

MEETING OF THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Minutes of the January 27, 2026 Meeting

The Maryland State Board of Education met virtually on January 27, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

The following Board members were present:

Dr. Joshua Michael (Board President), Dr. Monica Goldson (Board Vice President), Dr. Kim Lewis, Mr. Chet Chesterfield, Mr. O'Marie Barnes, Dr. Irma Johnson, Dr. James Bell, Mr. Nick Greer, Ms. Marcy Leonard, Ms. Xiomara Medina, Mr. Samir Paul, Ms. Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, Mr. Kenny Clash, and Ms. Nicole Murray-Lewis.

State Superintendent Dr. Carey Wright, State Board Executive Director Zachary Hands, and Assistant Attorney General Elliott Schoen were also in attendance.

MEETING OPENING

Dr. Michael called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and led the pledge of allegiance. Mr. Schoen declared that a quorum was present.

Dr. Michael offered opening remarks, noting the recent snowstorm and thanking school custodial, facilities, and operations staff for working to make school buildings safe for students. Dr. Michael also acknowledged how broader political tensions, particularly affecting multilingual learners and Hispanic students, are undermining students' sense of safety and contributing to visible declines in student outcomes, reinforcing the need for schools to remain stable, supportive environments.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Virtual participation:

- Trish Brennan-Gac (Maryland READS) – Coaching
- Dr. Zainab Chaudry (CAIR Maryland) – Cultural Competency in Maryland Public Schools' Curriculum
- Sharon Saroff – Special Education
- Dayana Bergman – Immigration Enforcement in Carroll County
- Paul Lemle (MSEA) – Adolescent Literacy and Charter School Regulations
- Janelle Neumann – Compliance and Operations Requirements

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- Approval of December 9, 2025, and January 15, 2026, Meeting Minutes
- Personnel Actions
- Budget Adjustments, December 2025
- COMAR 13A.04.13 Program in Physical Education (Permission to Adopt)
- COMAR 13A.12.02.03 Pathways to Teacher Licensure (Permission to Adopt)

- Garrett County Public Schools Waiver Request
- Queen Anne's County Public Schools Waiver Request
- Calendar Modification – Granting Authority to the State Superintendent
- Final Accountability Advisory Committee Report
- Change of October Board Meeting Date from Tuesday, October 27, to Thursday, October 29, 2026
- Updates to State Board Governance Manual

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the consent agenda. Dr. Goldson motioned, Dr. Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 0)

Dr. Michael welcomed Nicole Murray-Lewis as the new teacher member of the Board. Ms. Murray-Lewis is a veteran social studies educator in her 28th year. She teaches at Blake High School after 24 years at Gaithersburg High School and beginning her career in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. Ms. Murray-Lewis expressed her gratitude for the introduction.

STATE SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Wright shared that she attended the Governor's budget announcement in Frederick and Annapolis and expressed encouragement about the Governor's record investment in public schools, including approximately \$10 million investment in a statewide teacher coaching model. Dr. Wright also highlighted legislation currently in session.

Dr. Wright noted the opening of the NAEP testing window and emphasized the importance of strong participation, as the assessment provides critical data on student achievement and informs state and national comparisons. She also shared that the 2027 Pre-K Expansion Grant application is now open, encouraging eligible providers and school systems to apply to support the continued expansion of high-quality prekindergarten statewide. In addition, she highlighted that customer service support sessions are being offered to guide applicants through the grant process. Dr. Wright congratulated Mr. O'Marie Barnes and Howard County student Jeremy Wong on their selection as U.S. Senate Youth Program Delegates, and recognized the Maryland Department of Rehabilitative Services for improving its national ranking in disability determination services from last to 27th in the nation.

Dr. Wright also expressed her support for immigrant students, recognizing the strength and diversity they bring to Maryland's schools. She reaffirmed the importance of strong coordination among state and local partners to ensure that all students feel safe, supported, and able to fully participate in their education. She emphasized the need to clearly communicate existing policies and procedures, uphold student privacy protections, and maintain school environments that prioritize student well-being and safety.

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA) UPDATE - CECIL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dr. Jeff Lawson, Superintendent of Cecil County Public Schools, shared an update on his district, beginning with an overview of MCAP testing. He provided a sample math question that required strong reading comprehension and written responses, emphasizing that reading is a prerequisite for success in math. He also shared an example of a language arts task, along with a student essay sample, to highlight the high level of rigor students engage with each day.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION: MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS

Students from the Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC) presented, including Jordan Salkeld from Towson High School, Krish Putta from Poolesville High School, Goodness Alafe from Eastern Technical High School, and Jeremy Zhang from Eastern Middle School, with Advisor Karen Crawford, Executive Director of MASC. MASC fosters student leadership, voice, advocacy, and statewide connection. Ms. Alafe highlighted the MASC Advance program, where students participate in presenter certification programs. Mr. Zhang discussed the Fall Leadership Conference, noting record attendance, and Mr. Salkeld shared about the February Conference Legislative Session. Mr. Putta additionally spoke about participating in MASC webinars on topics from wellness to creating policy platforms. Mr. Zhang also highlighted student advocacy efforts, including Student Advocacy Day in Annapolis, and Mr. Salkeld emphasized how MASC promotes statewide connections across Maryland.

Dr. Michael acknowledged the students' efforts in building a strong organization and encouraged them to continue engaging in advocacy. Ms. Medina asked how to encourage more young people to contribute to policy conversations. Mr. Salkeld noted that MASC is working to be more inclusive and that committees provide opportunities for all students to participate. Ms. Crawford added that committees are virtual to promote participation. Mr. Barnes thanked the students for their work and commended their responsiveness.

COHORT GRADUATION RATE DATA (INFORMATION ONLY)

Mr. Tim Guy, MSDE's Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Assessment and Accountability, presented data on Maryland's cohort graduation and dropout rates, including four-year and five-year cohort graduation rates and the four-year cohort dropout rate. An adjusted cohort includes students who start as first-time ninth graders in a given year, with students added if they transfer in and removed if they transfer out during high school. For the 2024–2025 school year, Maryland's four-year cohort graduation rate was 86.4%, a decrease of 1.2 percentage points from the prior year, with declines across several student groups and the largest drop among multilingual learners. Graduation rates varied widely by local education agency (LEA), ranging from 71.7% to 95.0% or higher. The five-year cohort graduation rate increased slightly in 2023–2024 compared to the previous year, while the four-year cohort dropout rate rose by 1.6 percentage points in 2024–2025 compared to 2023–2024.

Dr. Johnson asked why the five-year cohort graduation rate is higher than the four-year cohort rate. Mr. Guy explained that five-year graduation rates are typically higher because this measure captures students who access supplemental offerings to graduate beyond the typical four-year period. Dr. Johnson then asked about the difference between Maryland diploma counts versus the five-year cohort. Mr. Guy clarified that the five-year cohort represents the total number of students enrolled, whereas the Maryland diploma count reflects how many received a diploma. Ms. Leonard asked if students who earned a certificate of completion are included in this data. Mr. Guy responded that they are not included due to federal regulations. She also asked about students who receive a GED, and Mr. Guy explained that they are similarly not counted in the graduation rate, with a few exceptions for multilingual learners who remain enrolled while earning their GED.

Dr. Lewis asked about the dropout rate among Hispanic/Latino students, who account for approximately 50% of student dropouts, inquiring about potential causes and year-to-year trends. Mr. Guy noted that identifying a single driver is difficult because data vary significantly by county. Dr. Bell asked if MSDE will continue to track dropout rates by student groups and whether home-schooled students are considered transfers. Mr. Guy confirmed that home-schooled students are coded as transfers.

Mr. Greer commented that data on multilingual students suggest the current political climate is affecting them and suggested considering alternative options, including virtual learning. He also noted a loss of roughly half of the gains from the previous year and a backslide in young men, requesting additional data disaggregated by both gender and Hispanic/Latino students. Mr. Barnes asked whether there is data explaining why students do not graduate in four years. Mr. Guy said that such data is not available and that many local factors could impact graduation. Ms. Chang asked about transfers to private schools. Mr. Guy explained that any student leaving the public system is coded as a dropout and stated he can also provide dropout rates by LEA upon request. Ms. Medina encouraged MSDE staff to further investigate concerns affecting multilingual students. Dr. Wright noted that she has worked with superintendents to continue exploring this issue. Dr. Michael added that the data presented reflects only the first half of 2025 and may not fully represent the current status of student outcomes, including the impacts of immigration enforcement.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE PROGRAM COACHING MODEL UPDATE (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Elise Brown, Assistant State Superintendent, and Dr. Jackie Peng, Chief of Staff in the Office of Teaching and Learning, provided an update on the Academic Excellence Program Coaching Model. Dr. Peng clarified an instructional coach is a licensed educator who provides job-embedded, non-evaluative support and professional learning to help educators strengthen instruction and implement evidence-based practices. The update further focused on three coaching initiatives currently underway in Maryland. The Early Literacy Network is an opt-in network for district coaches and leaders, with three regional sessions held to date and the option for on-site MSDE support. The Early Literacy Network is intended to strengthen evidence-based

literacy practices aligned with the Science of Reading and reduce the number of students at risk for reading difficulties. The Mathematics School Improvement Network uses an invited cohort model with a new cohort each year, beginning in January, and centers on school leadership teams to develop model sites for strong math instructional leadership and to lay the foundation for a statewide math coaching model. The Academic Excellence Program State Coach Pilot is a \$5.8 million, two-year pilot in Prince George's County Public Schools at selected elementary schools, focused on strengthening Tier 1 instruction aligned with the Science of Reading, implementing high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials, and supporting the PreK–3 Comprehensive Literacy Policy.

Mr. Greer asked that future data include the impact of coaches with proficiency scores overlaid and requested clarification on participation rates for professional development among coaches. He also asked how the Early Literacy Network aligns with the Academic Excellence Program. Dr. Peng explained that the Early Literacy Network helps MSDE better understand the current coaching landscape and is tailored to local contexts, while coaches in the Academic Excellence Program utilize the Maryland State Coaching Model. She noted that the same measurement tool used to assess teacher classroom growth is implemented across both programs. Mr. Greer asked about plans to develop math coaches. Dr. Peng shared that the Mathematics School Improvement Network will include statewide coaches. Dr. Wright added that this is a new state-level initiative that leverages existing coaches and provides them with state-supported professional development. Mr. Greer also inquired about the costs associated with the Academic Excellence Program, and Dr. Peng responded that the majority of funding supports coach salaries. Dr. Bell asked how many schools will participate in the Mathematics School Improvement Network in its first year. Dr. Brown said 16 schools have been identified, with an additional 60 schools to be added each year thereafter. Dr. Bell also asked about promising practices emerging from the initial 16 schools, and Dr. Brown noted that site visits will begin next month, with more information to be shared at the next meeting.

ADOLESCENT LITERACY POLICY (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

Dr. Chelsea Brewer, MSDE Executive Director of Literacy Programs and Initiatives, presented the proposed Comprehensive Adolescent Literacy Policy. Dr. Brewer explained that while Maryland's Comprehensive PreK–3 Literacy Policy established a strong foundation for early reading instruction and intervention, literacy demands increase significantly in grades 4–12 as students encounter more complex, discipline-specific texts and are expected to meet graduation and postsecondary expectations. Dr. Brewer emphasized that Maryland has not previously adopted a comprehensive literacy policy beyond grade 3. The proposed policy is intended to fill that gap by establishing clear, statewide expectations for Tier 1 instruction, assessment systems, intervention, professional learning, and family communication across grades 4–12, aligned with the Science of Reading and Maryland's College and Career Readiness (MCCR) Standards. The policy additionally establishes statewide expectations for literacy instruction, assessment, and intervention in grades 4–12 and emphasizes advanced foundational skills critical for adolescent readers. It defines a coherent assessment system that includes universal screening, diagnostic

assessments, and progress monitoring with grade-band-specific expectations. The policy also strengthens the use of Student Reading Improvement Plans (SRIPs) to ensure timely, targeted interventions and meaningful family engagement, and it clarifies the roles and responsibilities of LEAs, MSDE, and the State Board through a phased implementation timeline with assessment tool pilots to begin in SY2026-2027.

Dr. Bell asked what support LEAs will receive to implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Dr. Brewer explained that technical assistance is currently being provided through the National Center for Improving Literacy and will continue under the Comprehensive State Literacy Development Grant. Dr. Elise Brown added that MSDE is also seeking to hire an MTSS Director to further strengthen statewide implementation. Dr. Michael expressed hope that MTSS will be implemented across content areas, not solely within literacy instruction. Ms. Leonard emphasized the importance of ensuring educators have more time in front of students and that the policy does not result in additional administrative burdens for teachers. Mr. Greer encouraged classrooms to prioritize access to physical books rather than relying primarily on digital reading, and Dr. Wright noted that this recommendation could be incorporated into the state's forthcoming toolkit.

Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee unanimously recommends permission to publish.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to publish the Comprehensive Adolescent Literacy Policy. Dr. Bell motioned, Mr. Greer seconded. (In Favor: 13, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 1)

STATE BOARD ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Dr. Michael called for a motion to adjourn to an Executive Session. Mr. Greer motioned, Mr. Chesterfield seconded. (In Favor: 13, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 1)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to § 3-305(b)(1) and (7) of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon motion of Dr. Green and seconded by Mr. Chesterfield and with unanimous vote convened virtually. All board members were present, except Dr. Johnson was absent for the first part of the meeting. Also in attendance were State Superintendent Carey Wright, Executive Director Zachary Hands, Deputy Executive Director Hannah Oakley and Assistant Attorneys General Elliott Schoen, Jackie La Fiandra, and Lori Hopkins. The Executive Session commenced at 12:30 p.m. and ended at 1:30 p.m.

The State Board reviewed and approved four Opinions and three Orders.

- *A.A and E.E. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-01. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.

- *Calvert County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People v. Calvert County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-02. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *In the Matter of Baltimore City Public Charter School* – Opinion No. 26-03. The Board granted the petition for declaratory ruling requested by the charter schools.
- *M.A. and J.H. v. Montgomery County Board of Education (II)* – Opinion No. 26-04. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *AutoFlex Fleet, Inc. v. Montgomery County Board of Education (III)* – Order No. OR26-01. The Board denied the motion for reconsideration.
- *AutoFlex Fleet, Inc. v. Montgomery County Board of Education (III)* – Order No. OR26-02. The Board denied the motion to intervene and dismissed the motion to stay and motion for reconsideration as moot.
- *Dawn Balinski, et al. v. Calvert County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-03 The Board dismissed the appeal for lack of standing.

President Michael and Mr. Barnes gave the Board updates of various meetings they participated in. Dr. Wright updated the Board regarding the OLA audit report.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT UPDATE (INFORMATION ONLY)

Mr. Tim Guy shared an update on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). The new KRA was administered for the first time in the 2025–2026 school year, from August 1 through October 10, 2025. The Maryland KRA includes three components, Star Early Literacy (a 10-minute computer-adaptive assessment available in English and Spanish), Star Math (a 20-minute computer-adaptive assessment), and the Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS), a 19-question teacher survey. In addition to the required fall administration, optional winter and spring screening windows are available to support ongoing progress monitoring.

On the KRA Early Literacy assessment (English), 57% of students scored at the Established Skills level, meaning they demonstrated the foundational early literacy skills and knowledge expected at kindergarten entry and are considered proficient. Rates varied by race and ethnicity from 36.0% to 73.3%, with Hispanic/Latino scoring the lowest at 36.0%. Additionally, 22.1% of multilingual learners and 33.0% of students with disabilities scored at the Established Skills level. Results also varied by local education agency, ranging from 33.3% to 75.2%. On the KRA Early Literacy assessment (Spanish), 50.3% of students scored at the Established Skills level with 39.4% for Black/African American students, 42.9% for Asian students, and 50.3% for Hispanic/Latino students scoring at the Established Skills level.

On the KRA Mathematics assessment, 55.3% of students scored at the Established Skills level, including 35.9% of students with disabilities and 38.8% of multilingual learners scored at the Established Skills level.

Dr. Bell asked which KRA assessment is required, and Mr. Guy explained that state law mandates administration of at least one KRA, though districts may reassess students later in the year. Dr.

Bell noted that the data provides a strong baseline for measuring student growth over time. Mr. Barnes added that while there are notable disparities among student groups, there are also important successes, with more than half of students scoring proficient. Dr. Michael expressed interest in seeing additional data disaggregated by Pre-K enrollment and acknowledged the challenges in collecting that information across both public and private providers. Dr. Wright said that MSDE is working to obtain and analyze those data.

2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE AND FY2027 GOVERNOR'S BUDGET (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Stefan Redding Lallinger, MSDE's Chief Policy Director, and Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of the Office of Government Affairs, presented an overview of eight bills for discussion. Dr. Redding Lallinger described the process for developing legislative recommendations, explaining that MSDE leadership first evaluates each bill before bringing recommendations to Dr. Wright and members of the State Board Legislative Subgroup for review and final approval.

Dr. Michael noted SB0099, the Open Meetings Act, and expressed support, provided that testimony clarifies the State Board will be held to the same standards as local school boards.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to approve the Legislative Agenda. Dr. Lewis motioned, Mr. Greer seconded. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 0)

Ms. Donna Gunning, MSDE's Chief Financial Officer, presented an analysis of the Governor's FY2027 Budget. She provided background, noting that the State Board approved the department's fiscal 2027 budget request in September 2025. MSDE submitted the request to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) on October 4, 2025. The DBM budget hearing took place in late November, after which MSDE provided additional information and the updated fiscal 2027 major State Education Aid estimates.

Ms. Gunning outlined the agency's budget request compared with the Governor's allowance. She noted that MSDE requested \$17.5 million for the Academic Excellence Program, while the Governor's allowance provides \$10.8 million. The department also requested \$5 million for an information technology project to update the MSDE website, which was not approved. Additionally, MSDE sought to shift a portion of federal funds to general funds to address inconsistencies with federal funding. The department also requested upfront state funds for prekindergarten private providers, which local governments would later reimburse. MSDE additionally requested a career ladder true-up to fund teachers with National Board Certification.

Ms. Gunning explained that over-the-target entitlements, which include assessments and autism waivers, will be approved by the Governor. She noted that the Request for Proposal process for the new assessment system has been completed and is slated for review by the Board of Public Works, with costs anticipated to decrease in fiscal 2028. During FY2027, both the old and new assessment systems will operate concurrently. For the autism waiver, MSDE is maintaining a

freeze on new applicants and has implemented immediate changes, including requiring Live-In Caregiver providers to clock in and out in real time and prohibiting out-of-state service delivery to ensure oversight. The department is also updating the Level of Care and Plan of Care processes and has shared an analysis of rapidly increasing program costs with DBM and the Governor's Office.

In contrast, funding for the Childcare Scholarship Program was reduced. MSDE noted an unexpected spike in applications earlier in the year, keeping the enrollment freeze in place, but estimates that the program will serve 40,000 students by February 2026. A market rate increase is set to take effect in March 2026, and the program is projected to remain within the fiscal 2026 budget, with the FY2027 budget expected to cover costs, in part due to increased federal funds. MSDE also requested to convert nine contractual positions to permanent positions, which was not approved, and the only position increase is 0.4 FTE at the Office of the Attorney General.

Dr. Bell asked about funding for childcare, and Ms. Gunning explained that the current enrollment freeze was designed to cap participation at 40,000 students to keep the program within budget. She noted that as students leave the program, new students are able to enter. Dr. Wright added that the cap was put in place at around 47,000 students, and as older students have aged out, enrollment has gradually decreased to approximately 42,000 students.

COMAR 13A.01.05.012-.13 APPEALS TO THE STATE BOARD (PERMISSION TO REPUBLISH)

Mr. Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board of Education, presented COMAR 13A.01.05.12-.13. The proposed regulations clarify and strengthen procedures for the removal of local board of education members by distinguishing between third-party-initiated requests and actions initiated by the State Board, while ensuring due process. The revisions retain and formalize interim relief provisions, refine filing timelines, and grant the State Board flexibility to adjust procedural deadlines as needed to ensure fairness and timely resolution.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to republish COMAR 13A.01.05.12-.13. Dr. Lewis motioned, Dr. Goldson seconded. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 0)

SCHOOL YEAR 2024-2025 SCIENCE OF READING TRAINING (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Chelsea Brewer, MSDE's Executive Director of Literacy Programs and Initiatives, provided an update on statewide Science of Reading training for educators. State law and policy, including the Comprehensive PreK-3 Literacy Policy, the Ready to Read Act, and COMAR 13A.03.08 (Students at Risk for Reading Difficulty), require LEAs to report annually to MSDE on educator completion of approved Science of Reading training. MSDE is responsible for collecting, validating, and reporting this information. The SY 2024-2025 reporting cycle marks the first time this data has been compiled and presented in a single, statewide format, reflecting cumulative training completed by educators serving in PreK-3 instructional and leadership roles.

According to LEA reports as of September 15, 2025, 45% of K–3 teachers and 34% of K–3 administrators statewide had completed MSDE-approved Science of Reading training, with higher completion rates among broader leadership roles. This data demonstrates sustained district investment in literacy professional learning and establishes a consistent baseline to support ongoing monitoring, future reporting, and targeted technical assistance.

Ms. Leonard asked whether the training is offered annually. Dr. Brewer explained that it is a one-time course, though additional professional development opportunities are available. Ms. Medina asked how MSDE will ensure that districts with low participation rates improve. Dr. Brewer said the department works closely with LEAs to collect feedback and address barriers, and Dr. Smith added that summer training opportunities have been added as a result. Dr. Johnson noted that districts with low teacher participation also tend to have low student reading proficiency and asked how MSDE plans to track student outcomes after teachers complete the training. Dr. Brewer explained that the Ready to Read Act enables improved data collection, and that technical assistance and support will allow more teachers to participate while improving communication. Dr. Smith added that this data will help determine where to position coaches, and Dr. Wright noted it can also be shared with superintendents. Mr. Greer asked how data on trained administrators was collected, and Dr. Brewer said it was self-reported. Dr. Lewis suggested leveraging MSEA as a partner to increase participation. Dr. Michael stated that he would like to examine Montgomery County's data and participation rates in more detail going forward.

MARYLAND EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL LEADERS, SUPERINTENDENTS, AND LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Mr. Phil Lasser, MSDE Senior Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives, and Ms. Jill Snell, Executive Director of School Leadership, provided an update on the Maryland Education Leadership Program, which includes the Maryland Superintendent Leadership Academy, Maryland Board Leadership Academy, and Maryland School Leadership Academy. The Maryland Superintendent Leadership Academy focuses on elevating the voices and expertise of school and district leaders, with sessions highlighting topics such as innovative special education staffing. The Maryland Board Leadership Academy offers virtual sessions designed to help board members excel in their roles. The Maryland School Leadership Academy, with approximately 495 current and aspiring leaders enrolled as of January 16, 2026, is a year-long statewide program aligned with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. It serves principals, assistant principals, aspiring leaders, and district leaders through differentiated tracks and a combination of in-person and virtual learning.

AFTERNOON PUBLIC COMMENT

Virtual participation:

- Shannon Wilk (CASA) - Guidance on Student Protections
- Riley Ramos - Student Safety

AMENDMENTS TO JOIN IMPLEMENTATION POLICY #2 - MINIMUM SCHOOL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS (ACTION)

Mr. Alex Reese, MSDE Chief of Staff, presented proposed amendments to Joint Implementation Policy #2 - Minimum School Funding Requirements. Originally approved jointly by the State Board and the AIB in May 2024, the policy requires LEAs to report school-level fiscal data through the Financial Reporting system and, beginning in FY2025, to submit monthly budget and expenditure data. Under the current policy, LEAs must reduce by half the number of students attending schools that have not met the minimum funding requirement in 2026. In response to significant community feedback, both boards are considering extending the timeline, allowing LEAs an additional year to fully meet the requirement. The proposed extension would require each LEA to ensure that at least 75–100% of per-pupil formula funding follows all students to their school by FY2028 (school year 2027–2028), supporting effective continuous implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to amend Joint Implementation Policy #2 - Minimum School Funding Requirements. Dr. Goldson motioned, Dr. Bell seconded. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 0)

STATE BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Dr. Lewis shared that the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) recognized Maryland as having the highest participation in NASBE activities nationally, and noted that Ms. Chang ranked second in the county for her individual participation.

LEGAL OPINIONS AND ORDERS

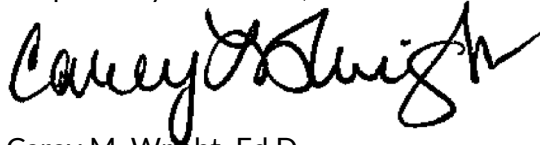
Mr. Elliott Schoen, MSDE's Assistant Attorneys General, announced the following opinions and orders:

- *A.A and E.E. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-01. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Calvert County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People v. Calvert County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-02. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
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- *AutoFlex Fleet, Inc. v. Montgomery County Board of Education (III)* – Order No. OR26-02. The Board denied the motion to intervene and dismissed the motion to stay and motion for reconsideration as moot.
- *Dawn Balinski, et al. v. Calvert County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-03 The Board dismissed the appeal for lack of standing.

STATE BOARD ADJOURN

Dr. Michael called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Greer motioned, Dr. Bell seconded. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 0).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carey M. Wright", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
Secretary/Treasurer

Date: February 24, 2026

The information included here provides a summary of the agenda items presented. The video recordings of the meetings are the official record and can be located at:

<https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/pages/meetings-2026.aspx>

Meeting materials, Opinions, and Orders can be found at:

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Pages/default.aspx>

The next Maryland State Board of Education meeting will be held on **Tuesday, February 24, 2026.**

Appropriate accommodations for individuals with disabilities will be provided upon request. Eight business days' notice prior to the event is required. Please contact Charlene Necessary at (410) 767-0467 or TTY at (410) 333-6442 so arrangements can be made.