engages in various activities, such as advocating for education-related policies, providing resources and programs for parents and teachers, supporting school improvement efforts, and organizing events that encourage family involvement in education.
- Free State PTA plays a significant role in connecting local PTAs across the state, amplifying their collective voice, and striving to create a positive impact on education and children's lives in Maryland.

- [Presentation: FreeState PTA](#)

## Board Appeals and Orders

The State Board issued legal opinions for the following cases:

- *Sarah Ianacone v. Frederick County Board of Education*, affirming the local board's termination of employment decision.
- *Justin King v. Harford County Board of Education*, affirming the local board's decision to impose a five-day suspension on an employee for striking another employee.
- *J.S. and J.S. v. Harford County Board of Education*, affirming the local board's student attendance boundary decision.
- *Fred Ragazzone v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education*, dismissing the appeal for untimeliness.