



MARYLAND STATE BOARD &
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

JUNE 2023



MARYLAND TRANSFORMS

STRATEGIC PLANNING ENGAGEMENT REPORT



A COMPANION PIECE TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This engagement report describes the journey to engage Maryland's diverse stakeholders and use what we have learned to inform the strategic planning process, as well as the plan's vision, mission, values, priorities, enablers, goals, metrics, and flagship programs, initiatives, and strategies. These elements are outlined in detail in the Strategic Plan. This report is a companion piece to the Strategic Plan guidebook, and both documents should be read together for an in-depth understanding of the plan's content and how it originated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IMPLEMENTING THE BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE	04
STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE OF PHASES	06
OUR OBJECTIVE & OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT	08
METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT	09
OUTREACH STRATEGIES	10
OUTREACH EXAMPLES & FIGURES	12
OVERVIEW OF SURVEY	14
OVERVIEW OF ROUNDTABLES	18
OVERVIEW OF LISTENING SESSIONS	32
OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY EVENTS & CONVERSATIONS	36
OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL VISITS & SHADOWS	37
OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL DATA WALKS	40
OVERVIEW OF CHARETTES	42
WHAT WE LEARNED SO FAR	50
WHAT IS COMING NEXT	52

IMPLEMENTING THE BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future was passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2021 to transform public education in the state into a world-class education system. The legislation presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fulfill the promise of an excellent and equitable education for all children in Maryland, especially those who have been historically underserved. The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education are collaborating with local education agencies and boards, institutions of higher education, the Accountability and Implementation Board, employers and stakeholders across the state to plan and implement the initiatives in each of the Blueprint's five pillars.

With sweeping policy changes designed to accelerate student achievement, and an unprecedented investment of state and local resources, the Blueprint creates the conditions for truly reimagining the education experience from early childhood to postsecondary success. To accomplish this, the Maryland State Board and Department of Education have developed a multiyear Strategic Plan released in three phases.

The complete Strategic Plan, released in June 2023, anchors the vision, mission, values, priorities, enablers, goals, metrics, and flagship programs, initiatives, and strategies to the Blueprint's promise of an excellent and equitable education for every student.



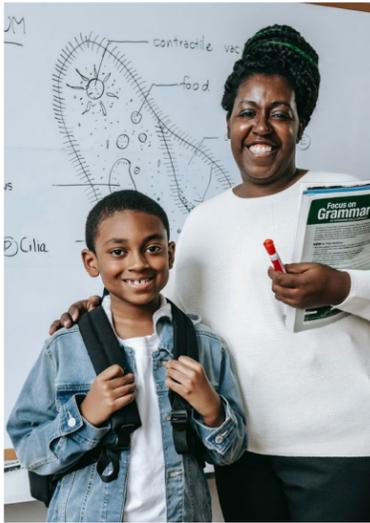
5 BLUEPRINT PILLARS

The Blueprint encompasses five pillars, each including key initiatives aimed at transforming the quality of education in Maryland, and narrowing and closing opportunity and achievement gaps.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Support more families to access no cost, high-quality Pre-K
- Scale the impact of Patty & Judy Centers
- Expand family options through public/private Pre-K partnerships



HIGH-QUALITY & DIVERSE TEACHERS & LEADERS

- Increasing starting salary to minimum \$60,000
- New career ladder and incentives for National Board Certified Teachers up to \$17,000
- Raising expectations for teacher preparation and induction



COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

- New college and career readiness standard by 10th grade
- Aligned curriculum resources and assessments
- College and career readiness and support pathways
- Expanded career and technical education system



MORE RESOURCES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

- Community Schools and School-based Health Centers expansion
- Concentration of Poverty grants
- Targeted supports for historically underserved students



GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

- Expert Review Teams
- Accountability and Implementation Board
- Local education agency Implementation Plans
- Maryland State Department of Education monitoring and technical assistance



NOVEMBER 2021

INITIAL ENGAGEMENT
& DATA GATHERING



PHASE
01



PHASE
02



PHASE
03



ONGOING COMMUNITY
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION

JULY 2023 & BEYOND



IMPLEMENTATION &
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE OF PHASES

The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education have envisioned the development and release of the Strategic Plan in three phases that span from October 2022 to June 2023.

1

OCTOBER 2022

Initial Release
Mission, Vision,
Values, Priorities
and Enablers

2

FEBRUARY 2023

Refine Phase 1
Release Goals
and Metrics

3

JUNE 2023

Finalize Phase 1 & 2
Release Targets*
Identify Flagship
Programs, Initiatives,
and Strategies

PHASE 1

Extending from November 2021 to October 2022, this phase focused on gaining initial input from a wide range of stakeholders representing the diversity of the state. Through multiple methods, from a statewide survey to roundtables and listening sessions, to the State Superintendent shadowing students in schools throughout the state, we learned what mattered most to our communities to transform public education in Maryland. The feedback we received helped shape the Strategic Plan's foundational elements, specifically the vision, mission, values, priorities, and enablers.

PHASE 2

Between October 2022 and February 2023, the Maryland State Board and Department of Education continued to engage with our communities to refine the Phase 1 elements of the Strategic Plan, and develop the goals and metrics linked to each of the priorities and enablers. Engagement took the form of regional data walks with stakeholders, ongoing student shadows, and a new series of roundtables and community events. The goals and metrics released in this phase provided insight on our direction as we moved into Phase 3 of the strategic planning process.

PHASE 3

Between February and June 2023, we engaged with stakeholders using previous methods and planning charettes to identify flagship programs, initiatives, and strategies, as well as set targets* to achieve the goals developed in Phase 2. This work was informed by best-in-class research and involved in-depth conversations with education experts, practitioners, and decision makers from early childhood to K-12 education and from the business community to institutions of higher education. The complete Strategic Plan, released in June 2023, anchors the vision, mission, values, priorities, enablers, goals, metrics, targets*, and the flagship programs, initiatives, and strategies to the Blueprint's promise of an excellent and equitable education for every child.

*Final targets will be released by late Fall 2023 using the Spring 2023 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program results

OUR OBJECTIVE & OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT

The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education have developed a multiyear Strategic Plan for the future of Maryland's education system. Public schools serve to prepare our future workforce and future community leaders, and it was critical that we hear from as many people as possible throughout the process.

The guiding objective was to build processes and create space for stakeholder input as we worked to develop a Strategic Plan, while seeking out and prioritizing new and underrepresented voices. This work is the basis for creating transformational change in Maryland's education system.



METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

A multi-pronged approach was developed to structure engagement for the strategic planning process to ensure flexible, responsive and iterative communication with stakeholders. A combination of virtual and in-person engagement methods were implemented to ensure engagement of stakeholders across Maryland's diverse landscape.



STAKEHOLDER TYPES

The primary aim of engagement for the strategic planning process was to gain input from a wide range of stakeholders that represented the diversity of the state. Stakeholders included groups such as: students, families, educators and school/district staff, community organizations, advocates and experts, business community, and higher education partners. More than **40,550 connections** were made through virtual and in-person touchpoints.

ENGAGEMENT METHODS EXPLAINED

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Community conversations were developed as a mechanism for the State Superintendent to be able to engage specific communities outside of the data collection process for the Strategic Plan. Similar to roundtables, these events engage a small group of stakeholders in a discussion.

SURVEYS

The purpose of the survey was to allow as many people as possible, in every community and every stakeholder group, to provide feedback on the state of public education in Maryland and the top priorities for improvement.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Events included presenting the strategic planning process to community organizations, advisory councils, school district and family events, and other stakeholder meetings (festivals, fairs, conferences, etc.).

ROUNDTABLES

The purpose of the roundtables was to engage in dialogue with a specific stakeholder group or with a range of stakeholders on a specific topic through a small group discussion format.

REGIONAL DATA WALKS

These presentations provided an opportunity for local education leaders to learn about the strategic planning process, discuss and analyze regional data trends, and provide feedback on what they deemed necessary in order to implement the priorities and enablers.

LISTENING SESSIONS

Listening sessions provided a space for community partners to share input on the Strategic Plan. Listening sessions were hosted by external groups with technical assistance provided by Maryland State Department of Education staff.

CHARETTES

Charettes provided a forum for diverse stakeholders to engage in creative discussion and provide immediate feedback on the flagship programs, initiatives, strategies that will support the realization of the Strategic Plan priorities, enablers, and goals.

OUTREACH STRATEGIES

A variety of outreach strategies were used to communicate with stakeholders in order to invite them to participate in the strategic planning process every step of the way. Staff members engaged with the community through grassroots efforts as well as traditional marketing strategies. The result was an overwhelming number of responses representing the diverse voices of Maryland.

	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN</p> <p>Digital marketing was used in every engagement method throughout the strategic planning process. Social media strategies were used to target large areas of the state and to encourage a wide variety of stakeholders to interact.</p>
	<p>ADVERTISING</p> <p>Radio spots in both English and Spanish were recorded and distributed on popular radio stations with an emphasis on reaching historically underrepresented and hard-to-reach audiences. Transit advertisements were also featured prominently across the state.</p>
	<p>DIRECT MAIL PIECES</p> <p>Postcards were mailed to zip codes in communities with low survey response rates in both English and Spanish. The mailed pieces included a QR code link directing them to the online survey.</p>
	<p>DOOR-TO-DOOR MARKETING</p> <p>Using United States Census Bureau data, door hangers were distributed to participants in areas with low-response groups and counties, areas with community schools, and areas with underrepresented groups.</p>
	<p>EVENT PROMOTION</p> <p>Maryland State Department of Education staff attended both virtual and in-person events, interacting with participants to promote involvement at community meetings, school and district events, festivals, fairs and conferences.</p>
	<p>COMMUNITY OUTREACH</p> <p>An outreach toolkit was developed to include sample language for newsletters and emails, social media graphics, and a flyer translated into English and Spanish to promote the strategic planning survey.</p>
	<p>PRESS RELEASES</p> <p>News media was leveraged to keep stakeholders informed of upcoming events and progress made throughout the strategic planning process. Press releases were distributed prominently on the Maryland State Department of Education website.</p>
	<p>COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS</p> <p>Maryland State Department of Education established a community engagement team committed to developing partnerships with community-based organizations, nonprofits, associations, and groups representing Maryland residents.</p>



Every Voice Counts.

The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education invite you to participate in their Strategic Planning Survey to help define the future of public school education.

We want to hear from all Maryland residents as we enhance educational opportunities for every Maryland child.

Take the survey today.
Help shape the future of education for every child.

We want to hear from all Maryland residents - with or without school-age children!

Take the survey:
www.marylandpublicschools.org/Survey



SCAN ME



The Maryland State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, creed, gender identity and expression, genetic information, marital status, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs.



OUTREACH EXAMPLES & FIGURES

Serving as ambassadors for the Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education, the engagement team sought out community feedback, built partnerships, listening sessions, roundtables, data walks, and more. The engagement team was responsible for implementing strategies to reach stakeholders on their terms. Below are a few examples of some of the strategies used during the engagement for the strategic planning process.

EVENT PROMOTION

The Maryland State Department of Education engagement staff attended **133 virtual and in-person events** interacting with **8,700+ participants** to promote the strategic planning survey and provide stakeholders with opportunities to take the survey.



Complete the Strategic Planning Survey today!

- Inicie la Encuesta de Planificación Estratégica
- 권한 기획 설문조사 시작
- Bắt đầu Khảo sát Lập kế hoạch Chiến lược
- ابدأ مسح التخطيط الاستراتيجي
- Commencer l'enquête sur la planification stratégique
- استریتجک پلاننگ شروع کریں
- 開始戰略規劃調查

marylandpublicschools.org/Survey

SOCIAL MEDIA

A social media campaign was developed to promote the survey, roundtables, listening sessions, data walks, and charettes, as well as community events. More than **1,176,295 impressions** were recorded during this time on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc.

EVERY VOICE COUNTS
CADA VOZ CUENTA

Help shape the future of Maryland education!
¡Ayúdenos a formar el futuro de las escuelas públicas de Maryland!

marylandpublicschools.org/Survey

POSTCARD MAILER

Over **70,910 direct mail pieces** were distributed in three rounds across eight counties.

- Baltimore City: 21,011
- Baltimore County: 14,953
- Montgomery County: 1,789
- Prince George's County: 16,704
- Charles County: 2,242
- Somerset County: 2,421
- Howard County: 9,717
- Worcester County: 2,074

DOOR HANGERS

More than **25,110 door hangers** were distributed in three rounds across four different counties.

- Baltimore City: 5,889
- Baltimore County: 7,543
- Montgomery County: 2,508
- Prince George's County: 9,173



MSDE Engages Our School Communities

STATE INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL LISTENING SESSION



The Reflective Coaching Model is working well with families and providers. Families now receive interventions that they are able to integrate into their child's daily routines to support the healthy development of our earliest learners.

We want to hear from you!
Connect with us: bit.ly/MSDEEngages



DIGITAL MEDIA

The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education publicized recorded versions of roundtables, listening sessions, and community conversations on the MSDE TV YouTube channel. Collectively, those videos received over **12,000 views** and continue to be available to the public.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

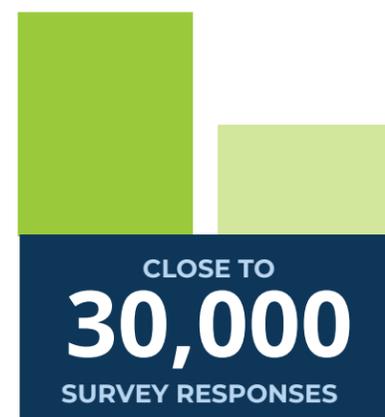
An outreach toolkit including sample language for newsletters and emails, social media graphics, and a flyer was distributed to promote the strategic planning survey. Over **3,500 toolkits** were emailed to groups and individuals. Over **33,000 physical flyers** were distributed to more than **325 community partners** throughout the state. Posters were displayed in high-traffic areas of public transport and accounted for more than **6,083,800 impressions**.





OVERVIEW OF SURVEY

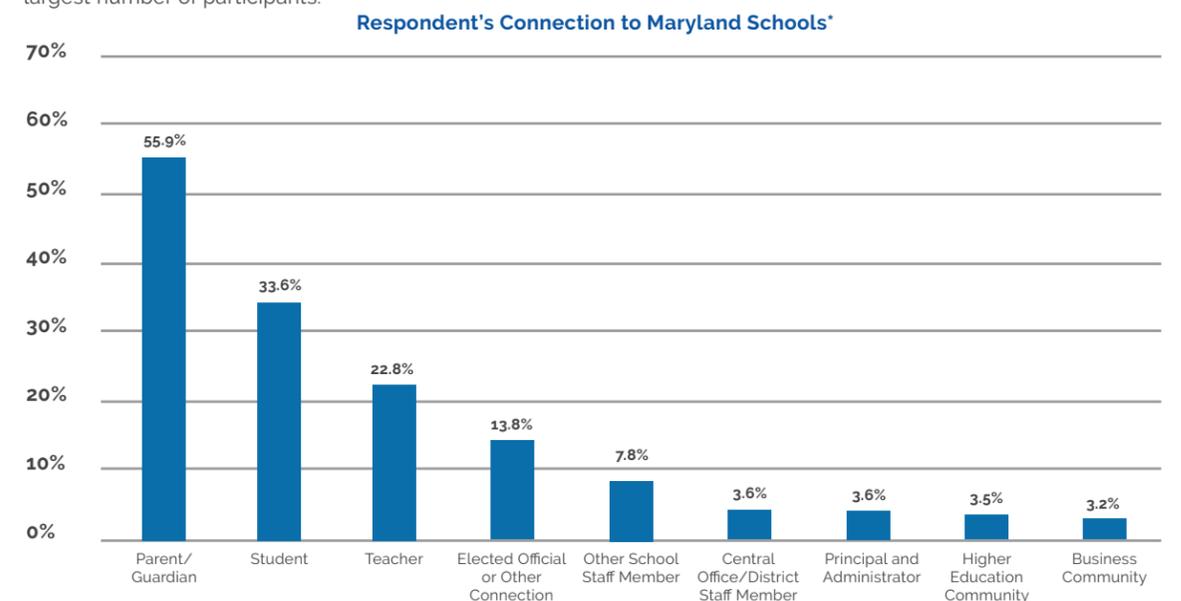
The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education developed an online survey to allow everyone in the state to provide feedback on the state of public education in Maryland and the top priorities for improvement. The purpose of the survey was to allow as many people as possible, in every community and every stakeholder group, to share their views to transform Maryland's public education into a best-in-class educational system.



MORE THAN HALF OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS WERE PARENTS/GUARDIANS

SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The survey was launched on January 25, 2022, and it continues to be open. More than **29,200 respondents** completed the survey during this period, with representation from every Maryland local education agency. Survey respondents represented a wide range of stakeholder groups, with parents/guardians, students, and teachers representing the largest number of participants.



**Some respondents selected more than one category*

DIVE INTO THE SURVEY RESULTS



MORE THAN 86% BELIEVE THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS "EXTREMELY IMPORTANT" FOR MARYLAND'S SUCCESS AS A STATE

We see great consistency in responses when comparing percentages across stakeholder groups, race/ethnicity, and regions. For stakeholder groups, for example, the percent who answered "extremely important" ranges from 84% for students to 90% for the higher education community.

68% HAVE A POSITIVE OPINION OF MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS' PERFORMANCE

We see important variations by stakeholder group. For example, only 54% of respondents in the business community have a positive opinion, compared to 77% of school leaders. We also see important variations by race/ethnicity, with 81% of Asian respondents holding a positive view compared to 68% of Blacks/African Americans and 66% of Hispanics/Latinos.

This analysis is based on all responses collected as of June 21, 2023, a total of 29,204 responses.

EMERGING PRIORITIES & ENABLERS

When taking a closer look at survey responses, it was clear that regardless of stakeholder type, race/ethnicity, and/or geographic location respondents had similar priorities. The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education surveyed families and communities and utilized that feedback to inform each phase of the strategic planning process.

PRIORITY

All Maryland students are proficient in reading by the end of third grade, and those who are not have the necessary supports to become proficient.

PRIORITY

All Maryland students graduate from high school college and career ready, and with an individualized plan to succeed in college, career, and life.

ENABLER

Maryland is ensuring student success by:

- supporting our students' social-emotional learning, health and wellness, and safety;
- enhancing school culture and climate; scaling high-quality wraparound supports and partnerships; and
- strengthening family and community engagement.

ENABLER

Maryland is elevating the stature of the teaching profession by:

- intentionally working to attract, recruit, and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce;
- setting rigorous standards for educator preparation programs and induction; and
- implementing a career ladder system focused on development and growth opportunities for all educators.

TOP 5 PRIORITIES BY RESPONDENT TYPE

RANKING	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	SCHOOL LEADERS	BUSINESS COMMUNITY
1	Improving reading and writing in the early grades	Improving reading and writing in the early grades	Improving reading and writing in the early grades	Improving reading and writing in the early grades
2	Improving math and science skills	Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports	Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports	Improving math and science skills
3	Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports	Recognizing and rewarding our best teachers	Developing more excellent teachers	Improving critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative teamwork skills
4	Developing more excellent teachers	Improving critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative teamwork skills	Improving math and science skills	Expanding Career and Technical Education programs
5	Improving critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative teamwork skills	Expanding Career and Technical Education programs	Improving critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative teamwork skills	Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports

TOP 5 PRIORITIES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

RANKING	BLACK RESPONDENTS	HISPANIC RESPONDENTS	ASIAN RESPONDENTS	WHITE RESPONDENTS
1	Improving reading and writing in the early grades	Improving reading and writing in the early grades	Improving reading and writing in the early grades	Improving reading and writing in the early grades
2	Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports	Improving math and science skills	Improving math and science skills	Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports
3	Improving math and science skills	Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports	Developing more excellent teachers	Improving math and science skills
4	Developing more excellent teachers	Developing more excellent teachers	Improving critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative teamwork skills	Improving critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative teamwork skills
5	Increasing resources to underserved communities	Improving critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative teamwork skills	Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports	Developing more excellent teachers

49% SELECTED **READING & WRITING IN THE EARLY GRADES** AS THEIR TOP PRIORITY

This priority remains at the top of the list when comparing results by stakeholder group and by region. That is also the case when we break down the results by race/ethnicity, with the only exception of Asian respondents, for whom this priority is the second most frequently selected, very closely after math and science skills.

TEACHERS & BUSINESS LEADERS SELECTED **EXPANDING CTE PROGRAMS** AMONG THE TOP FIVE MOST FREQUENTLY SELECTED PRIORITIES

Expanding Career and Technical Education programs appeared among the five most frequently cited priorities for teachers and business leaders. In addition, recognizing and rewarding best teachers was one of the five most cited priorities for teachers.

BLACK RESPONDENTS INCLUDED **RESOURCES TO UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES** IN THEIR TOP FIVE PRIORITIES

There were also differences when comparing results by race/ethnicity and by stakeholder group. Black/African American respondents included resources to underserved communities in their five most frequently selected priorities. This reinforces the unrealized equity work that Maryland needs to do.

ACROSS THE BOARD THE RESPONSES ECHOED THE SAME TOP PRIORITIES OVERALL

Across all racial and ethnic groups improving reading and writing in the early grades was the top priority. The result was the same when the data was analyzed by stakeholder group. This reflects the critical importance that all Maryland students are proficient in reading by the end of third grade, and those who are not have the necessary supports to become proficient.

NEARLY 1/3 CHOSE **SUPPORTS FOR SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MENTAL HEALTH OR MATH AND SCIENCE SKILLS**

When looking at the overall results, there were two priorities that received the second largest percentage of responses: supports for social, emotional, and mental health and math and science skills, each selected by nearly a third of respondents.

MORE THAN 27% CHOSE **DEVELOPING EXCELLENT TEACHERS OR CRITICAL THINKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, AND TEAMWORK SKILLS**

More than 27% of respondents selected developing excellent teachers and critical thinking, problem solving, or teamwork skills as their fourth and fifth priorities. School leaders included developing excellent teachers in their top three priorities.

This analysis is based on all responses collected as of June 21, 2023, a total of 29,204 responses.



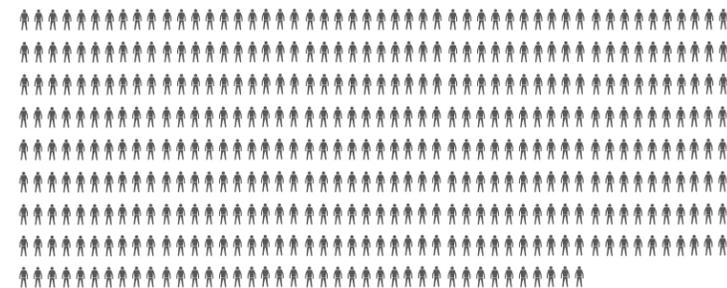
OVERVIEW OF ROUNDTABLES

The purpose of the roundtables was to engage in dialogue with a specific stakeholder group or with a range of stakeholders on a specific topic through a small group discussion format. Roundtables were hosted by the Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education on a virtual streaming platform. They were recorded and live streamed on the MSDE TV YouTube channel where viewers were able to comment and ask questions during the roundtable to expand participation. Transcripts from each roundtable and YouTube chat were analyzed for this engagement method.



30 ROUND TABLES

MORE THAN 440 PARTICIPANTS



ROUNDTABLE TOPICS

In collaboration with community partners and participants, topics were used to develop questions for each roundtable. Stakeholders who represent roles connected to the topic including students, families, educators, school and district leaders, service providers, community partners, etc. were prioritized. This process also ensured geographic, racial/ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, age, gender and role diversity in participation.

STUDENTS	TEACHERS	FAMILIES
MENTAL HEALTH	CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION	SCHOOL LEADERS AND STAFF
BUSINESS LEADERS	ENGLISH LEARNERS	SPECIAL EDUCATION
EDUCATOR DIVERSITY	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	EARLY CAREER & RISING EDUCATORS
ARTS EDUCATION	HIGHER EDUCATION	VIRTUAL SCHOOL
LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS	COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AND PARTNERS	LOCAL SUPERINTENDENTS

ROUNDTABLE DATA BREAKDOWN

The percentage of participants who identify as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian are similar to Maryland's racial and ethnic demographics from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS). When requesting recommendations for roundtable participants, engagement partners were asked to prioritize racial, ethnic, linguistic, and geographic diversity in order to ensure participants reflected the rich diversity of the state.

BY RACE/ETHNICITY

RACE/ETHNICITY	COUNT	PERCENTAGE	ACS 21
ASIAN	27	6%	7%
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	133	30%	29%
HISPANIC/LATINO	48	11%	12%
WHITE	179	41%	47%
BLANK/PREFER NOT TO DISCLOSE/OTHER	55	12%	4%
TOTAL	442	100%	

Through the registration process, participants were given the option to request interpretation services and translation of materials which allowed the roundtable discussions to include multilingual Marylanders. All roundtables were live streamed on the MSDE TV YouTube channel to allow more public engagement.

BY STAKEHOLDER TYPE

STAKEHOLDER TYPE	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
STUDENTS/ FORMER STUDENTS	84	19%
FAMILY MEMBERS	58	13%
EDUCATORS	99	22%
SCHOOL STAFF	13	3%
SCHOOL LEADERS	33	7%
DISTRICT STAFF	33	7%
LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD LEADERS	38	9%
BUSINESS LEADERS	24	5%
HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERS	19	4%
COMMUNITY PARTNERS	26	6%
OTHER/BLANK	15	3%
TOTAL	442	100%

Students, families, educators, school and district staff/leaders, community partners, higher education partners, and business leaders participated in roundtable discussions. Educators had the highest, and students had the second highest, levels of participation.

BY GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

COUNTY/LEA	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
ALLEGANY COUNTY	19	4%
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY	20	5%
BALTIMORE CITY	48	11%
BALTIMORE COUNTY	33	7%
CALVERT COUNTY	11	2%
CAROLINE COUNTY	4	1%
CARROLL COUNTY	14	3%
CECIL COUNTY	15	3%
CHARLES COUNTY	18	4%
DORCHESTER COUNTY	11	2%
FREDERICK COUNTY	21	5%
GARRETT COUNTY	4	1%
HARFORD COUNTY	14	3%
HOWARD COUNTY	18	4%
KENT COUNTY	8	2%
MONTGOMERY COUNTY	47	11%
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY	43	10%
QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY	8	2%
SAINT MARY'S COUNTY	11	2%
SOMERSET COUNTY	9	2%
TALBOT COUNTY	14	3%
WASHINGTON COUNTY	14	3%
WICOMICO COUNTY	15	3%
WORCESTER COUNTY	9	2%
OTHER/BLANK	114	3%
TOTAL	442	100%

Participation in roundtables included each county and Baltimore City. The goal for each roundtable was to have regional representation from the Western, Eastern Shore, Southern, and Central Maryland regions of the state.

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS REPRESENTED

GIFTED & TALENTED	SPECIAL EDUCATION	MULTILINGUAL	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS
ENGLISH	MATH & SCIENCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	TEACHERS OF COLOR
CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION	ART, MUSIC, & THEATRE	LOCAL STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS	ADVOCATES
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS COORDINATORS	CHILDCARE PROVIDERS	JUDY CENTER PROGRAMS	HEAD START
SCHOOL COUNSELORS + PSYCHOLOGISTS	HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS	COLLEGES + UNIVERSITIES	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS



PHASE 1 ROUNDTABLES: EDUCATOR DIVERSITY & EARLY CAREER & RISING EDUCATORS

Participants in these two roundtables had an opportunity to share their own experiences on teacher diversity and the early stages in the teacher pipeline, from recruitment into the profession to teacher preparation and certification, to their first years in the job.



KEY
TAKEAWAYS

TEACHERS OF COLOR CITED THEIR OWN EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH LACK OF REPRESENTATION AS HAVING A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THEIR DECISION TO BECOME A TEACHER & STAY IN THE PROFESSION

For some participants, the urgency to address that representation gap is a powerful internal driver. When speaking about recruiting students of color into the teaching profession, participants noted the lack of information for those who may be interested in a career in teaching. As a participant put it, "I had to figure all of that by myself." Another major obstacle for increasing the number of teachers of color, according to participants, was the steep cost of becoming a teacher, suggesting the need for financial assistance in the form of tuition reimbursement, paid internships, and/or stipends for student teachers.

IN THE EARLY STAGES TEACHERS OF COLOR FACED UNIQUE CHALLENGES DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THEIR COLLEAGUES

A female teacher recounted, for example, how she had been told by her superiors that her hair was "a little distracting." Teachers of color stated that they were often asked to assist with multiple student support and parent engagement activities beyond teaching such as providing translation services to non-English speaking parents/guardians. Despite the challenges, new teachers of color felt that it was important for them to stay in the profession and "to keep pushing." In their experience, they could truly make a difference not only for students of color but also for all students.

IMPORTANCE OF MENTORS WAS A COMMON THEME FOR EARLY CAREER SUCCESS AND NEW TEACHER RETENTION AMONGST PARTICIPANTS

This was crucial for all early career educators, including teachers of color. At the same time, participants were aware of the shortcomings in many existing mentor programs that "do it on a surface level" without training mentors, providing mentors with release time, and/or creating structured opportunities for mentees to improve their teaching practice by working closely with their mentors.

“ *It was great that I could speak Spanish, like ‘Oh my gosh, you understand where these students are coming from.’ But it was a double-edged sword because it led to many of my schools that they would ask me during my own personal time, hey, ‘I have a parent who doesn’t speak English, can you translate?’ ‘By the way I can’t communicate with the student, do you know what’s going on?’ And I felt like as a new teacher I could not say no and so it was definitely like I was backed into a corner.”*



QUESTIONS
ASKED

- 1** Describe the process of entering the educator workforce including your teacher preparation program, any barriers or supports that facilitated your entry into the educator workforce, and your ideas for improvements to better prepare educators to work in a variety of environments with diverse students.
- 2** Maryland and many other states are implementing strategies to strengthen the educator pipeline and diversify the workforce including "grow-your-own" programs and other initiatives. How do you think we should be supporting and encouraging students to enter the educator workforce? What other strategies should we consider to recruit more teachers of color in Maryland?
- 3** What conditions make teaching challenging for educators of color? Can you describe the spoken and unspoken asks and expectations of teachers of color that can make teaching more challenging?
- 4** What do you need from school systems to better support teachers of color and to elevate their voices?
- 5** How can school systems better support early career teachers so that they stay beyond the first five years?



EMERGING
PRIORITIES
& ENABLERS

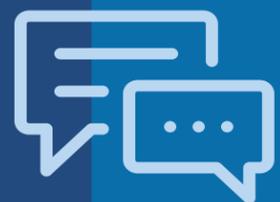
During Phase 1 of the strategic planning process, the Maryland State Board of Education and Maryland State Department of Education will engage stakeholders to develop strategies that strengthen every stage of the teacher pipeline, remove barriers for the recruitment and retention of teachers of color, and ensure that all early career and rising educators have the training and support they need to thrive in the profession.

ENABLER

- Maryland is elevating the stature of the teaching profession by:
- intentionally working to attract, recruit, and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce;
 - setting rigorous standards for educator preparation programs and induction; and
 - implementing a career ladder system focused on development and growth opportunities for all educators.

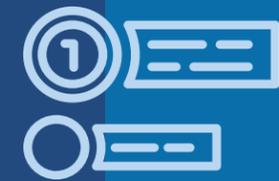
PHASE 1 ROUNDTABLES: STUDENTS & FAMILIES

These two roundtables offered participants an opportunity to provide feedback on what is working well and what needs improvement in their school community, their local education agency, and public education in the state. Participants shared their views about the effects of the pandemic, students' preparation for college and careers, the qualities of the most impactful teachers, and where to invest resources to improve education.



QUESTIONS ASKED

- 1** How has your student been impacted academically and social-emotionally by the COVID-19 pandemic and what mental health supports are available to your student and family through your local school? What supports are working well and what would you like schools to do better?
- 2** What aspects of your school community could be improved to benefit everyone?
- 3** Do you feel that the way education is designed in Maryland is best preparing you/your student for future college and careers? Why or why not? If not, what would you change?
- 4** When considering the teacher who has had the most profound impact on you/your student's learning experience and academic success, what qualities did that individual bring to the classroom?
- 5** If you had one million dollars to invest in your school/your local education agency, how would you spend the money?



EMERGING PRIORITIES & ENABLERS

The Maryland State Board of Education and Maryland State Department of Education will focus on supporting our schools, local education agencies, families, and decision makers by producing relevant, timely, and high-quality data and reporting, and enabling educators to make the best use of their resources to meet the needs of our students and accelerate student achievement.

PRIORITY

All Maryland students graduate from high school college and career ready, and with an individualized plan to succeed in college, career, and life.

ENABLER

- Maryland is ensuring student success by:
 - supporting our students' social-emotional learning, health and wellness, and safety;
 - enhancing school culture and climate;
 - scaling high-quality wraparound supports and partnerships; and strengthening family and community engagement.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

STUDENTS TALKED

ABOUT SPECIFIC CLASSROOM STRATEGIES THAT THE MOST IMPACTFUL TEACHERS WOULD USE

Student participants identified classroom strategies that the most impactful teachers would use to keep students engaged and help them develop their knowledge and skills. One approach that stood out in students' comments was teachers' openness to learn from students by voluntarily engaging in student-led activities and by asking students themselves how to improve their own teaching.

COLLEGE & CAREER

READINESS WAS AN AREA WHERE BOTH PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND STUDENTS FOUND ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

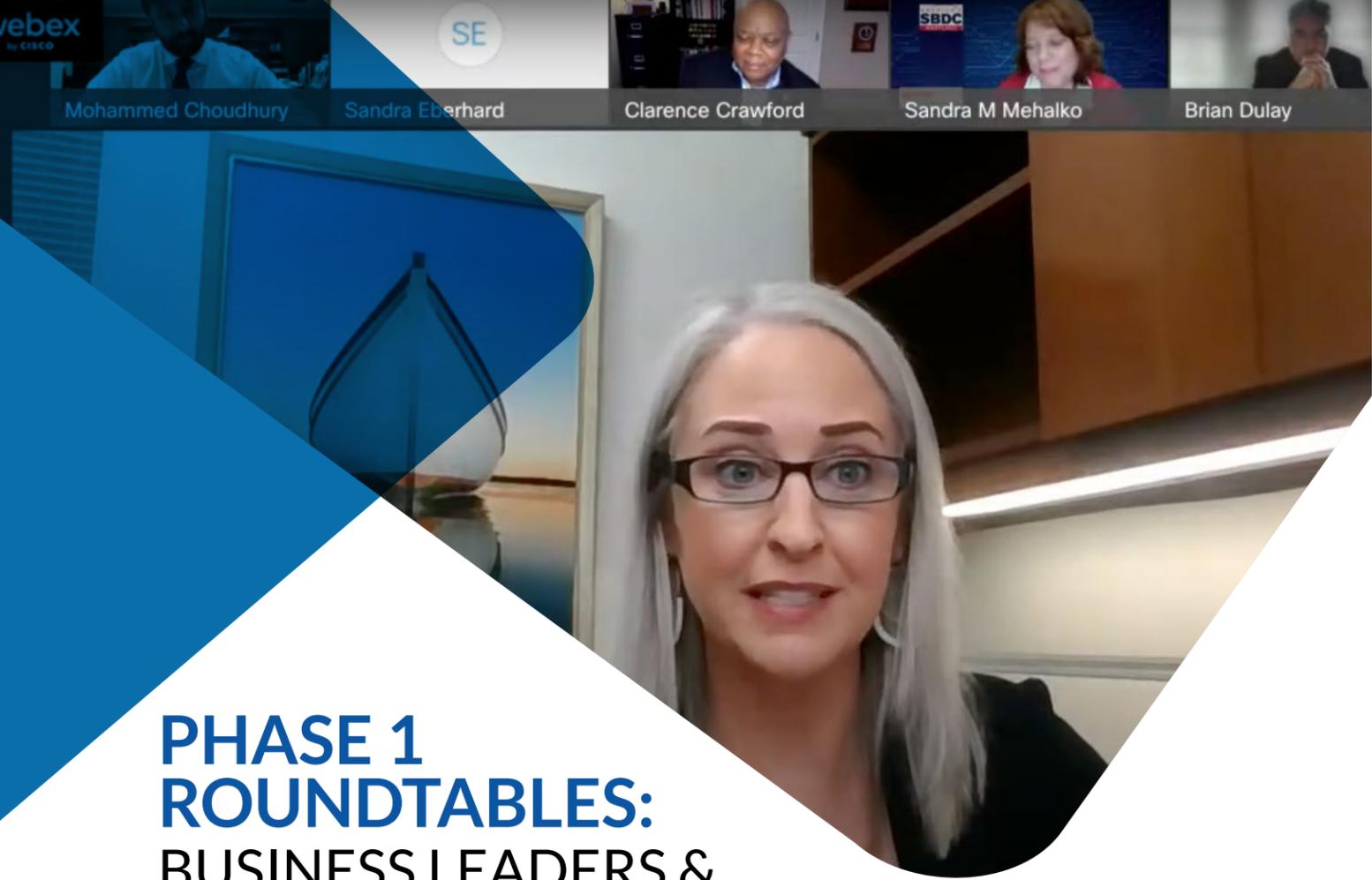
While some of the participants were benefiting from high-quality career and technical education and other specialized programs, they acknowledged that these opportunities were not always well known or equitably distributed. Participants advocated for greater investment in career counseling and for an expansion of college and career courses during high school to better prepare all students for postsecondary success.

FAMILY MEMBERS

TALKED ABOUT THE PROFOUND IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THEIR CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO LEARN, THEIR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING, AND THEIR SENSE OF CONNECTION

Beyond the immediate impact on their own children, participants reflected on how the pandemic had laid bare long-standing unmet needs and profound deficits in services for students and their families, from food insecurity to uneven access to reliable internet to a chronic shortage of mental health services. The pandemic heightened these needs and created more urgency for finding solutions. Participants called for greater availability of counselors in school buildings and for better education for both parents/guardians and students regarding mental health and emotional wellbeing.

“*My kid was in second grade before, but now he's on third grade, but last year he fell behind so much when the pandemic started. I don't speak a word of English and his teacher doesn't speak a word of Spanish and my kid was falling behind more and more... and she tried everything, absolutely everything to be able to communicate directly with me so we could do something about it. And she would find, for example, a Google translator, other type of chats that would be helpful for us to communicate. ...He was able to catch up with all the content and his peers...***”**



PHASE 1 ROUNDTABLES: BUSINESS LEADERS & CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The participants in the business leaders roundtable included business executives and entrepreneurs representing corporations, trade associations, and workforce development groups. A diverse group of participants contributed to the career and technical education roundtable, from employers, community-based CTE providers, and government officials to educators, students, and former students. In both events, the discussion was focused on areas of strength and areas in need of improvement in CTE programs in Maryland. Participants also had the opportunity to propose their own innovative ideas to improve and expand CTE programs, apprenticeships, and industry recognized credentials.

QUESTIONS ASKED

- 1 For those of you who have experienced CTE classes and programs, what is working well? What can be better? What are your ideas for innovative practices?
- 2 The Blueprint for Maryland's Future places an emphasis on industry credentials. So, for those of you that have earned or are earning an industry credential, what has worked well regarding the process to earn a credential and what can be improved?
- 3 And for the employers, what successes and barriers are you seeing (regarding the process for students to earn an industry recognized credential) and how can you creatively problem solve to overcome those barriers?
- 4 How can the education and business communities work together more creatively and collaboratively to grow work-based learning opportunities for Maryland public school students?
- 5 If you had \$1 million to invest in your local school CTE program, what would you spend the money on?

EMERGING PRIORITIES & ENABLERS

- (a)(1) On or before December 1, 2022, the Career and Technical Education Committee shall establish, for each school year between the 2023-2024 school year and the 2030-2031 school year, inclusive, statewide goals that reach 45% by the 2030-2031 school year, for the percentage of high school students who, prior to graduation, complete the high school level of a registered apprenticeship or an industry-recognized occupational credential. (Education §21-204)
- ENABLER** Maryland's classrooms challenge, support, and inspire students. Therefore, our schools will be equipped with high-quality curricula, lessons, assessments, and systems for intervention and acceleration.
 - PRIORITY** All Maryland students enter high school on track to meet the college and career readiness standard by the end of 10th grade, and are engaged socially, emotionally, and academically to succeed in progressively challenging and advanced level coursework aligned to college and career pathways.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- STUDENT PARTICIPANTS** WHO HAD RECENTLY COMPLETED INTERNSHIPS, APPRENTICESHIPS, AND OTHER FORMS OF WORK-BASED LEARNING HAD FOUND IMMENSE VALUE IN THESE PROGRAMS
Work-based learning experiences provided students with a unique opportunity to explore a career path through hands-on work and determine, based on first-hand knowledge, if that path was the right fit. Beyond the opportunities for career exploration, students spoke about the tangible benefits of completing a CTE program for postsecondary success. For those who expected to go to college, CTE programs offered the chance of earning college credits and acquiring valuable experience that could have a positive weight in college applications. For those who planned to enter the workforce as their immediate next step, completing a CTE program, especially if they earned an industry recognized credential along the way, could be their ticket to a well-paid job after graduating high school.
- SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE** AND EXPAND CTE PROGRAMS AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WHO COMPLETE AN APPRENTICESHIP OR AN INDUSTRY RECOGNIZED CREDENTIAL
In the view of participants, greater flexibility in the school schedule was needed for students to be able to complete all their CTE requirements, especially the work-based experience. In addition to greater flexibility in the school schedule, employers recommended streamlining how the educational system reaches out to business leaders. Some of the participants would like to see better coordination within the educational system, at the state level, if possible, to facilitate collaboration between education and industry.
- EQUALIZING THE IMPORTANCE** GIVEN TO CTE AND COLLEGE IN HOW THE STATE, SCHOOLS, AND FAMILIES PREPARE YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE
While roundtable participants had a positive view of existing apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning, they also recognized serious shortcomings in the CTE landscape in the state. Prominent among these were insufficient communication to students and parents/guardians regarding CTE opportunities, low employer and student participation, and a prevalent view of CTE as a backup to college rather than as an attractive primary educational and career path.

“ I think that there's a certain... just education that needs to happen around apprenticeship as a pathway to a career. I know that I've worked in high school settings for a while, and it was always college, college, college. If you can't do college, then maybe an apprenticeship or something, but that's just an incorrect and an uninformed opinion. It's because individuals don't understand all of the benefits.”



MERIN THOMAS,
STUDENT MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

SUMMARY OF PHASE 2 ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS

Different from Phase 1 roundtables which covered a wide range of topics and stakeholder groups, Phase 2 roundtables prioritized students, families, educators, and business leaders. Participants learned about Phase 1 of the Strategic Plan and voted on their top priorities and enablers during the sessions. The roundtable discussion questions allowed participants to give input on the remaining phases of the strategic planning process and focused on the priorities and enablers that participants ranked most important.



QUESTIONS ASKED

- 1 How can you support this priority or enabler?
- 2 What challenges do you think may come up?
- 3 What supports or strategies will be needed?
- 4 What does success for this priority look like?



KEY TAKEAWAYS

STUDENTS POINTED OUT

THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE THE ABILITY TO CHANGE THEIR PATH IN HIGH SCHOOL WHEN TAKING CTE COURSES, AND NOT BE FORCED TO COMMIT TO THE SAME SET OF COURSES

Many students explained that they do not know what they want and that they need an opportunity to explore multiple avenues and "make mistakes." Some students felt that exposure to a wide number of extracurriculars and "niche" classes in middle school would help them balance their interests. One idea that was suggested was pairing students with mentors. Students also recognized the importance of collaboration between counties, schools, and local businesses to help guide their apprenticeship programs.

FAMILIES DISCUSSED

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER TRAINING, SUPPORT, AND INCENTIVES FOR RETAINING HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS

Participants noted that addressing this need would include allowing early career teachers to have a longer induction period, assigning a mentor, providing continuing education classes, having a support system for how to navigate issues, and having a clear career ladder with incentives to recruit and retain high-quality teachers particularly in historically underserved communities and schools. Participants advocated for engaging and including diverse families more intentionally. Additionally, families expressed that a more diverse workforce representative of the student population is needed to accelerate student learning.

EDUCATORS ADDRESSED

THE CHALLENGES THAT MAY ARISE AS WE PREPARE FOR A DIVERSE AND QUALITY WORKFORCE SUCH AS BARRIERS TO ENTRY AND DISINTEREST IN THE PROFESSION

Several participants thought that while increased salary is a component in drawing in and retaining high-quality educators, there are other structural challenges that make a career in teaching less attractive. Teachers are experiencing burn out, absences are high, there are not enough substitute teachers to fill in, and more is being added to their plate rather than being removed. Participants reiterated that support and mentorship are essential for new teachers, and identified traditional and rigid requirements for certification as a potential barrier that limits the teacher pipeline.

“ Teachers are burnt out. We are going to hit a national crisis if something isn't done... I'm one of those people that was born a teacher, never joked about doing anything else. Being an educator, I love what I do, but we're tired.”



PRIORITIES & ENABLERS BY RANK

TOP PRIORITY for students and business leaders

All Maryland students graduate from high school college and career ready, and with an individualized plan to succeed in college, career, and life.

TOP ENABLER for families and educators

Maryland is elevating the stature of the teaching profession by:

- intentionally working to attract, recruit, and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce;
- setting rigorous standards for educator preparation programs and induction; and
- implementing a career ladder system focused on development and growth opportunities for all educators.



MARIAN HOYT, BCPSS/MSCA
SCHOOL COUNSELOR

SUMMARY OF PHASE 3 ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS

Similar to the structure of Phase 2 roundtables, the Phase 3 roundtables placed emphasis on engaging students, higher education partners, school staff, and community partners. Attendees were informed about the progress made in Phase 1 and 2 of the Strategic Plan and had the opportunity to vote on their primary priorities and enablers during the sessions. The roundtable discussions provided a platform for participants to contribute their insights towards the strategic planning process, centering on the priorities and enablers that received the highest rankings from the participants.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

STUDENTS EMPHASIZED

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPOSURE TO SPECIFIC CAREER PROGRAMS THAT ALLOW STUDENTS TO PURSUE CAREERS THEY ARE INTERESTED IN

Participants shared their perspectives and experiences related to college and career preparation. Students highlighted the importance of diverse career programs and opportunities in high school that enable them to explore their interests and gain practical skills. The participants advocated for mandatory or expanded classes that cover essential real-life topics, aiming to better equip students for success in college and future careers. Some students noted that a predefined pathway can be frustrating as it limits their exploration of different subjects and potential career interests.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

TALKED ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, OFFERING CLASSES AND ADVICE TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, AND EARLY EXPOSURE TO COLLEGE FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

Participants discussed the importance of early exposure and literacy programs that provide opportunities for young students (as early as sixth and seventh grade) to visit colleges and universities, both local and distant, to foster a sense of belonging and aspiration for college. They noted the importance of career education and ensuring that students understand that college is not the only path to a successful career. They also acknowledged the need to help students understand that learning is lifelong and that career choices may change over time. Additionally, participants addressed the importance of creating a positive and inviting school environment for students, especially in areas with social and economic challenges.

SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS

DISCUSSED HOW THEY SUPPORT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING, HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

Participants emphasized the importance of addressing students' mental health needs, trauma-informed care, ongoing support, and creating a favorable learning environment. They mentioned various programs and initiatives that support families, such as food distribution, health clinics, mental health support, mentoring programs, and partnerships with external organizations. They also discussed the challenges they face in supporting students' social-emotional well-being, especially in historically underserved areas.

“*Social emotional learning is my heart and my life...working in the area that I'm in it's really hard for our students to focus on academics when so many other things are going on. We can see the impact on our families. You know there's such a benefit to having the providers in our building.*”



QUESTIONS ASKED

- 1 How can you support this priority or enabler?
- 2 What challenges do you think may come up?
- 3 What supports or strategies will be needed?
- 4 What does success for this priority look like?



PRIORITIES & ENABLERS BY RANK

TOP PRIORITY for all groups

All Maryland students graduate from high school college and career ready, and with an individualized plan to succeed in college, career, and life.

TOP ENABLER for all groups

Maryland is ensuring student success by:

- supporting our students' social-emotional learning, health and wellness, and safety;
- enhancing school culture and climate;
- scaling high-quality wraparound supports and partnerships; and strengthening family and community engagement.



LISTENING SESSIONS BY GROUP

Listening sessions were scheduled with stakeholders and community partners or held during previously scheduled events. Maryland State Department of Education staff supported and attended each session. A question framework provided an opportunity for participants to share their thoughts and experiences on each of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future pillars that were most applicable to the stakeholder groups. Community partners and Maryland State Department of Education staff collaborated to ensure questions used stakeholder-friendly language and represented the specific groups' priorities.

PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT EXPRESS (PFE)

SPECIAL EDUCATION FAMILY SUPPORT COORDINATORS

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE PROVIDER COLLABORATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

CTE LOCAL DIRECTORS AND POSTSECONDARY CTE MEETING

STATE INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORY MEETING

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT ALIGNMENT (WIOA)

GIFTED AND TALENTED ADVISORY COUNCIL

NONPUBLIC SCHOOL LISTENING SESSION

FREE STATE PTA LISTENING SESSION

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS CONVENTION (MASC)

MARYLAND STATE CHILD CARE ASSOCIATION (MSCCA) CONFERENCE

GREATER SALISBURY COMMITTEE

MCCACET COMMUNITY COLLEGE MEETING LISTENING SESSION

SPECIAL EDUCATION STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION COUNTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE JOINT MEETING (SESAC/SECAC)

TEACH IN MARYLAND LISTENING SESSION

COMMUNITY W.E.L.L. LISTENING SESSION

BLACK & BROWN COALITION LISTENING SESSION

MAEF LISTENING SESSION

MOVING DORCHESTER FORWARD

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION SUMMER CONFERENCE

CASA LISTENING SESSION

STUDENT SERVICE COORDINATOR LISTENING SESSION

OVERVIEW OF LISTENING SESSIONS

The purpose of listening sessions was to provide a flexible format for stakeholders and community partners to share input on the Strategic Plan. Listening sessions were hosted by external groups with guidance and technical assistance provided by Maryland State Department of Education staff. The number of participants in each session ranged from small to large groups where facilitators posed the same questions in each group and note-takers recorded participant responses. Listening sessions were held in-person and virtually.



26 LISTENING
SESSIONS

MORE THAN
1,640
PARTICIPANTS

EMERGING PRIORITIES & ENABLERS

Listening session participants represented a vast array of community organizations and their comments touched on several Strategic Plan priorities and enablers. As the Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education moved through each phase of strategic planning, engagement with stakeholders continued to ensure that the goals, flagship programs, initiatives, and strategies selected to achieve these priorities remain closely attuned to the needs, expectations, and hopes of Maryland's diverse communities.

<p>PRIORITY</p>	<p>All Maryland students are prepared socially, emotionally, and academically for success in kindergarten.</p>	<p>PRIORITY</p>	<p>All Maryland students graduate from high school college and career ready, and with an individualized plan to succeed in college, career, and life.</p>
<p>ENABLER</p>	<p>Maryland is elevating the stature of the teaching profession by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> intentionally working to attract, recruit, and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce; setting rigorous standards for educator preparation programs and induction; and implementing a career ladder system focused on development and growth opportunities for all educators. 	<p>ENABLER</p>	<p>Maryland is supporting our schools, local education agencies, families, and decision makers by producing relevant, timely, and high-quality data and reporting, and enabling educators to make the best use of their resources to meet the needs of our students and accelerate student achievement.</p>

PARTICIPANTS WELCOMED THE RESOURCES MADE AVAILABLE BY THE BLUEPRINT FOR BROADENING THE AVAILABILITY AND EXPANDING ACCESS TO PRE-K AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Participants also spoke positively about the Blueprint's emphasis on promoting quality through the Maryland Excels quality rating system, which institutes a bonus for providers if they achieve and maintain quality standards. At the same time, participants spoke about potential challenges that may delay Pre-K expansion, particularly with regards to finding qualified teachers. Some expressed frustration with the existing credential review process and the time it takes, while others feared that new requirements for early childhood education teachers could exacerbate the existing staffing shortages.

CONCERNS WITH SHORTAGES EXTENDED BEYOND THE WORLD OF PRE-K AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

To address these concerns, participants shared proposals and strategies already underway to recruit, prepare, train, and retain highly qualified and diverse teachers and leaders. Participants proposed subsidizing training for all teachers who service English learners, funding professional development in special education for all general education teachers, and expanding "grow your own" programs as a strategy for getting students of diverse backgrounds into the teacher workforce.

PARTICIPANTS SHARED THE IMPORTANCE OF ENSURING THAT ALL TEACHERS DEVELOP CULTURAL COMPETENCE

This expectation came up prominently when participants were asked what they would do if they had a million dollars to invest in their school communities. As it was explained, the money could be spent on funding to provide professional development for teachers to better understand the lives of their students and the way this impacts teaching and learning.

“...Our students are going to feel more comfortable if there are people that look like them in the school; we are using the 'grow your own,' but it will be 7-10 years before we see the fruits of our labor... we are looking at our young teachers now to see who has leadership qualities and how we can build upon this.”

PARTICIPANTS RECOMMEND MUCH GREATER COLLABORATION AND CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY

Among the Blueprint strategies that generated most interest among participants were those related to college and career readiness. Participants were encouraged by the Blueprint's mandate that students be college and career ready by the end of the 10th grade, and that they be able to select among pathways leading to postsecondary success. Participants conveyed excitement about initiatives and programs that were already expanding dual enrollment and apprenticeships and had concrete suggestions on how to bring those opportunities to scale. In the view of participants, stronger connections between education and business could take many forms, from a collaborative approach to career exploration and curriculum development to inviting employers to conduct interviewing and hiring in the school building. Participants imagined a future in which students would experience a seamless transition from career exploration to preparation and training, and from credentialing to hiring and career success.

“ Starting with K-5, offer career explorations and field trips to employers of career clusters like hospitals, police stations, and ports. Employers can implement 'adopt-a-class' and speaker series to educate students about various occupations in middle school, along with programming at the school level in career explorations. Structured CTE curriculum and apprenticeship pathways with local employers will offer the final piece of direct hire.”

CREATING SEAMLESS AND EQUITABLE PATHS TOWARDS FURTHER EDUCATION AND CAREERS WOULD REQUIRE MORE RESOURCES TO ENSURE THAT ALL STUDENTS ARE SUCCESSFUL

Participants shared positive examples of ongoing work to support students based on need, such as hiring additional bilingual staff to better communicate with English learners and their families, utilizing federal funds to develop multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) aimed at meeting students' academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs, and leveraging the Blueprint's Concentration of Poverty grants to provide wraparound supports. While noting real progress in the efforts to build and expand support systems and resources for students, participants also acknowledged the challenges ahead. Participants advocated for more counselors, greater access to mental health and wellness services, greater availability of services for multilingual students and families, and better transition paths out of high school for students with disabilities. Participants also stressed the central role of parents/guardians in supporting their children's success in school, even more so in the case of students with disabilities, and called for districts and schools to provide more educational resources to parents/guardians to assist them in this role.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY EVENTS & CONVERSATIONS

Community conversations were developed as a mechanism for the State Superintendent to directly engage with specific communities, especially historically underserved groups. Similar to roundtables, community conversations featured a small group of stakeholders in a discussion. These conversations were co-facilitated by the State Superintendent and a community leader. Topics and questions were developed in collaboration between community leaders, community organizations, and Maryland State Department of Education staff. Community conversations were held in-person and virtually.



24 LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES ENGAGED



OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL VISITS & SHADOWS

Since joining the State Department of Education in July 2021, State Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury has visited all of Maryland's local education agencies - **23 counties and Baltimore City** - to engage with students, staff, principals, and local superintendents throughout the state. Visits consisted of shadowing a student during classes, school programs, lunch and even recess! During these fully-immersive experiences, the State Superintendent actively participated in classwork, physical education, and student-led meetings. These shadows were followed by a shadow of the local education agency's superintendent and/or school principal. Each visit was documented on the Maryland State Department of Education's social media platforms detailing the day's happenings.

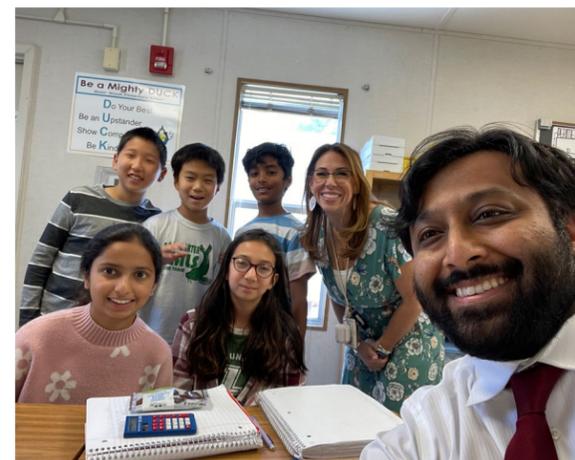
ALLEGANY COUNTY

State Superintendent Choudhury shadowed 1st grader Della at Cresaptown Elementary School. Together, they participated in math class where students learned how to measure the length of an object using nonstandard units of measure. Della and her classmates completed an activity using paperclips and unit cubes to measure and find the length of common objects like carrots and markers. Mr. Choudhury ended the day by shadowing Superintendent Mr. Blank at the Allegany central office.



HOWARD COUNTY

State Superintendent Choudhury shadowed 5th grader Olivia at Manor Woods Elementary School. As a Chinese, Spanish and American student, Olivia has integrated her culture into her daily interactions. Olivia began the day in orchestra where they played a rendition of "We Are the Champions" by Queen. After orchestra was ELA where the class was by analyzing Shel Silverstein's "Where the Sidewalk Ends." Next up was math class where students traveled around the classroom to complete problems including finding the degrees of angles, ratios, and more. Mr. Choudhury then made his way to Longfellow Elementary School where he shadowed Principal Anderson. Afterward, he shadowed Superintendent Martirano at the central office.



WICOMICO COUNTY

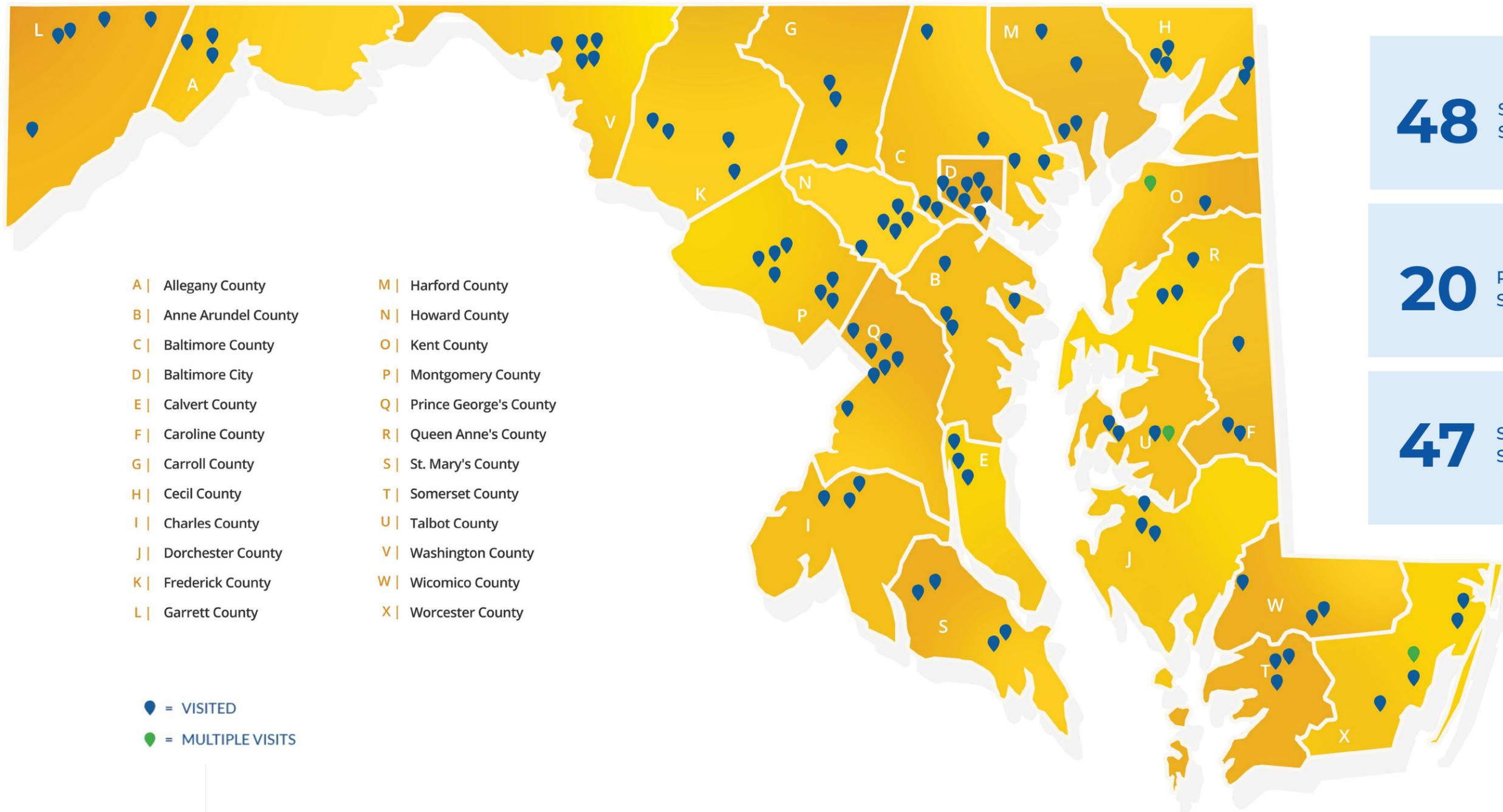
State Superintendent Choudhury shadowed Cayson, a 2nd-grade Beaver Run Elementary School student. Their morning of learning was filled with phonics lessons, sentence-building puzzles, and a class read-aloud of "Monkey and Rabbit." During Music class, students engaged in festive singing and dancing. Next, he shadowed Wicomico County Superintendent Dr. Micah Stauffer at Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore. Their mission is to inspire and prepare youth to succeed with learning focused on financial literacy, workforce and entrepreneurship.



STATE SUPERINTENDENT SCHOOL VISITS 2021 – PRESENT

288
HOURS

SHADOWING STUDENTS, PRINCIPALS, AND SUPERINTENDENTS



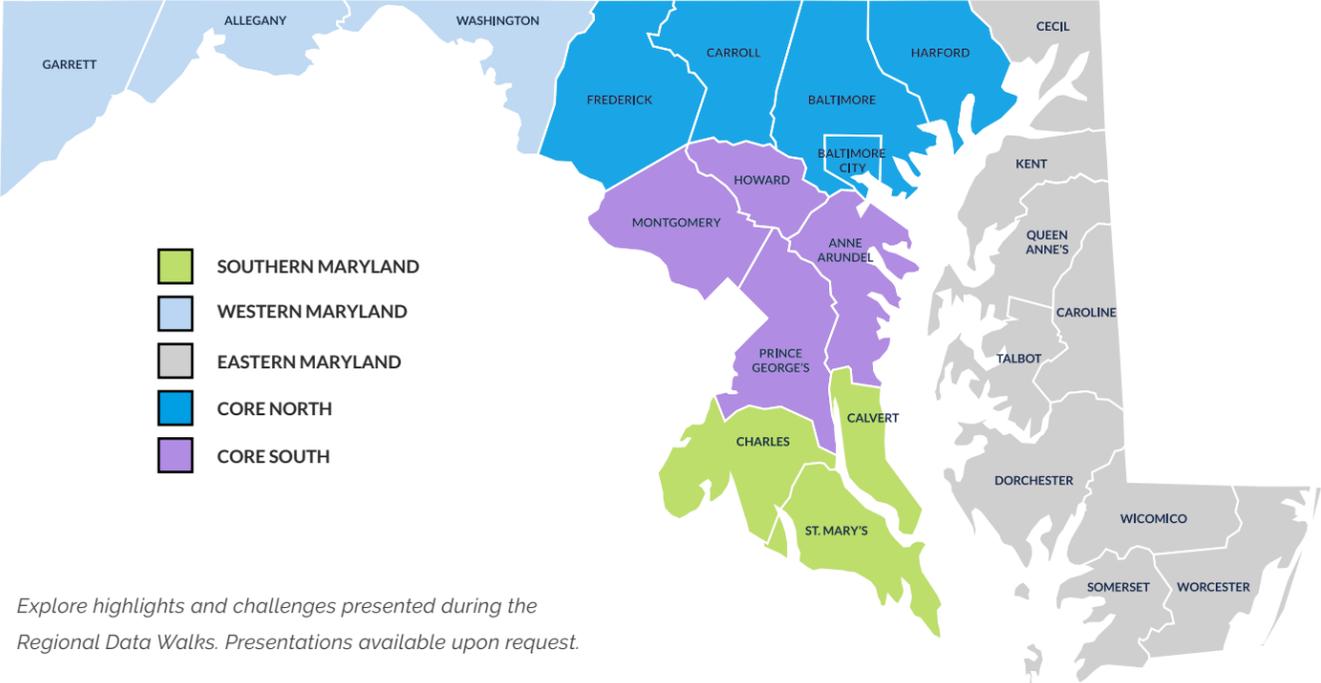
48 STUDENT SHADOWS

20 PRINCIPAL SHADOWS

47 SUPERINTENDENT SHADOWS



REGIONS IN MARYLAND BY COUNTY



Explore highlights and challenges presented during the Regional Data Walks. Presentations available upon request.

OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL DATA WALKS

The Regional Data Walks provided an opportunity for local boards of education and local education agency staff to learn about the strategic planning process, discuss and analyze local education data trends, and provide feedback on what they deemed necessary to implement the priorities and enablers. Attendees included local school board members, local superintendents, and district staff. Participants engaged in interactive data walks focused on regional data related to the specific priorities and enablers outlined in the Strategic Plan.



5 REGIONS ACROSS THE STATE PARTICIPATED



QUESTIONS ASKED

Participants were asked to answer the following questions for each priority and enabler based on the regional data presented during the data walk.

- 1** What are your initial reactions to this data?
- 2** What actions can you take or are you taking to support progress related to this priority?
- 3** What barriers or risks do you foresee and what support might you need to address these?



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- STAFFING WAS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED** PARTICULARLY FINANCIAL INCENTIVES, STAFFING CHALLENGES, AND A NEED FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF STAFF

Participants pushed for an increase in salaries, as well as multiple pathways to teacher certification. Participants also supported lower student to teacher ratios. Some respondents provided suggestions to increase the teacher pipeline through "Grow Your Own" efforts. Lastly, participants shared there should be more positions to support student well-being such as mental health professionals, psychological personnel, and therapists, as students are demonstrating a need to learn positive behavior.
- PARTICIPANTS FELT THAT** STUDENTS NEED MORE TIME AND SUPPORT IN FIGURING OUT THEIR CAREER PATH

Participants noted that to prepare students for college and careers, there should be more opportunities for internships and apprenticeships that allow for seamless pathways into careers after high school. Additionally, concerns were raised about barriers to dual enrollment, particularly for students of color.
- MANY RESPONDENTS** REPORTED THAT THEY GAINED INSIGHTS FROM THE DATA WALK ABOUT THEIR LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA) AND OTHER LEAS

Participants were interested in connecting with other LEAs and learning strategies and ideas from each other. A number of respondents contrasted outcomes in their LEA to outcomes with other LEAs, noting those who were doing particularly well and those who needed more support.



OVERVIEW OF CHARETTES

The Maryland State Board and Department of Education conducted regional charettes to develop, refine, and finalize the flagship programs, initiatives, and strategies related to the priorities and enablers. Strategic planning charettes provided a forum for stakeholders to engage in creative discussion and provide immediate feedback on ideas presented. More importantly, the charettes enabled participants to become mutual authors of the plan. Interactive sessions were held both in-person and virtually.



5 STRATEGIC PLANNING CHARETTES



CHARETTE TOPICS

The priorities and enablers provide the framework for the development of measurable goals and specific strategies to transform public education in Maryland into a world-class educational system. With discreet, evidence-based markers, the priorities map out what a successful educational progression looks like for a Maryland student. The enablers detail the necessary structural conditions that need to be met for every student in the state to support them in successfully reaching their full potential.



**PRIORITY 1:
READY FOR KINDERGARTEN**



**PRIORITY 2:
READY TO READ**



**PRIORITY 3:
READY FOR HIGH SCHOOL**



**PRIORITY 4:
READY FOR COLLEGE & CAREER**



**ENABLER 3:
ELEVATING THE TEACHING PROFESSION**



READY FOR KINDERGARTEN CHARETTE SUMMARY

On June 8, 2023, 15 participants representing five local education agencies (Baltimore City and Caroline, Garrett, Kent, and Worcester counties) convened to discuss their thoughts about the strategies, under the priority: All Maryland students are prepared socially, emotionally, and academically for success in kindergarten. Participants included Judy Center coordinators, executive directors, early childhood coaches, principals, early childhood teachers, and other stakeholders.

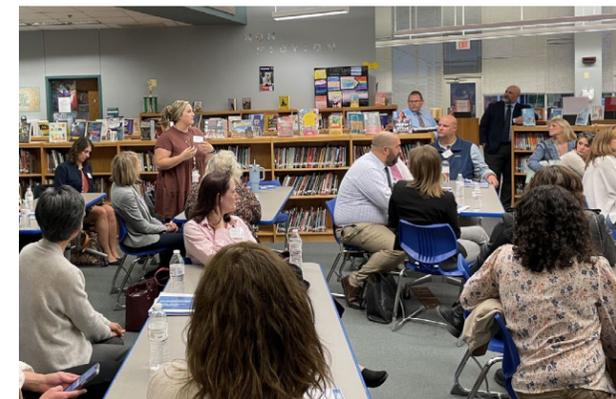


READY TO READ CHARETTE SUMMARY

On May 2, 2023, 43 participants representing five local education agencies (Frederick, Washington, Carroll, Howard, and Montgomery counties) convened to discuss their thoughts about the strategies, under the priority: Ready to read by the end of the third grade, and those who are not have the necessary support to become proficient. Participants included directors of curriculum and instruction, principals and superintendents, literacy coaches, teachers, parents, as well as others.



“ Having high-quality child care in rural areas of Maryland is something we need more of.”



“ Maybe a word to write in progress monitoring is accountability...you can have the greatest measures in place, but if we're not making certain that they are being used the way that they're intended to be used and that they're not driving next decisions instructionally for children, then they're only as good as...a waste of time.”



KEY TAKEAWAYS

STAKEHOLDERS WANTED

INCREASED ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS & THE EXPANSION OF EARLY LEARNING HUBS

Participants discussed the significance of ensuring that all children have access to early childhood education, as it helps develop foundational skills and prepares them for kindergarten. They highlighted the need to focus on the period between birth and age three, as underserved populations may lack access to high-quality early childhood centers or face limited options for childcare. They emphasized the importance of addressing these gaps to ensure all children receive quality care and education before entering Pre-K. Participants expressed their support for the expansion of Pre-K programs, as it would provide more opportunities for children to receive early education and support their development. Additionally, these types of programs should not only provide early learning support but also meet essential needs. Examples of these types of resources would be providing food and clothing and connecting with and serving families. This would likely help parents to focus more on what their children are doing and learning in the classroom.

PARTICIPANTS EMPHASIZED

THE NEED FOR OUTREACH AND INCENTIVES TO MOTIVATE DAYCARE PROVIDERS TO IMPROVE THEIR RATINGS AND OFFER HIGHER-QUALITY CARE

Participants reflected on the importance of sufficient planning time for teachers, addressing gaps in early childhood care, and improving the availability and quality of child care options. Educators expressed the need for extra planning time to gather materials and ensure that students could simply engage and learn. Participants mused about how child care providers might be motivated or incentivized to earn higher ratings and even entice potential new partnerships.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

ATTENDEES FOCUSED THEIR

DISCUSSION ON THE CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE CONTEXT OF EVIDENCE-BASED AND HIGHLY EFFECTIVE READING

The discussion centered around the conditions necessary for successful implementation of training programs. Participants highlighted the importance of training teachers in all subject areas, not just language arts, and the need for consistent strategies across content areas. They discussed the challenges of providing training to all educators, the criteria for evidence-based training, and the need for accountability and funding. The conversation touched on the challenges of providing training to a large number of teachers, the need for requirements and accountability, and the role of higher education programs in preparing teachers with the necessary skills.

EDUCATORS DISCUSSED THE

THE NEED TO PROVIDE TEACHERS WITH RESOURCES, GUIDANCE, AND COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE THEIR TEACHING PRACTICES

Participants mentioned the ability to provide feedback about implementation hurdles, as well as responsive leadership that allows for flexibility in training depending on teachers' needs. The discussion also addressed the importance of ongoing support and mentorship for teachers and the need to create space and prioritize reading instruction within schools. The balance between time spent on assessments and instruction needs to be considered so that students are not being overtested. Some participants suggested having students set goals for themselves, and to celebrate when they are achieved so that students have ownership over learning. Often assessments are given and not revisited, but showing students the progress they are making would give them a taste of success.



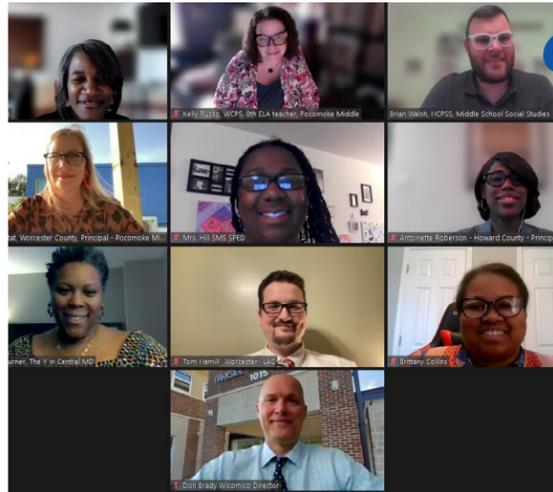
READY FOR HIGH SCHOOL CHARETTE SUMMARY

On May 11, 2023, 14 participants representing four local education agencies (Baltimore City, Worcester, Wicomico, and Howard counties) convened to discuss their thoughts about the strategies, under the priority: All Maryland students enter high school on track to meet the college and career readiness standard by the end of 10th grade. Participants included administrators, community partners, principals, school counselors, parents, as well as other stakeholders.



READY FOR COLLEGE & CAREER CHARETTE SUMMARY

On May 16, 2023, 19 participants representing four local education agencies (Queen Anne's, Somerset, Charles, and Washington counties) convened to discuss their thoughts about the strategies under the priority: All Maryland students graduate from high school college and career ready, and with an individualized plan to succeed in college, career, and life. Participants included directors of admissions at local community colleges, principals, school counselors, apprenticeship coordinators, as well as others.



“ I think it's very important that we give the students a rigorous course and curriculum program that has very high standards and opportunities for enrichment and rigor, but I also think we tend to forget there needs to be time in the schedule to address those gaps when students have them. When students start developing these gaps and the only way to plug those gaps is by taking away other opportunities... I think that's when we lose the engagement of students, when they see the balance of...get extra help on this area where I'm falling down means I'm missing out on this really interesting, engaging opportunity that I want to take part in.”



“ Using our multiple measures to be able to place students into courses...where they will thrive in and be comfortable and succeed...preparing them for being in college or in a career...going directly into a trade or going directly into the workforce with those skills is always very important.”



KEY TAKEAWAYS

STAKEHOLDERS POINTED OUT

HOW STUDENTS' CURRENT SCHEDULES AND PROGRAMS ARE SO FOCUSED ON RIGOR AND CURRICULUM THAT THERE IS LESS OPPORTUNITY AND TIME TO ADDRESS LEARNING GAPS

When students need to get some extra help in certain areas, the only option is to take away opportunities, and as a result, students begin to lose engagement. To counter waning engagement, schools could rearrange students' schedules and incorporate an intervention block into the school day, where students can get extra help or extra enrichment, depending on their needs.

ATTENDEES STRESSED THE

DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS ACROSS ALL GRADE LEVELS, BUT ESPECIALLY IN MIDDLE SCHOOL COULD BE BENEFICIAL IN TARGETING STRUGGLING STUDENTS

Participants mentioned developing a system that provides early identification of students facing academic and attendance challenges. The system should be vetted, be able to be used at different school levels, and be based on students' particular needs. Relatedly, educators need resources and support for understanding the adolescent brain, what the transition from childhood to adolescence looks like, and what their needs are. They also need planning time and confidence that they can succeed. It would be helpful if schools could provide more staffing, particularly social workers and counselors, to work with students, which would assist in providing individualized instruction. Schools could also be in better communication with families who can play a role in supporting students.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

PARTICIPANTS FELT STRONGLY

THAT EDUCATORS AND COUNSELORS SHOULD BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE DIFFERENT PATHWAYS/PROGRAMS AND BE ABLE TO DESCRIBE WHAT POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION LOOKS LIKE

Although students should be able to choose their own pathways and not be tracked or have programs prescribed to them, counselors could help students create their plans so that students are placed where they are comfortable and can encounter success. Participants were excited by the idea that multiple measures would be utilized to examine each student holistically. Previously, having one standardized test seemed to come across as a gatekeeping mechanism that prevented students from career pathways.

WHEN DISCUSSING

INDICATORS FOR INTERVENTION AND QUALITY MATERIALS PARTICIPANTS FOCUSED ON HOW MENTAL HEALTH FACTORS COULD IMPACT CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Participants emphasized that schools should set up a system for early intervention when considering whether schools have the resources to address issues such as mental health, which is currently a salient topic. Attendees felt that follow through with resources after the pandemic was crucial for student success. Many felt that teachers were not adequately prepared for instruction in the evolving world following the pandemic. Participants were also concerned that some families would struggle to understand the advanced curriculum presented to their students and have a voice in the selection of high-quality materials.



ELEVATING THE TEACHING PROFESSION CHARETTE SUMMARY

On May 25, 2023, 32 educators representing five local education agencies (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's counties) convened to discuss their thoughts about the strategies under the enabler: Attract, recruit, and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce; setting rigorous standards for educator preparation programs and induction; implementing a career ladder system focused on development and growth opportunities for all educators. Participants included principals, teachers, education supervisors, early college staff, CTE teachers, and other stakeholders.



“The collaboration between our post secondary and secondary and the development of the needs in our system is nonexistent...So they're working, in my experience, in isolation, creating the supports for our system.”

A NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

EXPRESSED THAT IT WAS A STRUGGLE FOR LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES TO FORM AND MAINTAIN PARTNERSHIPS WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

One obstacle is that partners such as local community colleges do not have the capacity, partly because some postsecondary institutions have changed their credentials for who can teach the coursework and thus have a hard time finding professors. Another obstacle is that some institutions are hesitant to partner with LEAs that aren't geographically close to the institutions. They reported that hands-on experiences with children within programs should begin earlier. Participants described several barriers or shortcomings of educator preparation programs, such as not presenting the most current practices, no courses on behavior management, and limitations such as GPA requirements for hands-on learning. Participants raised the question of alternative pathways to certification and tuition reimbursement as strategies to solve these issues.

INTEREST WAS SPARKED

AROUND THE TOPIC OF GROW YOUR OWN STAFF STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER PIPELINES

Some participants mentioned that students in their LEAs wanted to be teachers, but there were many barriers to higher education. Other participants described an interest to revamp resident teacher programs because there is a need due to teacher vacancies. Participants indicated that a number of new teachers feel they don't receive the support they need. For those who have mentors, the mentor may be someone who is retired or experienced, and it has been awhile since they themselves went through the mentoring experience and cannot necessarily share relevant experiences about what "potholes" to not step in. Teachers need to have a supportive environment and be able to build relationships, collaborate, and observe others; this would make them feel more integrated.

EMERGING PROGRAMS, INITIATIVES, AND STRATEGIES



KEY TAKEAWAYS



WHAT WE LEARNED SO FAR

Marylanders across our state have conveyed a strong commitment and enduring support for public education. When asked how important the quality of Maryland's public schools are to the success of the state, an overwhelming majority have said that it is extremely important. A strong majority have a positive view of Maryland public schools' performance. At the same time, a diverse array of stakeholders have stressed key areas for improvement, the unmet challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and urgency about the need to transform educational experiences for all students at scale, especially those who have been historically underserved.

Ensuring high-quality reading and writing learning experiences in the early grades was a top priority among all stakeholder groups who completed the strategic planning survey. This reflects the critical importance that all Maryland students are proficient in reading by the end of third grade, and those who are not have the necessary supports to become proficient. Additionally, stakeholder groups, including teachers and school leaders, prioritized developing excellent teachers and recognizing and rewarding them among their top five priorities.

Furthermore, in addition to survey responses, in-depth dialogues fostered by roundtables highlighted meaningful nuances in the views and aspirations of Marylanders across our state. Black/African American respondents emphasized resources such as access to advanced course work and pathways, and high-quality teachers for underserved communities in their most frequently cited priorities. Participants in our educator roundtables stressed the urgency of addressing representation gaps in the teaching profession, supporting new teachers' growth through close collaboration, observation, and feedback from highly effective mentors, and expanding access to job-embedded professional learning opportunities. Students and parents/guardians, in turn, advocated for stronger wraparound supports, engagement, and better educational resources for families to support their students success in school. Leaders from the business community passionately spoke about the need to elevate career and technical education and ensuring better coordination between industry and the educational system to facilitate students' access and success with career exploration, work-based learning, and job placement opportunities.

“ Stakeholders have stressed key areas for improvement, the unmet challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and urgency about the need to transform educational experiences for all students at scale, especially those who have been historically underserved.”

Many of the themes that were prominent in the strategic planning survey and roundtables also emerged during listening sessions. Participants stressed the importance of strengthening health and wellness supports for students. They also emphasized creating seamless and equitable pathways to college and careers and the expectation that institutions of higher education, employers, and the educational system must collaborate effectively to make those pathways a reality for every Maryland student. Listening sessions also called attention to additional priorities, such as the need to address teacher shortages and expanding high-quality Pre-K and early childhood programs.

As we entered Phase 2 of our engagement efforts, we heard stakeholders advocate for innovative ways to recruit and retain high-quality teachers and staff during the regional data walks. The feedback mirrored previous conversations about pathways to college and careers and exposing students to more opportunities earlier in their educational journey. Data walks fostered a collaborative environment where local education leaders could connect and learn from one another reflecting a clear demand for more opportunities like this in the future.

In Phase 3, we gave our stakeholders a platform to become mutual authors of the plan through strategic planning charettes. We listened as participants shared their personal perspectives on early childhood, literacy, support in the middle grades, educator preparation, and ensuring students are ready for college and career. Through the charettes, stakeholders identified and ranked strategies grounded in research.

The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education look forward to the continued implementation of the Strategic Plan and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. By addressing the challenges, seizing the opportunities, and upholding the values that have been expressed throughout this process, we will ensure a brighter and more equitable future for the children of Maryland. Thank you for transforming Maryland with us!

WHAT IS COMING NEXT



JULY 2023 & BEYOND

Implementation & Continuous Improvement

The implementation process of the Strategic Plan transforms the elements outlined in the plan into actionable steps. Effective implementation requires clear communication, strong leadership, and continued engagement of stakeholders. Regular monitoring and evaluation of progress are crucial to identify any gaps or challenges in the implementation process. The continuous improvement process ensures that the plan remains relevant and effective over time. Through a cycle of implementation, evaluation, and improvement, we can ensure that the Strategic Plan remains dynamic, responsive, and aligned with evolving needs.

NOVEMBER 2021

INITIAL ENGAGEMENT & DATA GATHERING



● ONGOING COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
 - - - BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION

OCTOBER 2022

Initial Release
Mission, Vision, Values,
Priorities, and Enablers

PHASE 01



PHASE 02



FEBRUARY 2023

Refine Phase 1
Release Success Metrics and Goals

JUNE 2023

Finalize Phase 1 & 2
Release Targets*
Identify Flagship Programs,
Initiatives, and Strategies

PHASE 03



JULY 2023 & BEYOND



IMPLEMENTATION & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

*Final targets will be released by late Fall 2023 using the Spring 2023 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program results



THANK YOU FOR TRANSFORMING MARYLAND WITH US

We extend our sincere gratitude for taking the time to read about the Maryland State Board and Department of Education's engagement efforts to develop the multiyear Strategic Plan. This plan serves as the foundation for transforming public education in Maryland and ensuring an excellent and equitable learning experience for every student. From articulating the vision, mission, values, and priorities in Phase 1 to establishing goals and metrics for progress evaluation in Phase 2, and finally implementing research-based programs, initiatives, and strategies in Phase 3, the guidebook encapsulates the essence of our commitment to creating high-quality learning environments. We appreciate your engagement and support as we work towards achieving the Blueprint for Maryland's Future promise. Together, we will transform Maryland into a world-class education system.

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