

May 21, 2024

On Tuesday, May 21, Board Vice President Joshua Michael (in the absence of President Clarence Crawford) convened the State Board of Education's regular monthly meeting. Members in attendance, in-person and online, included: Shawn Bartley, 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 May 21, 2024, meeting agenda, materials, and video.](#)

Board Vice President Remarks

Vice President Michael emphasized the significance of the recently established policy on dual enrollment, adopted jointly by the State Board and Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB). He stressed that the intent is to continue to collaborate with the AIB and steward the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. He described the context of the recently adopted joint policy regarding dual enrollment and how it relates to the State Board's recently adopted college and career readiness (CCR) standard, and highlighted the continuum of work with the AIB regarding the science of reading and the progress of the expert review teams.

Public Comments

Public comments were delivered by:

- Sharon Saroff, special education advocate, who voiced her ongoing concerns with students receiving special education services in an individualized manner that reflects their learning pace.
- Angie Vigliotti, a candidate for Frederick County Board of Education, who shared her concerns with the budget crisis being experienced in Frederick County and the challenges it presents to implementing the Blueprint.
- Kelly Bostic, a parent of a victim of drug poisoning, who requested increased public education about drug poisoning awareness.
- Cheryl Bost, President of the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA), who provided an overview of legislation passed to address the teacher shortage, the status of contract negotiations regarding career ladders, and the failure of county governments to fully fund the Blueprint.
- Alia Roberts, a special educator, who advocated for programs for higher functioning students with autism.

Consent Agenda

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

Teachers of the Year Recognition

Vice President Michael and State Superintendent Wright welcomed and recognized the 24 Teachers of the Year for their outstanding work on behalf of their students, their commitment to high quality pedagogy and instruction, and their leadership among their peers. Local superintendents and principals joined the teachers for photos with the State Board and Superintendent Wright.

[Roster of Maryland's 24 Teachers of the Year](#)

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Carey Wright congratulated the teachers of the year, and noted that former teachers of the year participate in the Teachers of Promise Program, which was highlighted in a video presentation. She shared updates on the accountability workgroup, with the goal of updating the statewide accountability system in the coming legislative session, because the accountability system is embedded in state law. She highlighted progress in the department's launch of the PowerSchool school finance system used by MSDE and local school systems aligned with the Blueprint. She also shared that in the past week 29 MSDE staff and 6 AIB staffers reviewed the Blueprint implementation plans submitted by local school systems and other entities. Dr. Wright noted that May is Mental Health Awareness Month and celebrated teachers and school staff working to address student mental health needs. She highlighted a recent visit to Hampstead Hill Academy, a charter school in Baltimore City, and how impressed she was by the assembly of 300 middle school students devoted to restorative practices.

Dr. Wright introduced a video highlighting the apprenticeship programs being offered in the Harford County public school system and she invited Harford County Superintendent Sean Bulson to address the Board.

Blueprint Update

Dr. Shayna Cook, Deputy Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood, and Jenna Smith, Director, Quality Improvement Initiatives, presented on the Maryland EXCELS and Maryland Accreditation programs. Maryland EXCELS is the state's quality rating and improvement system for licensed child care and early childhood education programs that meet nationally recognized quality standards. Programs earn quality ratings that form a pathway to excellence. A rating of 1 is awarded to providers and programs that successfully meet initial requirements. A rating of 5 is granted to those with the highest level of quality and who are state or nationally accredited. Ms. Smith highlighted the steady increase in the number of programs with published ratings of 3, 4, and 5 with a significant growth in the quality of family child care programs. In addition, Maryland is providing increased financial bonuses to incentivize quality improvements in early care and education programs posting new ratings or improved ratings.

Dr. Cook described the Maryland Accreditation process through which licensed child care centers and Public Pre-K programs demonstrate their commitment to providing high-quality learning. Child care centers pursue accreditation utilizing tools including state standards, self-appraisal, program improvement plans, technical assistance, and validation visits. Presenters also emphasized significant improvements in MSDE's customer services based on direct engagement with providers.

Vice President Michael requested clarification on the distinct roles and functions of Maryland EXCELS and Maryland Accreditation programs, and the criteria for EXCELS scoring, and Dr. Cook and Ms. Smith provided detailed explanations.

- [Presentation: Maryland EXCELS and Maryland Accreditation](#)

Science of Reading Professional Development Initiative

State Superintendent Wright announced a \$6.85 million multi-year partnership with the nonprofit Ibis Group to provide a flexible, virtual program to provide access to evidence-based instructional methods and the resources needed to master grade-level reading by the end of the 1st grade, and to read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade. Dr. Deann Collins, Deputy Superintendent, and Dr. Tennett Smith, Director of Literacy Programs and Initiatives, presented on the new partnership and the delivery of literacy professional development for educators. This partnership was developed through the combined efforts of philanthropic organizations, the State University of New York (SUNY) and AIM Institute for Research, and will provide direct access to professional learning to over 30,000 educators across Maryland. Krishnanda Tallur, Deputy State Superintendent for Finance and Operations, described the role of the Public Education Partnership fund, already established under state law, to facilitate the type of outside contributions being used in this literacy initiative. The State Board voted to approve the use of \$350,000 in state funds to support this new initiative and partnership.

- [Presentation](#)

Milken Educator Awards

The State Board and Dr. Wright recognized Bradley Absher and Maggie Arnold, recipients of the 2023 Maryland Milken Educator Award.

- Bradley Absher, a fifth-grade mathematics teacher at Bodkin Elementary School in Anne Arundel County, extends leadership beyond the classroom walls. He mentors not only his own students but offers after-school tutoring and unwavering support to students throughout the school.
- Maggie Arnold teaches ninth to twelfth grade mathematics at Frederick High School in Frederick County. Maggie's approach to educating the “whole child” is rooted in Mind Brain Education (MBE), involving the connection among meditation, mindfulness, and metacognition.

- [Memo and Bios](#)

Briefing on the FY 2025 Education Budget

Krishnanda Tallur, Deputy State Superintendent for Finance and Operations, and Assistant Superintendent Donna Gunning presented the Department's fiscal year (FY) 2025 operating budget, impacts of recently enacted legislation, and state aid for local school systems. Ms. Gunning highlighted the growth in the MSDE headquarters budget from \$405 to \$411 million, and outlined legislative impacts, including:

- \$1 million for Access to Attorneys, Advocates, and Consultants for families and guardians of students with disabilities.
- \$100,000 – study on Driving Career CTE program and apprenticeships for high school students in coordination with MDL and MVA.
- \$2 million for Blueprint Coordinator funding; and permanent codification of this program.
- Increased funding for added student counts for Tier I students enrolled with private providers.

Deputy Superintendent Gunning also highlighted the following actions impacting the Blueprint for Maryland's Future programs:

- Concentration of Poverty Program Continues Phase-in.
- Additional 167 schools receive Personnel Grants.
- Additional 161 schools receive Per Pupil Grants.
- Special Education Program increases \$65.2 million or 14%.
- Multilingual Learners Program increases by \$46 million or 10%.
- Local Wealth Per Pupil increases 3% in FY 2025.
- Statewide Enrollment in FY 2025 changed very slightly.
- [Budget Presentation](#)

Teacher Workforce Update

Chandra Haislet, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Assessment, Accountability, Performance Reporting, and Research, and Kelly Meadows, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Educator Effectiveness, presented on Maryland's teacher workforce issues including supply, demand, and diversity.

Assistant Superintendent Haislet highlighted that as of October 2023, there were 63,220 teachers in Maryland public schools. The percentage of first-year teachers who are Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino has more than doubled in the past ten years, reaching 30% and 8%, respectively. However, more than half of first-year teachers in Maryland are white. The gap between the percentage of students of color and the percentage of teachers of color statewide is 36 percentage points and varies at the LEA level from 4 to 52 percentage points. In the most recent year, 10.7% of Maryland teachers did not return to teaching in the state.

Assistant Superintendent Meadows presented on teacher preparation programs and teacher supply and distribution issues. She emphasized that enrollment in Maryland teacher preparation programs has increased since SY 2016- 2017, reversing the prior downward trend. In 2011, 8,403 teacher candidates were enrolled in Maryland preparation programs, dropping to 4,010 in 2016-2017, and increasing to 5,962 in 2021. In addition, the number of Maryland licenses issued annually has steadily declined over the past 5 years. In the 2021-2022 school year 63% of applicants who qualified for licensure were prepared out of state.

Presenters highlighted the dramatic increase in the numbers of National Board Certified (NBC) teachers, and enhanced flexibility through the nine available pathways for professional teacher licensure. They also noted that high-poverty schools continue to have higher percentages of

inexperienced teachers, teachers teaching out-of-field, and teachers teaching with emergency or provisional licenses.

Dr. Wright emphasized the need for much greater attention and sense of urgency to the recruitment of diverse educators, more reflective of the diversity in Maryland's classrooms. Vice President Michael also noted the critical role of conditionally certified teachers in achieving greater diversity in the workforce. Board members also discussed the need for clarification licensure requirements for special educators, particularly among nonpublic special education schools.

- [Teacher Workforce Presentation](#)

Blueprint Minimum School Funding Requirement Update

Deputy Superintendent Donna Gunning provided a brief overview of the Blueprint's requirement that 75% of certain per pupil funding that school systems receive be allocated at the school level so that programmatic funding (Multilingual Learner, Special Education, Free and Reduced Price Meal Eligible) follows students to the schools they attend. Dr. Wright then described the purpose of Joint Policy #2, adopted days earlier by the AIB, to urge local school systems to meet the minimum school funding requirement for all students in all schools as soon as practicable, and require that school systems meet the requirement by no later than the 2026-2027 school year. The Joint Policy sets forth the following timeline:

- 2024-2025 School Year: LEAs are expected to make a good faith effort to meet the requirement in the baseline year.
- 2025-2026 School Year: Each LEA that is not in compliance with the requirement shall reduce by at least half the percentage of students within a district who attend a school that has not met the minimum school funding level (at least 75%/100% as applicable) of per pupil formula funding.
- 2026-2027 School Year: Each LEA shall demonstrate that the minimum school funding level (at least 75%/100% as applicable) of per pupil formula funding is following all students to their school.

Board members raised several questions regarding the work of the Department and local school systems to adopt new financial reporting methods to facilitate not only annual data but monthly reporting on actual expenditures in schools. Board Vice President Michael noted that progress in equitable allocation of student and school-based funding is overdue, but because it has never been required presents significant challenges. He highlighted the direct relationship of tracking funding to student performance accountability and the major reforms being pursued on both fronts. He also indicated that one way to achieve school-based funding equity is to reassign teachers and other staff to increase investments in schools with the highest needs. Board member Rachel McCusker spoke in opposition to using involuntary transfers of educators because of the detriment to teacher morale and therefore retention. Following the presentation, the State Board voted to approve the Joint Policy on minimum school funding.

- [Joint Implementation Policy #2 – Minimum School Funding Requirement](#)

Special Education Workgroup Update

Dr. Wright introduced Deputy Superintendent Colins and Dr. Antoine Hickman, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services, who provided a detailed progress update on the Department's Blueprint Special Education Workgroup, which was convened by MSDE in 2022 to discuss and make recommendations on instruction and services for students with disabilities. The Workgroup is co-chaired by Dr. Wright and Ms. Liz Zogby of the Maryland Down Syndrome Special Education Policy & Advocacy Project. The Workgroup has held eight (8) meetings since August 2023, and is comprised of approximately 50 members including representatives from MSDE, school administrators, special education and general education teachers, parents, advocates and attorneys, community partners, special education directors, physicians, and others.

Assistant Superintendent Hickman presented several policy recommendations including updates to state regulations, enhanced state oversight of local IEPs, related services, and student progress, and high-dosage literacy tutoring in grades K-3. Recommendations also focus on improvements in MSDE programs and services.

In addition, Vice President Michael noted that legislation introduced, though not passed, did raise serious concerns with the quality of the Maryland Online IEP system operated by MSDE, and requested the Workgroup's attention to this issue.

The Workgroup is reviewing feedback on its draft interim report, preparing to submit the interim report to the AIB by July 1, 2024, and planning to submit its final report by December 1, 2024.

- [Special Education Workgroup Presentation](#)

Board Appeals and Orders

The State Board issued legal opinions for the following cases:

- *S.M. v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education*, affirming the local board's decision regarding a student's three-day suspension.
- *Fred Ragazzone v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education*, denying appellant's motion for reconsideration of the State Board's decision affirming his termination from employment.
- *K.B. v. Montgomery County Board of Education*, affirming the local board's decision regarding its indoor air quality policy.
- *V.B. and H.B. v. Montgomery County Board of Education*, affirming the local board's decision regarding student transportation services.
- *Stephanie P. v. Montgomery County Board of Education; and Christopher K., Jose R., N.B. and Z.E.D., and W.J. v. Montgomery County Board of Education*, staying the State Board appeal until the pending federal case, and appeals, are resolved. These cases involve parents challenging the local board's policy regarding the use of use of LGBTQ+ inclusive texts in its language arts curriculum without providing an opt-out from classroom instruction using such texts.