

MEETING OF THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Minutes of the August 25, 2026 Meeting
200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

The Maryland State Board of Education met on August 25, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the State Boardroom located within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

The following Board members were present in the Boardroom: Dr. Joshua Michael, Dr. Kim Lewis, Dr. Irma Johnson, Mr. Nick Greer, Ms. Marcy Leonard, Mr. Chet Chesterfield, Dr. James Bell, Dr. Monica Goldson, Dr. Peggy Carr, Ms. Xiomara Medina, and Ms. Lorena Wu.

Mr. Samir Paul, Mr. Kenny Clash, and Ms. Nicole Murray-Lewis were not present.

State Superintendent Dr. Carey Wright, State Board Director Zach 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. Hands declared that a quorum was present.

Dr. Michael shared opening remarks reflecting on Maryland's history of educational inequity and emphasized the Blueprint's role in restructuring opportunity through public education. He highlighted recent academic progress while stressing the need to sustain investment, strengthen teaching and learning, and ensure that resources translate into improved outcomes for students.

PUBLIC COMMENT

In-Person participation:

- Robert Miller – Math Policy
- Rachel McGrain, AEMS – Math Policy and Arts in Education Week

Virtual participation:

- Sharon Saroff – Special Education
- Phaedra Spencer – Somerset Education Association – Book Policy

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- Approval of July 28, 2026 Meeting Minutes
- Personnel Actions
- Budget Adjustments, July 28, 2026
- COMAR 13A.12.06.02 Grounds for Disciplinary Action and COMAR 13A.12.06.03 Petition for Disciplinary Action or Denial (Permission to Adopt)

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the consent agenda. Mr. Chesterfield motioned; Dr. Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

STATE SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Wright shared updates from the first day of school, including her visit to Frederick County Public Schools and upcoming visits to Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Carroll, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties. She thanked educators and school leaders for their work preparing for the new school year and shared a video from Maryland Teacher of the Year ALonna Soward-Puryear. She

highlighted the upcoming launch of MSTAR in grades 3–8, the Technical Advisory Committee's work, and recent discussions by the Assessment and Accountability Advisory Committee on potential school staffing indicators. She also noted her attendance at the Maryland Association of Counties annual conference and the release of MSDE's initial instructional materials reviews. She recognized Jennifer Davidson of Anne Arundel County Public Schools as the 2026 Maryland History Teacher of the Year.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION: MARYLAND STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (MSEA)

Mr. Paul Lemle, President of the Maryland State Education Association, Dr. Nikki Woodward, Vice President, and Mr. Sean Johnson, Executive Director, shared background on MSEA and its work, including collective bargaining, statewide advocacy, and professional learning. Dr. Woodward discussed budget considerations and the improvements made under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, including the expansion of community schools, National Board Certified Teachers, and career ladders. Mr. Johnson shared teacher data on artificial intelligence, noting MSEA polling that indicated members are concerned about the loss of key skills and academic dishonesty. At the same time, teachers expressed less concern about the impact on teaching. Additionally, Mr. Johnson said 45% of teachers reported declines in student attendance and connected this to concerns about immigration enforcement activity in or near their school community. Mr. Lemle shared other issues requiring continued partnership, including implementing the COMPASS Act and the new state report card, as well as transitioning from the MCAP assessment to MSTAR. Areas of cooperation additionally include community school regulations, class time and scheduling, and threats to public education that detract from student academic achievement.

Dr. Michael shared his appreciation for MSEA's continued partnership. Ms. Leonard asked how MSEA envisions expanding collaborative time given limited resources. Mr. Lemle said elementary teachers are the priority, while many secondary teachers often have the schedule flexibility to use collaborative time effectively. Dr. Carr encouraged MSEA to review national data on teacher and principal retention that considers additional factors that affect teacher retention. Dr. Woodward said MSEA and the AIB are working to develop a standardized, statewide exit screening to understand teacher retention in Maryland better, while stressing that climate and culture in each school often vary and affect teacher satisfaction. Ms. Medina said the MSEA data on teacher retention and the impact of "burnout" on teachers need more detail to clarify the contributing factors behind "burnout." Ms. Medina also emphasized that the factors contributing to "burnout" may depend on school personnel, as school counselors and mental health professionals may rank student mental health as a major contributing factor. Dr. Lewis asked about longitudinal data and how retention factors have changed over time, especially considering social media, student mental health, and class size. Mr. Johnson said he would follow up with additional data.

Dr. Goldson asked about the survey sample size and when it was administered. Mr. Greer asked whether the survey included additional questions about cell phone use and Chromebooks. Dr. Carr said MSEA can further consider the internal standards for technology use in the classroom. Dr. Bell asked how Maryland can balance responsible technology use with AI literacy. Mr. Lemle said professional learning is critical to support educators to balance the demands of new technology. Mr. Greer noted research that states reading on digital devices is not as beneficial as reading from a book. Mr. Lemle concluded with appreciation for MSDE staff.

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

Dr. Jymil Thompson, Superintendent, Dorchester County Public Schools, provided an update on behalf of the 24 local superintendents and the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM). Dr. Thompson shared changes to special education programming and a shift away from outside contractors to internal IEP teams.

Dr. Carr recommended further clarifying the high-dose tutoring strategy to ensure evidence-based instruction and stressed community engagement to support efforts to address chronic absenteeism. Ms. Wu asked if a Career and Readiness Center is available for students and what access may look like for recent graduates. Dr. Thompson said Dorchester is developing their post-secondary resources, including a Career and Readiness Center. Dr. Bell asked how the data supports intervention and resource allocation based on feeder patterns.

2025-2026 MCAP RESULTS DEEP DIVE (INFORMATION ONLY)

Mr. Geoff Sanderson, MSDE Chief of Accountability, shared the 2025-2026 MCAP results, building on the July 2026 presentation. Mr. Sanderson reviewed student performance by MCAP performance levels, cohort trends, student groups, school poverty, attendance, and the 90th and 10th percentile groups, noting trends in ELA and mathematics proficiency and achievement gaps.

Board members discussed the results and thanked Mr. Sanderson and his team for the data analysis. Ms. Medina asked for clarification regarding the term “not exiting” on slide 24, and Mr. Sanderson clarified the definition. Dr. Lewis acknowledged the goal of decreasing proficiency gaps among all student groups. Ms. Wu asked about services and interventions provided to students who are behind, including changes in proficiency rates. Mr. Sanderson explained that interventions are monitored locally by LEAs, while Dr. Wright noted that districts implement different interventions and that high-dose tutoring is used across the state. Mr. Greer requested further analysis of students moving between performance levels and suggested examining higher-poverty schools showing strong improvement to identify effective practices.

Dr. Carr requested that future scatter plots include R-squared values and asked for further analysis of low-income students performing proficiently compared with higher-income students performing below proficiency. Dr. Johnson asked whether curriculum standards may be contributing to students not achieving proficiency goals. Dr. Bell asked whether recruitment and retention of qualified mathematics teachers may correlate with lower mathematics proficiency.

REVISED PREK-12 MATHEMATICS POLICY (ACTION)

Dr. Lyndsey Brightful, MSDE Director of Mathematics, introduced the revised PreK-12 Mathematics Policy and shared an overview of the public comments MSDE received. With approximately 274 individual comments, 18% came from educators, and 31% came from parents, with 80% of comments coming from five LEAs including Frederick County, Montgomery County, Howard County, Anne Arundel County, and Prince George’s County. 47.1% of submissions supported the proposed timeline revisions, 1.2% explicitly opposed the delayed timeline, and 51.7% did not express a clear position. Roughly 132 public comments focused on the instructional minute requirements, addressing issues such as scheduling, access to electives and other programs, local flexibility, staffing, funding, and resources. In contrast, 73% of those comments were nearly identical or substantially similar, representing a group or form letter.

Dr. Brightful added context on instructional time requirements and noted that most LEAs currently offer at least 60 minutes of Tier 1 math instruction or intervention periods.

Dr. Stefan Redding-Lallinger, MSDE’s Chief Policy Officer, shared that MSDE is creating guidance that accounts for various scheduling constraints, school day lengths, and other variables. Dr. Redding-Lallinger presented a sample schedule built around a 6-hour, 45-minute school day, in which all core subjects receive 60 minutes, plus two 60-minute elective blocks, with 30 minutes for lunch/recess and 15 minutes for transitions/dismissal.

Mr. Greer asked how the transition time was determined in the sample schedule and stressed the importance of using all instructional time effectively, not just math instructional time. Ms. Medina said the transition time in the sample schedule may not be feasible. She highlighted that the form letters submitted for public comment provide an accessible way for families to participate in the public comment process. Dr. Bell asked if the sample schedule considered intervention periods, and Dr. Redding-Lallinger said yes and noted the guidance will include additional examples, including schedules with intervention blocks as well as alternating A and B day schedules. Dr. Bell additionally suggested collaboration across LEAs to ensure that districts that effectively implemented schedules can share best practices. Dr. Johnson asked how MSDE gathers feedback from LEAs. Dr. Wright emphasized the disparities between instructional time from LEA to LEA. Dr. Goldson said the board should prioritize understanding what happens during instructional time rather than setting fixed minutes across the state, and emphasized that scheduling decisions should be left to local master schedulers. Dr. Brightful said MSDE plans to visit each district in the coming year and has continuously engaged with district leaders throughout the policy's development. Ms. Leonard inquired how technology is incorporated into mathematics instructional materials. She also asked about the planned mathematics course offerings for students in the eleventh and twelfth grades. Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee unanimously supported the revised PreK-12 Mathematics Policy.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to adopt the revised PreK-12 Mathematics Policy. Mr. Chesterfield motioned, Ms. Medina seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

STATE BOARD ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Dr. Michael requested Board approval to adjourn to executive session. Dr. Bell motioned, Mr. Greer seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to § 3-305(b)(7) and (b)(13) of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon motion of James Bell, Jr. and seconded by Nick Greer and with unanimous vote, the State Board of Education met in closed session on August 25, 2026 in Conference Room #1, 8 th Floor, at the Nancy S. Grasmick Building. All board members were present except Kenny Clash, Nicole Murray-Lewis, and Samir Paul. Also in attendance were State Superintendent Carey Wright, Executive Director Zachary Hands, Deputy Executive Director Hannah Oakley, and Assistant Attorneys General Alan Dunklow, Jackie LaFiandra, and Lori Hopkins. The Executive Session commenced at 1:07 p.m. and ended at 2:07 p.m. The State Board reviewed and approved four Opinions and two Orders.

- *Christopher K., Jose R., N.B. and Z.E.D., and W.J. v. Montgomery County Board of Education*—Opinion No. 26-29. The Board affirmed the local board decision.
- *Stephanie P. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-30. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Pravina Raghavan, et al. v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-31. The Board adopted the ALJ's Proposed Decision and affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Derek Shank v. Allegany County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 26-32. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *J.A. and L.A. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-28. The Board dismissed the appeal as moot.
- *M.H. and A.H. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-297. The Board remanded the appeal back to the local board.

In addition, President Michael provided a leadership update. Finally, the Board reviewed the State

Superintendent's recommendations for State-Aided Institutions. Chief Operating Officer Krishnanda Tallur, Chief Financial Officer Donna Gunning, Senior Executive Director Neeta Gandhi, Chief Policy Officer Stefan Redding Lallinger, and Chief of Staff Alex Reese attended this presentation.

CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIP COPAYMENT MODEL (ACTION)

Ms. Sarah Neville-Morgan, Assistant State Superintendent of the Division of Early Childhood, shared the proposed sliding fee scale and copayment model. Ms. Neville-Morgan said the proposed model will support the child care scholarship program's sustainability. Ann Stock, Chief of Staff of the Division of Early Childhood, discussed how the current model assigns a weekly per-child copayment of \$1, \$2, or \$3 based on the hours of care the child is enrolled in, regardless of family income. Currently, MSDE does not subtract copayments from provider payment rates. Providers receive copayments on top of provider payment rates. Ms. Stock then described House Bill 1321, which requires families to pay a larger percentage of their income as their income increases while capping copayments at 7% of a family's income and ensuring that families who participate in certain public benefit programs or who have income below 100% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) are exempt from copayments.

Ms. Kelly Dwyer outlined the sliding fee scale and provided two examples. The Sliding Fee Scale Policy will be implemented no sooner than January 1, 2027. MSDE will provide at least 90 days' notice to families and child care providers before the policy takes effect. Ms. Dwyer mentioned town halls in September to share more about the policy and its implementation.

Ms. Wu asked how the copayment will be determined for families that receive irregular or seasonal income. Ms. Neville-Morgan informed Ms. Wu that it depends on whether families are enrolled in care and will be subject to the sliding fee. Dr. Bell asked how the copayment model would impact the current child care scholarship waitlist. It was clarified that the model would reduce scholarship costs, allowing an estimated 3,000 children to be removed from the waitlist in 2028. Ms. Leonard asked how the copayment would be determined if a family's income changes within the 24-month redetermination period. Ms. Neville-Morgan said the family can report a change in income and the copayment amount can be reduced accordingly. Mr. Greer asked whether families have expressed a preference towards keeping their children at home. Mr. Chesterfield asked whether the fee reduction would take effect immediately or after a waiting period. In response, Ms. Neville-Morgan noted that the fee reduction would take effect once a family's eligibility is redetermined following a change in income. While the process may take up to a month, the adjustment would be retroactive to the date the family reports the income change. Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee unanimously voted to adopt the Child Care Copayment Model.

ACTION: Dr. Michael moved to adopt the Child Care Copayment Model. Ms. Medina motioned; Dr. Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

COMAR 13A.05.15 COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

Ms. Mary Gable, Assistant State Superintendent of the Division of Student Support and Federal Programs, presented amendments to COMAR 13A.05.15 Community Schools. The proposed regulation governs the conditions under which a county board of education with community schools and an eligible community school may expend Program Funds under the Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program. Ms. Gable noted that wrap-around services remain a priority and emphasized the need for an additional emphasis on academic improvement strategies. The regulation requires at least 40% of the funds that the county board reserves for centralized expenditure be allocated to Academic Improvement Strategies for literacy and mathematics Progress Plans.

To provide additional context, Ms. Gable shared how Concentration of Poverty grants are awarded to eligible schools, including a personnel grant and per-pupil grant. The personnel grant can be used to hire a Community School Coordinator and a professional healthcare practitioner. After those positions are filled, the community school can use the remaining funds to provide wraparound services. Schools additionally receive a per-pupil grant that is calculated based on the number of students living in poverty attending the school. The grants are awarded to schools based on a sliding scale and are used to provide a wide variety of wraparound services.

Dr. Lewis said the Education Policy Committee unanimously recommends permission to publish COMAR 13A.05.15 Community Schools.

ACTION: Dr. Michael moved to publish COMAR 13A.05.15 Community Schools. Dr. Lewis motioned; Dr. Bell seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY UPDATES (INFORMATION ONLY)

Mr. Geoff Sanderson shared an update on the state assessment program, the school accountability rating system, and the implementation timeline. Beginning with the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math assessment in SY 2026-2027, the MSTAR assessment will be phased in systematically over 3 years. Mr. Sanderson emphasized that MSTAR is better aligned with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the newest College and Career-Ready Standards and additionally features a shorter overall test length, more accessible adaptive testing, and an enhanced reporting timeline compared to the MCAP assessment.

Ms. Leonard asked if formative assessments are still part of the new MSTAR suite, and Mr. Sanderson said yes. Ms. Leonard also asked whether the Technical Advisory Committee includes a student representative. Ms. Wu asked whether transition supports would be available to help students understand the transition from MCAP to MSTAR, including the purpose and importance of the assessment. Mr. Sanderson noted that practice tests and optional interim assessments will provide students with opportunities to become familiar with MSTAR and that student communications will be tailored to different grade levels.

Dr. Carr asked about the proposed improvements to the standard-setting process, including how best practices would be incorporated. She also asked to review sample student score reports and asked about the topics Mr. Sanderson would present at the September meeting. Dr. Carr later asked whether preliminary trials of the standard-setting process would be conducted. Ms. Medina raised concerns regarding linguistic challenges, including regional language differences and colloquialisms, and emphasized the importance of involving students and parents in the development and review phases.

AFTERNOON PUBLIC COMMENT

Virtual participation:

- Trish Brennan-Gac, Maryland READS – MCAP, Reading and Coaching

LEGAL OPINIONS AND ORDERS

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

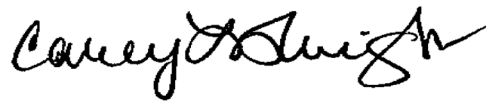
- *Christopher K., Jose R., N.B. and Z.E.D., and W.J. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* Opinion No. 26-29. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
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- *M.H. and A.H. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Order No. OR26-29. The Board remanded the appeal back to the local board.

STATE BOARD ADJOURN

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Chesterfield motioned; Dr. Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 10, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 4)

Respectfully submitted,



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

Date: September 29, 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, September 29, 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.