

MEETING OF THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Minutes of the March 24, 2026 Meeting
200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

The Maryland State Board of Education met on March 24, 2026, at 9:00 am in the State Board room located within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

The following Board members were present in the Boardroom:

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

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

MEETING OPENING

Dr. Michael called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and led the pledge of allegiance. Mr. Dunklow declared that a quorum was present.

Dr. Michael thanked the Perry Hall High School Choir for their performance prior to the State Board meeting and recognized Ms. Chuen-Chin Chang for her years of service on the State Board.

Dr. Michael offered opening remarks, emphasizing that this time of year is when student growth becomes especially visible, reinforcing the importance of being in school and maximizing instructional time. Dr. Michael previewed agenda items including calendar modification requests as well as instructional time and math planning.

PUBLIC COMMENT

In-Person participation:

- Kate Volpe - Social Studies and Science instructional minutes
- Robert W. Miller – Mathematics Policy
- Noah Guerin – Social Studies/Science Class Time Cuts
- Anthony J. Conto, Maryland Music Educators Association - Arts/Music Education Advocacy - Arts/Music in Our Schools Month
- Rachel Valsing, Maryland Art Education Association - Impact of arts education on behalf of the Maryland Art Education Association
- Jason Semanoff, Jr.- Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils - COMAR 13A.05.04 Programs for Library Media Services

Virtual participation:

- Ella Nester - Social Studies and Science instructional minutes
- Marcie Taylor-Thoma, MD Council for the Social Studies - Middle School Social Studies & Science
- Darryl Pilate, Maryland Dance Education Association - Arts in our School Month/Arts Advocacy
- Suchismita Chandran, HCPSS Science Advisory Committee - MSDE Adolescent Literacy Policy

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- Approval of February 24, 2026 Meeting Minutes
- Personnel Actions
- Budget Adjustments, February 2026
- COMAR 13A.12.04.10 Other Therapists (Permission to Adopt)
- Trellis School Waiver Request
- Calendar Modification for Nonpublic Schools - Granting Authority to the State Superintendent

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the consent agenda. Dr. Johnson motioned, Dr. Bell seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

STATE SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

In recognition of March as National Arts in Our Schools Month, Dr. Wright shared two priorities, strengthening high-quality Tier 1 arts instruction and expanding arts pathways for students to study the arts throughout high school. Dr. Wright shared two videos showcasing arts instruction in Prince George's County and Calvert County Public Schools, and acknowledged MSDE videographer Daniel Perkins for his work in producing them.

Dr. Wright expressed concern about potential federal cuts to education research, while highlighting the work of the National College Attainment Network and the Council of Chief State School Officers, who awarded a grant to the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Center to develop an interactive tool to support high school students pursuing postsecondary pathways. Dr. Wright shared that, in recognition of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration highlighted one of Maryland's program participants in an online video feature. Dr. Wright shared that she welcomed students to the annual Teach Maryland Conference, encouraging them to pursue careers in education and noting this year's theme, "Build a Future With Us."

Dr. Wright congratulated Principal Ed Cosentino of Phelps Luck Elementary School in Howard County Public Schools on his election as Vice President of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Dr. Wright concluded by also recognizing the five schools that have earned the Emerging Science of Reading School recognition including Halls

Cross Road Elementary, Mechanicsville Elementary, Sandy Mount Elementary School, Samuel Chase Elementary School, and Sandy Plains Elementary School.

CALENDAR MODIFICATION REQUESTS (ACTION)

Mr. Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, and Ms. Teresa Dantzler, MSDE's Ombudsperson, reviewed calendar modification requests from local education agencies (LEAs). Education Article §7-103 requires schools to be open for 180 days and 1,080 hours and grants the State Board of Education authority to grant waivers to adjust the school year when attendance is disrupted by natural disasters, civil disasters, or severe weather. The applicable requirements for a waiver, outlined in COMAR 13A.02.01.04, specify that LEAs must demonstrate sufficient effort to provide instruction through calendar planning and modifications, and that the circumstances warranting the waiver are significant. COMAR further requires that LEAs include built-in make-up days in their original calendar and utilize those days, as well as extend the school year by up to three additional days, before requesting a waiver.

Caroline County Public Schools and Dorchester County Public Schools requested a one day waiver after closing for inclement weather for seven days and three days respectively. Mr. Hands affirmed both districts made an effort to modify their calendar, extended their school year by three days, and used all of their designated inclement weather days. The preliminary recommendation was for the State Board to approve both waiver requests.

Frederick County Public Schools requested a three day waiver after closing for six inclement weather days. Mr. Hands said Frederick County Public Schools extended their school year by three days but did not use all of its designated inclement weather days. The preliminary recommendation was for the State Board to grant a partial one day waiver of June 17th, since that was not a previously identified inclement weather day in their calendar.

Washington County Public Schools requested a two day waiver after closing for inclement weather for six days. Mr. Hands said Washington County Public Schools extended their school year by three days but the request did not provide sufficient detail regarding the need for a waiver. The preliminary recommendation was to deny the waiver request.

Somerset County Public Schools requested a three day waiver after closing for inclement weather for six days. Mr. Hands said Somerset County Public Schools did not extend their school year by three days, and that approving the waiver would cause the school year to end on a Monday, an outcome the Board has aimed to avoid. The preliminary recommendation was to deny the waiver request.

Harford County Public Schools requested a three day waiver after closing for inclement weather for seven days. Mr. Hands said Harford County Public Schools extended their school year by three days but did not use all of their designed inclement weather days. Given the significant

extension into the final week of June and the calendar modifications, the preliminary recommendation was to approve the waiver request.

Montgomery County Public Schools requested a three day waiver after closing for six inclement weather days. Mr. Hands said Montgomery County Public Schools did not extend their school year by three days and did not use all of its designated inclement weather days. However, like Harford County, the significant extension into the final week of June and the calendar modifications, the preliminary recommendation was to approve the waiver request.

Prince George's County Public Schools requested a two day waiver after closing for eight inclement weather days. Mr. Hands said Prince George's County Public Schools extended their school year by three days but did not use all of its designated inclement weather days. Given the extension into the final week of June and the calendar modifications, consistent with the rationale for the previous two approvals, the preliminary recommendation was to approve the waiver request.

Dr. Michael said there is a broader need to restructure and review how school calendars are developed. He stressed that students should not be in school during the final week of June, citing the observance of Juneteenth and the timing of primary elections. Dr. Michael also noted that the expansion of virtual instruction has changed how schools can respond to inclement weather, and that many of the current guidelines, developed prior to the pandemic, warrant updating. In light of these considerations, and alongside ongoing calendar modification requests, Dr. Michael highlighted a forthcoming resolution and a commitment to work with local school systems on policy and potential legislation.

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the Caroline County waiver request. Ms. Medina motioned, Mr. Chesterfield seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the Dorchester County waiver request. Mr. Barnes motioned, Ms. Murray Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of a partial waiver for Frederick County. Mr. Greer motioned, Ms. Medina seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested the Board deny the Washington County waiver request. Mr. Chesterfield motioned, Dr. Johnson seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested the Board deny the Somerset County waiver request. Dr. Lewis motioned, Mr. Greer seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested the Board approve the Hartford County waiver request. Dr. Bell motioned, Ms. Murray Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested the Board approve the Montgomery County waiver request and waive the three day extension requirement. Ms. Medina motioned, Mr. Barnes seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested the Board approve the Prince George's County waiver request. Mr. Chesterfield motioned, Dr. Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

Mr. Hands introduced Maryland State Board of Education Resolution 26-01 on School Calendar Planning and Inclement Weather Make-Up Days. Dr. Michael explained that Resolution 26-01 signals that the school year should conclude by the Juneteenth holiday, including any planned inclement weather days. The resolution further outlines that districts should either include three inclement weather days along with a virtual instruction plan, or build six inclement weather days into their calendars. If these conditions are met, the State Board would consider waiver requests in the next school year. Dr. Michael noted that the resolution is informed by community feedback and is intended to promote consistency across the state while preserving local flexibility.

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested the Board approve Resolution 26-01. Ms. Medina motioned, Dr. Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

UPDATE ON COMPREHENSIVE MATH PLANS (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Lyndsey Brightful, MSDE Director of Mathematics, introduced the Comprehensive Math Plan with a video. The Maryland PreK-12 Mathematics Policy was unanimously adopted as the State's first comprehensive mathematics policy in March 2025, establishing expectations for research-based strategies to improve student outcomes. In alignment with this effort, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) developed Comprehensive Math Plans to outline structures, strategies, and priorities for implementation. Ms. Brightful shared the strengths of LEA policy development including a commitment to Tier 1 instruction through implementation of High Quality Instructional Materials and collaboration across LEA teams. She additionally noted areas of growth that include professional learning alignment to student and educator goals as well as preparation for implementation of Integrated Algebra and Secondary Math Pathways. Ms. Brightful further characterized SY2025-2026 as a learning year as MSDE continues to provide implementation support resources to enable LEAs to focus on implementation in SY2026-2027.

Mr. Greer emphasized that instruction should remain multidisciplinary and that strengthening math outcomes should not be a zero-sum effort, asking how MSDE can measure the impact on instructional time across subjects. Ms. Brightful affirmed the importance of interdisciplinary content and said the daily math minutes requirement will continue to be discussed in

collaboration with LEAs. Dr. Wright acknowledged superintendent concerns about balancing time among core areas and committed to convening a stakeholder group, including scheduling experts, to address these issues. Dr. Johnson asked if teachers will be included in the workgroup and Dr. Wright confirmed that teachers would be included. Dr. Michael noted that while the policy spans K–8, much of the public feedback has focused on grades 6–8. Ms. Leonard highlighted that increased rigor will require additional resources and support for both students and teachers, and Dr. Michael underscored that improving math policies is a comprehensive effort that requires significant work from the MSDE math team.

JOINT IMPLEMENTATION POLICY #2 - MINIMUM SCHOOL FUNDING (PERMISSION TO ADOPT)

Mr. Alex Reese, MSDE's Chief of Staff, and Ms. Donna Gunning, MSDE's Chief Financial Officer, introduced revisions to Joint Implementation Policy #2 and provided background on the Blueprint's minimum school funding (MSF) requirements. The Blueprint establishes a minimum of 75% of the per-pupil foundation amount, along with full funding for certain targeted programs, including concentration of poverty grants and full-day prekindergarten for private providers. LEAs are required to report annually to the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) and MSDE on compliance at both the system and school levels and are expected to demonstrate a good faith effort toward meeting these requirements.

Beginning in fiscal year 2026, the AIB is authorized to evaluate compliance and release or withhold funds based on an LEA's compliance with MSF. Mr. Reese outlined the primary changes that remove the annual progress targets in FY2026 and FY2027 as well as eliminating the alternative calculation of minimum school funding. The policy maintains the requirement that, by Fiscal Year 2028 (2027-2028 School Year), each LEA shall have fully implemented MSF for each of its schools.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to adopt Joint Implementation Policy #2. Dr. Goldson motioned, Ms. Murray-Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

COMAR 13A.05.01.08 ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT ELIGIBILITY (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

Ms. Molly Conner, MSDE Director of Performance Support and Technical Assistance, and Dr. Jennifer Masoodi, Assistant State Superintendent of Special Education, introduced COMAR 13A.05.01.08. Dr. Michael welcomed Dr. Masoodi as the new Assistant State Superintendent of Special Education. Ms. Conner stated COMAR 13A.05.01.08 is aligned with the goal to increase the percentage of students with disabilities served in Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) settings. To provide additional background, Ms. Conner noted federal regulations allow up to 1% of students with disabilities to take the Alternate Assessment. In Maryland, Alternate Assessments are based on Alternate Achievement Standards which are aligned to Maryland College and Career Ready standards but reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity. The Alternate Assessment in Maryland is entitled the Dynamic Learning Map, and instruction aligned to the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards are known as Essential Elements.

Eligibility for Alternate Assessment is established by the Appendix A tool which guides the IEP team through a multitude of considerations prior to determining if a student has a Most Significant Cognitive Disability. Ms. Conner shared data that states 1,397 Maryland students from Prek to Grade 2 are participating in the Alternative Assessment. Ms. Conner expressed concern that students are being deemed eligible for assessments they are not permitted to take, which risks predetermining their educational outcomes. She also highlighted data showing that students who take the Alternate Assessment are disproportionately placed in segregated educational settings. Based on the Blueprint Special Education Workgroup recommendations and MSDE's Pre-K to 3 Literacy Policy, the proposed changes to COMAR state that only students with a Most Significant Cognitive Disability determination are eligible for the Alternative Assessment and eligibility cannot be considered until a student's third grade year. Additional changes include an updated definition of "Alternate Academic Achievement Standards" to stress the importance of promoting access to the general curriculum.

Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee unanimously recommends permission to publish COMAR 13A.05.01.08 as amended by the Committee.

Dr. Lewis noted that some LEAs may have classrooms dedicated to Alternate Assessment pathways, directly negating the purpose of inclusive education. Dr. Lewis further requested MSDE provide guidance, oversight, and, if necessary correction action plans, to ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Lastly, Dr. Lewis asked for annual updates on Alternate Assessment and student placement data.

Mr. Barnes asked how MSDE defines a Most Significant Cognitive Disability and Ms. Conner said Appendix A guides that determination. Dr. Bell similarly emphasized the importance of clear definitions related to the Most Significant Cognitive Disability determination and the need for consistent communication to districts. Dr. Lewis added that Appendix A and the determination process should be understood as a decision tree, or a structured, step-by-step framework for decision-making. Dr. Wright said the MSDE team is continuing to develop guidance and is prepared to provide technical assistance to support districts with implementation. Dr. Johnson said it may be helpful to describe the Most Significant Cognitive Disability determination as a process that includes the assessment instrument, the interpretation of the assessment, and the IEP team. Ms. Conner said she will defer to Counsel for any references in COMAR but noted there is an opportunity for MSDE to further support districts with definitional guidance.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to publish COMAR 13A.05.01.08 Alternate Assessment Eligibility. Dr. Johnson motioned, Ms. Murray Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

COMAR 13A.07.14 CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT HISTORY (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

Ms. Kelly Meadows, MSDE Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Educator Effectiveness, presented proposed amendments to COMAR 13A.07.14 Child Sexual Abuse and

Sexual Misconduct History and provided background on the original Employment History Review Process codified in 2019. The January 2026 report from the Office of Legislative Audits recommended that MSDE establish additional procedures to ensure local school systems are conducting required pre-employment screenings for positions with direct access to minors. In response, MSDE has proposed adding a new regulation, 13A.07.14.07, which would require local boards of education to annually attest to compliance with screening requirements and conduct limited reviews of their procedures, including audits of employees hired within a year of the review.

Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee unanimously recommends permission to publish COMAR 13A.07.14.

Ms. Leonard asked whether the limited review applies to all employees, and Ms. Meadows responded that it was intentionally broad to allow districts to determine the scope of the audit.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to publish COMAR 13A.07.14 Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct History. Mr. Chesterfield motioned, Mr. Barnes seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

DYNAMIC LEARNING MAPS (DLM) ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR SCIENCE (PERMISSION TO ADOPT)

Ms. Erika McCrea, MSDE Executive Director of State Assessments, and Dr. Paige Bradford, MSDE Section Chief for Specialized Instruction, shared the newly revised Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Science Essential Elements. These standards, designed for students participating in the Alternate Framework, align with the College and Career Ready Standards and will replace the currently approved Science Essential Elements, reflecting the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The development of Science Essential Elements began in 2014 with five states collaborating to create preliminary elements based on the K-12 Science Education Framework and NGSS. Starting in 2019, over 15 partner states and the DLM Technical Advisory Committee contributed to revising and expanding the elements to cover a broader range of dimensions. Between March 2022 and September 2023, stakeholders, including state representatives, engaged in an iterative review of 84 proposed Essential Elements. After field tests are administered in Spring of 2026, the new assessment will become operational in the Spring 2027 assessment window.

Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee unanimously recommends permission to adopt Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Essential Elements for Science.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to adopt Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Essential Elements for Science. Ms. Murray Lewis motioned, Dr. Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

STATE BOARD ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Dr. Michael called for a motion to adjourn to an Executive Session. Dr. Bell motioned, Mr. Barnes seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to § 3-305(b)(1) and (7) of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon motion of Dr. Bell and seconded by Mr. Barnes and with unanimous vote convened Conference Room #1, 8th Floor, at the Nancy S. Grasmick Building. All board members were present except Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, Xiomara Medina, and Samir Paul. Also in attendance were State Superintendent Carey Wright, Executive Director Zachary Hands, Deputy Executive Director Hannah Oakley, Chief of Staff Alex Reese, Chief Policy Officer Stefan Redding Lallinger, LEE Fellow Eli Smolen, and Assistant Attorneys General Alan Dunklow and Jackie La Fiandra. The Executive Session commenced at 12:25 p.m. and ended at 1:18 p.m.

The State Board reviewed and approved four Opinions.

- *Courtney Handte v. Caroline County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-11. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Rotunda Jenkins v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* – Opinion No. 26-12. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Janie Shafer v. Frederick County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-13. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Kelly Urbaniak v. Harford County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-14. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.

In addition, Mr. Redding Lallinger provided an informational briefing on the legislative session, Dr.

Bell provided an update on the Prince George's County superintendent search, and Ms. La Fiandra provided an update on pending cases.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Students from the Cromwell Valley Elementary School Ukulele Ensemble performed.

CHILDREN'S CABINET STRATEGIC PLAN (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Carmel Martin, Special Secretary of the Governor's Office for Children and a Senior Advisor to the Governor for Economic Mobility, and Ms. Cleo Hirsch, Chief of Staff of the Governor's Office for Children, shared the Children's Cabinet Strategic Plan. Ms. Martin outlined the Children's Cabinet's mission, noting that it includes more than 12 member agencies and serves as a forum for state agencies to identify, develop, and implement interagency initiatives, as well as produce policy recommendations aimed at reducing child poverty and improving services and supports for children and families. Ms. Martin described the Children's Cabinet's work as interconnected with the ENOUGH initiative, a neighborhood, place-based program that

advances community-led solutions through targeted resources, technical assistance, and coordinated government support. The Children's Cabinet's priorities also include improving access to benefits, strengthening child care and community schools, supporting young men and boys, and addressing the racial wealth gap. Ms. Martin outlined the ENOUGH initiative's theory of action, noting the role of community schools as required partners. She emphasized that schools play a critical role for ENOUGH grantees in supporting cradle-to-career efforts, highlighting examples such as San Mar Family and Community Services in Washington County, the Y in Baltimore City, and the Latin American Youth Center in Prince George's County.

Dr. Johnson and Mr. Greer expressed appreciation for Ms. Martin's work and the efforts of the Governor's Office for Children. Mr. Greer highlighted the family program at the Department of Labor and asked about opportunities to leverage pediatricians as partners in expanding benefit access, as well as the availability of data on students with disabilities. Ms. Martin said she has been working with the Department of Labor to support the benefit access initiative. Ms. Hirsch said the Governor's Office for Children is also working to build the data infrastructure to ensure community initiatives are data informed. Mr. Barnes asked about student outcomes for students at community schools. Dr. Wright said there are 711 community schools but MSDE has not done a student level analysis for community schools. Dr. Michael asked Ms. Martin to share her perspective on areas of growth and success in education across the state. Ms. Martin pointed to significant progress in Blueprint implementation, a major priority for the Governor, as well as the expansion of career pathways for high school students. Ms. Hirsch highlighted improvements in the teacher workforce, including decreases in the vacancy rate supported by interagency partnerships. Ms. Martin also noted the need to improve the methodology used to count students in poverty.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION; ARTS EDUCATION IN MARYLAND SCHOOLS (AEMS)

Ms. Rachel McGrain, Executive Director of AEMS, and Ms. Christen Cromwell, AEMS Board Co-Chair, highlighted the organization's mission and the importance of robust arts education. Ms. Cromwell shared that 90% of arts educators report facing barriers to providing high-quality, equitable arts instruction. To support arts education and address funding and resource challenges, AEMS advocated for the continued use of Concentration Poverty funds to support fine arts programming, as proposed in HB352/SB289. Ms. McGrain additionally noted scheduling challenges, including reductions in arts opportunities due to increased math requirements. AEMS priorities additionally include administrative support resources, support for students with disabilities, as well as smaller class sizes and robust staffing models.

Ms. Leonard emphasized the value of the "Think Like an Administrator," resource and Ms. Medina stated her appreciation for AEMS' advocacy. Dr. Michael said that as the State Board reviews all state standards, he is open to examining arts regulations to improve access and ensure they reflect current practice, noting arts instruction remains a priority.

SERVICE LEARNING REQUIREMENT UPDATE (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Mary Gable, Assistant State Superintendent of the Division of Student Support and Federal Programs, and Ms. Laura Buccigrossi, MSDE Service-Learning Specialist, shared the history of Service-Learning in Maryland starting with initial implementation in the 1980s. As defined in COMAR, students must complete 75 hours of service, including a preparation, action, and reflection component, or fulfill a locally designed program approved by MSDE. Ms. Gable described how service learning aligns with broader student outcomes and highlighted the support and guidance MSDE provides to districts in implementing these programs, including the statewide implementation plan submission process. Ms. Buccigrossi noted that most students complete the majority of the 75-hour requirement through embedded service-learning during regular instructional time, with implementation most commonly beginning in grade 6. Ms. Buccigrossi also described how embedded service-learning is distributed across high school courses, which teachers most often plan these experiences, and how they are evaluated. Ms. Marquelia Sanderson, a senior at Glen Burnie High School, shared her service-learning experience as the founder of Create for Kids and reflected on the benefits of the service-learning requirement.

Mr. Barnes highlighted the potential to align service learning with Career-Connected Learning, noting that students can leverage these experiences to market themselves to future employers. Ms. Medina commended Ms. Sanderson for her leadership and expressed interest in connecting her organization with additional partners. Dr. Bell asked for further clarification on the breakdown of the required 75 hours and Ms. Buccigrossi said a majority of the hours must be completed through the service action component. Ms. Gable noted that districts determine how service-learning hours are allocated within the classroom, typically distributing them across multiple grades and content areas.

2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Stefan Redding-Lallinger, MSDE's Chief Policy Director, and Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of the Office of Government Affairs, provided a legislative update and highlighted three bills recommended for support by the Board's Legislative Subgroup. Mr. Redding-Lallinger said the Office of Government Affairs has been tracking approximately 379 bills over the course of the legislative session, 157 of which have passed their respective chambers. HB0029 would expand access to post-college and career readiness pathways by allowing local flexibility in covering program costs, ensuring low-income students can participate at no cost, and updating provisions related to dual enrollment and CTE governance. Ms. Cratsley noted that HB0029 has absorbed a significant portion of SB311, a bill the Board previously voted to support. HB0575, a bill the Board originally voted to support with amendments, would require school systems to excuse absences for students participating in civic engagement activities, including service with public-facing bodies and the General Assembly Page Program. The bill has since been amended to address MSDE's concerns regarding chronic absenteeism, ensuring that excused absences are still included in the count to provide an accurate measure of missed instructional time. HB0525/SB0928 would require districts to adopt policies restricting student use of electronic communication devices during the school day, with specified

exceptions and stakeholder input, while prohibiting suspension or expulsion for violations and requiring ongoing reporting to MSDE. Ms. Cratsley emphasized that many of the recommendations that MSDE put forward in guidance have been incorporated into the legislation.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to approve the updated position on HB0029. Dr. Lewis motioned, Dr. Goldson seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to approve the updated position on HB0575. Dr. Bell motioned, Mr. Barnes seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to approve the updated position on HB0525 and SB0928. Mr. Chesterfield motioned, Dr. Bell seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

Mr. Greer asked for clarification on how the term “stored” is defined in HB0525 pertaining to cell phone use in school. Ms. Cratsley said the House version of the bill provides greater flexibility for districts in determining device storage, while still ensuring that students cannot access their phones during the school day. Ms. Murray-Lewis asked how the legislation considers enforcement for students that violate the cell phone policy. Ms. Cratsley said the bill specifies that infractions of the cell phone policy cannot result in suspension or expulsions and tasks the State Board with promulgating regulations that can further address discipline practices. Mr. Redding-Lallinger added that each district will be required to develop their own policy and there may be variation from county to county. Ms. Murray-Lewis expressed concern that there would not be consistency across counties, while Mr. Redding-Lallinger responded that the bill establishes a required foundation but was intentionally written to allow for local variation. Dr. Bell asked how the previous guidance from the State Board has been incorporated into the cell phone legislation. Ms. Cratsley said the bill has been developed in consideration of MSDE’s guidance, noting emergency planning, stakeholder collaboration, and discipline practices. Ms. Medina clarified that the legislation requires districts to develop a cell phone policy aligned with the established framework, and Mr. Redding-Lallinger confirmed that interpretation. Dr. Michael noted that this will require the development of regulations. Ms. Leonard emphasized the importance of being mindful of how disciplinary practices address insubordination that may arise indirectly from the cell phone policy.

Mr. Redding-Lallinger provided updates on eight bills the Board had previously taken positions on that have since progressed or been amended.

AFTERNOON PUBLIC COMMENT

In-Person participation:

- Riya Gupta, Strong Schools Maryland - Minimum School Funding Requirement

Virtual participation:

- Sharon R. Saroff, M.S.Ed – Special Education

- Hemalatha Bhaskaran, Maryland Science Supervisor's Association - Protecting instructional time for science and social studies
- Steven L. Barker, Maryland Theatre Education Association – Arts Education
- Alita-Geri Carter, Qualequity Access – Special Education

STATE BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Mr. Greer said the Strategy and Operations Committee will meet April 15, 2026, and Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee will meet April 16, 2026. Ms. Medina shared that she attended the Maryland School Counselor Association Conference and congratulated Stephanie Thurmon of Reservoir High School in Howard County Public Schools on being named the 2026 Maryland School Counselor of the Year.

Mr. Barnes said the State Board is aware of feedback regarding COMAR 13A.05.04 Library Media Services and affirmed that each school program is required to include certified school library media specialists. The State Board is working with stakeholders to provide further clarification and remains committed to ensuring that every student has access to trained library media specialists. COMAR 13A.05.04 Library Media Services will return to the State Board in April.

As Chair of the Prince George's County Superintendent Selection Committee, Dr. Bell shared that the Committee has convened twice and is working in partnership with the search firm PoliHire to conduct a national search and identify the strongest candidates to recommend to the Prince George's County Executive by May 8, 2026.

LEGAL OPINIONS AND ORDERS

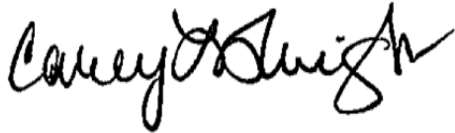
Mr. Allan Dunklow, MSDE Assistant Attorney General, announced the following opinions:

- *Courtney Handte v. Caroline County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-11. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Rotunda Jenkins v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* – Opinion No. 26-12. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Janie Shafer v. Frederick County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-13. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Kelly Urbaniak v. Harford County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-14. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.

STATE BOARD ADJOURN

Dr. Michael called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Greer motioned, Dr. Bell seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2).

Respectfully submitted,



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

Date: April 28, 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, April 28, 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.