

MEETING OF THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Minutes of the June 23, 2026 Meeting
200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

The Maryland State Board of Education met on June 23, 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, Mr. Nick Greer, Ms. Marcy Leonard, Ms. Nicole Murray-Lewis, Mr. Chet Chesterfield, and Dr. Peggy Carr were all present. Ms. Xiomara Medina was present virtually. Mr. Kenny Clash, Dr. James Bell, and Mr. Samir Paul were not present.

State Superintendent Dr. Carey Wright, State Board Director Zach Hands, and Assistant Attorney General Allan 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 shared opening remarks and reflected on the close of the 2025-2026 school year, acknowledging all members of the school community as integral components of student learning. Dr. Michael additionally commented on the value of a balanced curriculum and the importance of math and literacy instruction, while acknowledging that the policies continue to evolve through ongoing improvement and public feedback.

Dr. Michael acknowledged Ms. Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang for her service to the Board and recognized her work with the National Association of State Boards of Education. Dr. Lewis and Mr. Greer also expressed their appreciation for Ms. Chang's service. Ms. Chang thanked the Board, stating that it had been an honor to serve. Ms. Chang also emphasized Maryland's strong educational leadership and the importance of meaningful family engagement.

PUBLIC COMMENT

In-Person participation:

- Otis Lee Eldridge, III, Baltimore City Public Schools – Middle school scheduling and seat time regarding band, music, and art classes
- Robert Miller – New Mathematics and Literacy Policies
- Simone Gibson, Maryland Initiative for Literacy and Equity – MILE Updates
- Saan Rhyne, Maryland Association of Student Councils - Comprehensive Mathematics Policy
- Colleen Morris, MSEA – Restorative Practices

- David Armenti, Maryland Center for History & Culture - Comprehensive Mathematics Policy

Virtual participation:

- Paul Lemle, MSEA - Comprehensive Literacy Policy / Restorative Practices
- Kristen Vance, Howard County Public Schools - Reading Curriculum related to the Maryland Blueprint
- Betsy Tao, Distraction Free Schools Maryland - Impact of Technology on Student Literacy

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- Approval of May 28, 2026 Meeting Minutes
- Personnel Actions
- Budget Adjustments, May 2026
- COMAR 13A.12.05.05 Supervisors of Instruction, Assistant Principals, Principals (Permission to Adopt)
- COMAR 13A.12.05.06 Library Media Administrator (Permission to Adopt)
- COMAR 13A.12.05.10 Supervisor of Special Education (Permission to Adopt)

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the consent agenda. Mr. Greer motioned, Dr. Johnson seconded. (In Favor: 10, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 4)

STATE SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Wright expressed her appreciation for the feedback received on the updated mathematics and instructional time requirements. She shared that the Department has been working with local school systems to support implementation of the requirement for 60 minutes of daily mathematics instruction, or 300 cumulative minutes per week, for students in kindergarten through Grade 8. Dr. Wright also acknowledged that each local school system has unique priorities and circumstances related to school day scheduling, particularly at the middle school level, and emphasized that the Department will work with LEAs to ensure the instructional time requirement is met without sacrificing other important subjects, including the arts, social studies, and science. Dr. Wright noted that LEAs are participating in a scheduling workgroup and will pilot different scheduling models to inform implementation. She also shared that the required implementation timeline will be extended to provide districts with additional time to prepare. Dr. Wright then discussed efforts to collect feedback from district leaders to develop Master Scheduling Guidance by Winter 2026. Dr. Wright additionally discussed the Align Connect Elevate (ACE) Literacy and Mathematics convening hosted by the Division of Instructional Programs to support central office leaders to build a shared understanding of statewide academic instruction.

Dr. Wright shared that she attended the Children's National Hospital School Wellness Symposium and a convening of ENOUGH grant recipients, highlighting the importance of strong

community partnerships in supporting students. Dr. Wright acknowledged Dr. Erik Bonner, Assistant State Superintendent for Rehabilitation Services as the incoming president elect of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation. Additionally, Dr. Wright congratulated the MSDE Communications Team for receiving a Golden Achievement Award from the National School Public Relations Association in recognition of its communications campaign for the Maryland Momentum Strategic Plan. Lastly, Dr. Wright shared a video from the graduation of the Early College and Teacher Academy of Maryland and expressed her gratitude for Maryland's school communities, wishing students, educators, and families a restful and enjoyable summer break.

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

Dr. Dave Bromwell, Superintendent of Somerset County Public Schools, provided an update on behalf of the 24 local superintendents and the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland. Before providing broader updates, Dr. Bromwell expressed his appreciation to the State Board for welcoming him back following his retirement. Reflecting on his previous role, Dr. Bromwell noted that he was similarly focused on fulfilling the promise of the Blueprint and emphasized the importance of aligning systems to support its successful implementation. Dr. Bromwell additionally acknowledged the need to update existing statewide testing programs and shared that he looks forward to the forthcoming changes. He further noted increased collaboration between the AIB and MSDE is encouraging while emphasizing that the data collection and reporting requirements are highly burdensome for small school districts. Dr. Bromwell shared he has reshaped the organizational chart in Somerset to align better with the Blueprint and discussed Somerset's work to update its teacher evaluation process. Lastly, after speaking with recent graduates, Dr. Bromwell shared that many students are concerned with the role of technology in the classroom and the value of direct instruction from teachers.

Mr. Barnes asked about Somerset's work on the new Math Policy as it relates to a balanced curriculum. Dr. Bromwell shared Somerset has added instructional time to their math program and improved intervention systems to address low math proficiency. Dr. Bromwell added that Somerset is currently considering block schedules to support implementation of the Math Policy.

PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR RECOGNITION

Dr. Michael introduced Maryland's 2026–2027 Principals of the Year, highlighting the importance of school leadership and principals' work to support educators, strengthen school communities, and promote student growth and academic success. Dr. Wright acknowledged the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) and the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) for their work supporting school leaders and welcomed Chris Truffer, MASSP Executive Director, and Dr. Christopher Wooleyhand, MAESP Executive Director. Dr. Wright introduced the following honorees:

- Dr. Joshua Fine, Flower Hill Elementary School, Montgomery County Public Schools
- Dr. Rhoda Nunez-Donnelly, Murray Hill Middle School, Howard County Public Schools

- Briana Walker, Greensboro Elementary School, Caroline County Public Schools
- Dr. Ryan Durr, Meade High School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools
- Dr. Deborah Dennie, Leonardtown Middle School, St. Mary's County Public Schools
- Andrea Cannady, Northeast Middle School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools
- Lyndsay Huerbin, Arundel High School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

COMPREHENSIVE MATH POLICY AND SECONDARY MATH PROGRAM (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Wright introduced Dr. Lyndsey Brightful, MSDE Director of Mathematics, and framed the presentation by noting that the Mathematics Policy and Literacy Policy share a common goal of reversing declines in student achievement, accelerating student progress, and establishing a strong statewide foundation for mathematics and literacy instruction. Both policies emphasize the implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), high-quality Tier 1 instruction aligned to Maryland's academic standards, the use of high-quality instructional materials, and sustained professional learning for educators. Additionally, both prioritize early identification of students in need of intervention and increased transparency and communication with families. Dr. Wright concluded by emphasizing that, together, the policies represent the strongest, clearest, and most coherent statewide framework to date for supporting mathematics and literacy achievement.

Dr. Brightful provided an update on the Mathematics Policy, adopted in March 2025, highlighting a revised implementation timeline and a change in terminology from "secondary mathematics pathway" to "secondary mathematics program." She explained that the revised name better reflects the multiple programmatic options available to students rather than implying a single prescribed pathway. Dr. Brightful additionally explained the research underpinning the mathematics programs, highlighting historical barriers that have limited student access, the need for multiple pathways that reflect students' diverse goals and experiences, and the growing importance of data literacy and quantitative reasoning alongside, rather than solely through, the traditional pathway to Calculus. Dr. Brightful shared the implementation timeline, framing SY2025-2026 as a learning year, including professional learning and the development of implementation resources such as slide deck templates, a Numeracy Development Framework, and revised standard companion guides.

For SY2026-2027, MSDE is committed to providing professional learning to support the implementation of the revised PreK-8 Math Standards. Professional learning includes synchronous and asynchronous learning modules, the Math School Improvement Network, and Comprehensive Math Plan Implementation Visits. In response to LEA feedback, the current policy will be required to implement the Math Policy by SY2028-2029 instead of SY2027-2028. This includes the 60 minutes of math instruction for grade K-8, integrated algebra course progression, common secondary math pathways, and math acceleration course progression in grades 3-8. Lastly, Dr. Brightful shared the next steps, noted an additional public comment period, and explained the rationale for the policy's instructional time requirements, stating that

they are modeled after the instructional time expectations of high-performing states and countries that have demonstrated strong mathematics proficiency and achievement gains.

Dr. Michael stated that the policy will be revisited after the public comment period but emphasized that it was important for the Board to review the policy before it is released for public comment. Dr. Johnson asked to review how Algebra 1 and Algebra 2 will look differently in the revised policy. Dr. Brightful said the initial policy from July 2025 was presented as a crosswalk to support comparisons between the previous and updated policy. Dr. Johnson additionally stressed the scale of this change and asked how MSDE is being intentional with professional development. Dr. Brightful said her staff is meeting districts where they are, providing resources in the modality most helpful to educators. Dr. Johnson also expressed appreciation for the data supporting the proposed instructional time requirements and encouraged MSDE to continue grounding discussions of increased mathematics instructional time in the supporting research and evidence. Dr. Michael clarified that the 60-minute mathematics instructional time requirement was previously approved by the Board and has been in effect for more than a year.

Ms. Murray-Lewis asked how the state will support LEAs with the resources needed for implementation. Dr. Brightful said all professional learning resources are free for LEAs and MSDE is committed to addressing any barriers to access identified by LEAs. Mr. Barnes encouraged MSDE to continue monitoring how LEAs are implementing the 60-minute mathematics instructional time requirement and to further examine how other countries maintain a balanced curriculum while increasing instructional time for core academic subjects. Dr. Brightful confirmed that MSDE will provide sample schedules to support implementation and will continue to identify and share best practices from both local school systems and high-performing international education systems. Dr. Carr similarly emphasized the importance of examining international standards, noting that the relationship between a 60-minute mathematics instructional time requirement and student outcomes may not be clear. She also suggested the TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) Encyclopedia as a resource for further consideration.

COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY POLICY (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Jill Snell, Executive Director of Literacy Programs and Initiatives, provided an update on the Comprehensive Literacy Policy and reviewed the policy's development timeline, beginning with the PreK–3 Early Literacy Policy in January 2024, followed by the Adolescent Literacy Policy in January 2026, and culminating in the proposed PreK–12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy. Dr. Laura Aberg, Coordinator of Literacy Programs and Initiatives, explained that the shift from separate literacy policies to a comprehensive policy was driven by stakeholder feedback and concerns about fragmentation. The combined policy is intended to support a coherent continuum of literacy instruction, intervention, and support across grade levels.

Dr. Aberg provided an update on the Universal Screener process, noting that the available screeners do not support enough languages to require screening in students' home languages statewide. She acknowledged the importance of distinguishing between language acquisition needs and reading needs. Additionally, Dr. Aberg discussed how IEP teams will use screening results to inform the development of students' reading goals and noted that MSDE will provide additional guidance on accommodations for approved screeners. Dr. Aberg also shared that implementation of the retention policy has been delayed and will now take effect in the 2028–2029 school year. Recognizing concerns regarding overtesting and the need to align with the *More Learning, Less Testing Act of 2017*, Dr. Aberg explained that, rather than requiring all students to be screened in ninth grade, screening will be targeted to students who demonstrate learning difficulties in the prior school year. Lastly, Ms. Snell shared that MSDE has reopened the Request for Information (RFI) process for PreK–12 universal screeners and will continue to engage in ongoing revisions to the Literacy Policy, including updates related to writing, refined guidance, and long-term planning.

Dr. Lewis noted that universal screening requirements may be duplicative and create additional burdens for IEP teams already engaged in developing individualized education programs for students with disabilities. Mr. Greer shared that the family guides are valuable additions but cautioned that the informed consent process and related language regarding student retention may be confusing for families. He also emphasized the importance of engaging teacher preparation programs to ensure educators are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the policy effectively. Dr. Michael requested that a final version of the Literacy Policy be provided to the Board with a more detailed summary of the revisions and updates.

COMAR 13A.16 CHILD CARE CENTERS & 13A.17 CHILD CARE LETTERS OF COMPLIANCE (SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN) (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

Ms. Sarah Neville-Morgan, Assistant State Superintendent of the Division of Early Childhood, introduced proposed amendments pertaining to the maximum group size allowed in child care centers and required training for staff that serve school age children. Currently, a group of school-age children (ages 5 years and older) must have a staff/child ratio of 1 to 15 and a maximum group size of 30. Under the proposed amendment, a center may utilize a maximum group size of 45 when staffed by at least one teacher, one assistant teacher, and one aide. Ms. Neville-Morgan provided additional context noting the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) initially convened a School Age Workgroup in 2023 to consider potential amendments to group size and staffing requirements for school-age children. On September 20, 2023, DEC further discussed proposed amendments during an Office of Child Care (OCC) Advisory Council Ad Hoc Meeting, gathering feedback from stakeholders on suggested changes to Child Care Center and Letter of Compliance regulations.

Dr. Michael asked for additional information regarding the scenarios in which the regulation would apply. Ms. Neville-Morgan explained that the regulations address after-school programs, which are often operated in multi-purpose spaces. Dr. Lewis asked about square footage

requirements, and Ms. Keisha Maxwell, Administrator of Policy and Special Projects, confirmed that the requirements remain unchanged at 35 square feet per child.

Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee unanimously recommends permission to publish 13A.16 Child Care Centers & 13A.17 Child Care Letters of Compliance.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to publish 13A.16 Child Care Centers & 13A.17 Child Care Letters of Compliance. Mr. Chesterfield motioned, Ms. Murray Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

COMAR 13A.12.04.11 EDUCATOR LICENSURE, SPECIALISTS, SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS, 13A.05.05.01 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS, & 13A.05.05.16 SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER PROGRAM (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

Ms. Mary Gable, Assistant State Superintendent of the Division of Student Support and Federal Programs, presented proposed amendments to clarify the requirements for school social worker licensure. COMAR 13A.12.04.11 Educator Licensure, Specialists, School Social Worker defines a school social worker and aligns licensure language from the Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners. Once licensed by the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners, MSDE Educator Licensure describes school social workers as “Specialists.” Additionally, COMAR 13A.05.05.01 General Requirements adds “School Social Work” to the coordinated program of pupil services which includes school counseling, pupil personnel, school psychology and health services. COMAR 13A.05.05.16 School Social Worker Program then defines the program objectives and delineates the role of social workers in supporting students and schools.

Mr. Barnes asked how schools determine whether to hire social workers and how those positions are distributed across the State. Ms. Gable explained that local school systems and individual schools determine their staffing and personnel needs, including whether to employ a school social worker or pupil personnel worker, a broader category of professionals who provide student support services. Ms. Medina thanked the MSDE team for clarifying the staffing options available to schools and emphasized the importance of flexible, creative staffing models to build comprehensive student support services.

Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee unanimously recommends permission to publish COMAR 13A.12.04.11 Educator Licensure, Specialists, School Social Workers, 13A.05.05.01 General Requirements, & 13A.05.05.16 School Social Worker Program.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to publish COMAR 13A.12.04.11 Educator Licensure, Specialists, School Social Workers, 13A.05.05.01 General Requirements, & 13A.05.05.16 School Social Worker Program. Dr. Lewis motioned, Mr. Barnes seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

STATE BOARD ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Dr. Michael called for a motion to adjourn to an Executive Session. Mr. Chesterfield motioned, Mr. Greer seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to § 3-305(b)(7) of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon motion of Chet Chesterfield and seconded by Nick Greer and with unanimous vote the State Board of Education met in closed session on June 23, 2026 in Conference Room #1, 8th Floor, at the Nancy S. Grasmick Building. All board members were present except for James Bell and Kenny Clash. Also in attendance were State Superintendent Carey Wright, Executive Director Zachary Hands, Deputy Director Hannah Oakley, and Assistant Attorneys General Alan Dunklow and Jackie LaFiandra. The Executive Session commenced at 12:15 p.m. and ended at 12:55 p.m. The State Board reviewed and approved two Opinions and three Orders.

- *A.M. v. Harford County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-25. The Board affirmed the local board decision.
- *Velma Taboada v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* – Opinion No. 26-26. The Board reversed the local board's decision.
- *Joan Daughety v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-17. The Board remanded the appeal back to the local board.
- *E.W. v. Harford County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-18. The Board dismissed the appeal.
- *R.G. and E.G. v. Howard County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-19. The Board dismissed the appeal.

In addition, Mr. Dunklow provided an update on pending legal matters, President Joshua Michael provided an update on stakeholder meetings, and board members began the nomination process for board officers in accordance with the Governance and Operations Manual.

RECOGNITION OF MR. O'MARIE BARNES (STUDENT MEMBER OF THE BOARD)

Dr. Michael expressed his appreciation for Mr. Barnes, recognizing his service to the State and his steadfast representation of student voice. He commended Mr. Barnes for raising the standard for Board members through his preparation, thoughtful engagement, and leadership, and shared his excitement for Mr. Barnes' next chapter. Dr. Goldson, Dr. Lewis, and Dr. Carr similarly expressed their appreciation for Mr. Barnes and recognized his meaningful contributions to the Board. The Board then presented Mr. Barnes with a surprise gift and took a group photograph.

Mr. Chesterfield expressed his appreciation for Mr. Barnes' service and described him as an inspiration. Dr. Johnson recognized him as an exemplary representative of Maryland students. Ms. Leonard highlighted his student leadership, while Ms. Murray-Lewis reflected on the inspiration and hope she gained from working with him. Ms. Medina emphasized the importance of including student voices in policymaking, Mr. Greer commended Mr. Barnes' curiosity and engagement, and Dr. Wright also expressed her appreciation for his service and confidence in his future success. Mr. Barnes thanked the Board for their kind words and reflected on his journey,

recognizing the support of his mother and grandparents in helping him overcome challenges and serve on the State Board of Education. He shared that his story represents the beauty of opportunity in Maryland and expressed his hope that the Board's continued work will help ensure future students have access to the same opportunities and academic success.

STRATEGIC PLAN HIGHLIGHT: GROW YOUR OWN PROGRAM AND REGISTERED TEACHER APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Kelly Meadows, Assistant Superintendent of Educator Effectiveness, shared an update on the Grow-Your-Own (GYO) Educators Grant Program established as a part of the Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act of 2025. Ms. Meadows explained that GYO programs are not separate teacher licensure pathways, but rather leverage existing approved pathways to support partnerships, provide funding, and develop local talent pipelines. Dr. Jason Keys, Director of the Office of Educator Preparation, outlined common GYO frameworks including high school pipelines, paraprofessional-to-teacher programs, teacher residencies, alternative licensure programs, and registered teacher apprenticeship initiatives.

Dr. Keys further described the MSDE Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP), noting the earn as you learn model, on the job training by the LEA employer and an approved teacher preparation program. Currently four Maryland LEAs, three community colleges, and three four-year institutions are engaged in partnerships to offer the RTAP. Ms. Meadows additionally clarified the difference between the RTAP model and traditional teacher preparation programs. Dr. Keys then provided an overview of the FY2026 GYO Educators Grant, through which \$19.4 million was awarded to 13 LEAs. Lastly, Dr. Keys and Ms. Meadows recognized the contributions of state partners, including the University System of Maryland, the Maryland State Education Association, and the Maryland Department of Labor, in supporting GYO initiatives. They also highlighted that the second application window is now open for the program's second cohort of candidates.

Ms. Murray-Lewis asked about the success of GYO programs in other states and related evidence. Ms. Meadows said there are many GYO models, but there is significant variation so MSDE will be working to collect outcomes data to further consider program effectiveness. Ms. Meadows also affirmed that GYO programs maintain the same rigor and quality as traditional preparation programs, offering the same coursework through a different delivery model. Mr. Greer asked whether there is evidence that GYO programs are effective in recruiting and retaining male teachers. Ms. Meadows said that data is not yet available but that MSDE will collect and report the data as the programs develop. She added that GYO initiatives will need to intentionally recruit and support populations that are underrepresented in the educator workforce. Dr. Michael noted that traditional teacher preparation programs have not been sufficient to meet the goal of diversifying the educator workforce.

Mr. Greer then asked whether GYO programs would be concentrated in low-income schools. Ms. Meadows said that decisions regarding program placement and implementation would be made

by local school systems. Dr. Michael asked about the scale of the RTAP. Dr. Keys shared that the four participating LEAs have begun recruitment and that more than 500 individuals attended program information sessions. He also noted that eight additional LEAs will join the program in the coming year. Dr. Keys explained that the program has scaled rapidly, noting that it was only registered in September of the previous year. Dr. Johnson asked whether all colleges and universities within the Maryland system are engaged in the program. Dr. Keys explained that MSDE is working with numerous institutions of higher education to meet the Department of Labor requirement that universities provide course credit for the classroom component of the apprenticeship program, with some institutions committed to offering more than 30 credits. Ms. Meadows added that the Maryland Higher Education Commission has been a critical partner in supporting the initiative. Dr. Michael asked to review the list of universities participating in the program.

Mr. Barnes asked about efforts to secure additional funding for the program in the future. Dr. Keys explained that being a registered apprenticeship through the Department of Labor provides opportunities to access additional funding streams and noted MSDE's partnership with the National Center for Grow Your Own to explore future funding opportunities. Dr. Michael concluded by describing the current teacher labor market, noting that Maryland has approximately 12,000 teaching positions that will not be filled by returning professionally licensed teachers, highlighting the need for continued investment in creative educator pipeline solutions. Dr. Michael then asked about the role of the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) in supporting efforts to strengthen the teacher pipeline. Ms. Meadows and Dr. Keys shared that MSEA is a key partner in this work and serves as an advisory member of the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee. Ms. Murray-Lewis asked whether mentor teachers will receive compensation, and Dr. Keys confirmed that mentors will receive a stipend and participate in additional training.

CHILD CARE PROVIDER PANEL (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Sarah Neville-Morgan opened the discussion by emphasizing the value of early childhood education and the importance of the early childhood workforce as a foundational component of Pillar 1 of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. She then introduced the panelists: Kimberly Greene-Epps, a family child care provider from Baltimore City; Michelle Ward, Early Childhood Supervisor for Calvert County Public Schools; Lisa Ann Dickinson, President of the Maryland State Child Care Association and Director of a child care center in Baltimore County; Laura Hutton, Apprenticeship Coordinator at Harford Community College; and Francisco Mendoza, Director of three child care centers in Montgomery and Howard counties. Each panelist shared their pathway into the early childhood workforce and described their current work supporting young children, families, and early childhood educators. The panelists discussed barriers to expanding early childhood programs, including the high cost of facility requirements, families' ability to afford child care, challenges recruiting and retaining qualified educators, and navigating changing regulatory requirements.

Ms. Murray-Lewis thanked the panelists for their work supporting young children and asked about professional development requirements for early childhood educators and how providers are evaluated based on student outcomes. Ms. Neville-Morgan explained that the COMAR regulations discussed earlier in the day outline requirements for early childhood educators and noted that MSDE has multiple opportunities to evaluate providers. She highlighted the role of regional licensing teams, which conduct more than 10,000 inspections annually to assess the health and safety of child care settings. Dr. Michael asked the provider panelists to share examples of the programming they offer and describe what high-quality care looks like in practice. Ms. Greene-Epps and Ms. Ward highlighted relationship-building and family engagement strategies that strengthen the broader learning community while supporting children's development and self-expression.

Ms. Leonard highlighted public libraries as an important resource and asked how MSDE could better support child care providers. Ms. Hutton emphasized the need for more streamlined systems and clearer communication, while Mr. Mendoza noted that grant applications and reporting requirements can be challenging to navigate, including burdensome expense reporting requirements. Ms. Dickinson raised concerns about the sustainability of the current reimbursement structure for the Pre-K Expansion Grant, noting that providers often pay salary and operational expenses upfront and experience delays in reimbursement. Ms. Ward similarly shared that delayed payments have been a significant barrier for private providers partnering with her LEA while Ms. Dickinson acknowledged that improvements have been made to the process. Dr. Michael concluded by expressing appreciation for the panelists' feedback and emphasizing that, although investments in child care have increased, the State's infrastructure to support the child care community has not expanded at the same pace.

COMPREHENSIVE ENROLLMENT UPDATE (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Matthew Duque, Executive Director of Research, presented an update on student enrollment including historical national enrollment trends as well as SY2025-2026 enrollment trends and projections. Beginning with the national context, Dr. Duque shared enrollment trends from Fall 2014 to Fall 2024, noting that Maryland was one of 20 states that experienced net positive enrollment growth during this period. More recently however, the total count of students enrolled in the 2025-2026 school year decreased compared to the 2024-2025 count. Pre-K, elementary, and high school enrollment showed increases between SY 2021-2022 and SY 2024-2025 but dropped in SY 2025-2026. In contrast, Kindergarten and middle school enrollment declined over the past five years. Dr. Duque shared enrollment trends across public schools, nonpublic schools, and homeschools, noting similar declines across all three sectors. He highlighted that, from 2025 to 2026, homeschool enrollment decreased by 3.6%, compared to a 1.3% decrease in public school enrollment and a 1.4% decrease in nonpublic school enrollment. Dr. Duque also presented enrollment data by LEA, noting that all but one LEA, Kent County, experienced enrollment declines between the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years.

Mr. Greer asked for clarification on the discrepancies between enrollment data reported by the Department of Planning and MSDE. Dr. Duque explained that the primary difference is MSDE's inclusion of Pre-K enrollment in its total enrollment count. Mr. Greer also expressed concern that

the Department of Planning's projections may overstate enrollment declines and noted his broader concern with the downward enrollment trend. Dr. Michael added that the data do not capture changes within student subgroups, including declines among immigrant families, which have historically contributed to public school enrollment growth.

AFTERNOON PUBLIC COMMENT

Virtual participation:

- June Ella Pompei, HCPSS - Blueprint and its effects on the middle school fine arts.
- Melissa Salz, HCPSM (Howard County Parents School Music) - How Blue Print is influencing scheduling
- Samantha Fowler, Maryland Civic Education Coalition - Protecting instructional time for social studies and science in Middle Level Learning.
- Sunta Harris, MDCSS – Social Studies Education

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM AND COMPASS ACT UPDATE (INFORMATION ONLY)

Mr. Tim Guy, MSDE's Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Assessment and Accountability, provided an update on the State's accountability system, building on previous Board presentations. He began by reviewing the federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), explaining that states are required to meaningfully differentiate school performance using indicators that include academic achievement, academic growth or another academic indicator, graduation rates for high schools, English language proficiency, and measures of school quality or student success. Mr. Guy noted that federal law requires the first four indicators to each receive substantial weight and, collectively, significantly greater weight than the school quality and student success indicator when making annual accountability determinations.

Mr. Guy then outlined the proposed revisions to Maryland's school accountability indicators. Under the current accountability system, academic indicators account for 65% of a school's overall score, while school quality and student success indicators account for the remaining 35%. He explained that the COMPASS Act, enacted during the most recent legislative session, authorizes MSDE to increase the weight of academic indicators to 70% of the overall accountability score. At the elementary and middle school levels, Mr. Guy explained that chronic absenteeism and access to a well-rounded curriculum would be removed from the school quality and student success category. He noted that chronic absenteeism was removed because it is highly correlated with a school's economically disadvantaged population, while the access to a well-rounded curriculum indicator was identified by the U.S. Department of Education as insufficiently differentiating school performance.

In their place, MSDE proposes adding a school staffing indicator, while retaining the existing teacher and student survey measures. Mr. Guy also highlighted the addition of an opportunity measure within the academic indicators that evaluates the academic growth of the lowest-performing third of students in each school. Similar revisions are proposed for the high school accountability system. Mr. Guy explained that high school academic indicators would continue to include measures such as graduation rates, while the college and career readiness indicator would be combined with the existing well-rounded curriculum measure.

Dr. Johnson asked what the proposed school staffing indicator would measure. Dr. Wright responded that the Technical Advisory Committee is still developing and defining the metric. Dr. Michael additionally explained that the State Board will review the Committee's recommendations and have the opportunity to approve the final metrics. Ms. Murray-Lewis asked about the removal of the chronic absenteeism indicator, expressing concern that it could reduce schools' incentive to prioritize strategies that address absenteeism. Dr. Wright said that schools will remain focused on attendance because student academic outcomes are closely tied to absenteeism. She also noted that chronic absenteeism will continue to be monitored through the Aligned Metrics used by the Accountability and Implementation Board. Dr. Michael reaffirmed that chronic absenteeism remains a State priority but noted that it should not be used as an accountability measure in a way that disproportionately penalizes high-poverty schools. Dr. Johnson similarly expressed concern that the proposed school staffing indicator could also be highly correlated with school poverty. Dr. Lewis said she looks forward to further discussion of the proposed academic growth measure. Ms. Leonard emphasized that accountability systems are only effective if they help identify where resources can be most effectively directed and noted that this consideration will remain critical as the Board continues its discussion.

LEGAL OPINIONS AND ORDERS

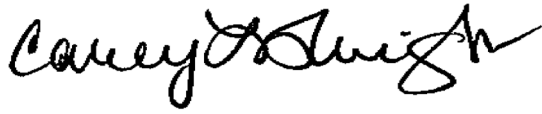
Mr. Dunklow, MSDE Assistant Attorney General, announced the following opinions and orders:

- *A.M. v. Harford County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-25. The Board affirmed the local board decision.
- *Velma Taboada v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* – Opinion No. 26-26. The Board reversed the local board's decision.
- *Joan Daughety v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-17. The Board remanded the appeal back to the local board.
- *E.W. v. Harford County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-18. The Board dismissed the appeal.
- *R.G. and E.G. v. Howard County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-19. The Board dismissed the appeal.

STATE BOARD ADJOURN

Dr. Michael called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Barnes motioned, Dr. Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 9, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 5).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carey M. Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "C" and "W".

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

Date: July 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, July 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.