

**THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Minutes of the September 24, 2024 Meeting**  
**200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201**

The Maryland State Board of Education met on September 24, 2024 at 9:02am in the State Board room located within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

The following Board members were present in the Boardroom:

Dr. Joshua Michael (Board President), Dr. Monica Goldson (Board Vice President), Ms. Rachel McCusker, Ms. Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, Mr. Clarence Crawford, Mr. Nick Greer, Dr. Susan Getty, Mr. Abhiram Gaddam, Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy, Mr. Samir Paul, Mr. Kenny Clash, Dr. Kim Lewis, Ms. Xiomara Medina, and Dr. Irma Johnson were in attendance.

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

**MEETING OPENING**

President Michael called the meeting to order at 9:02am and led the pledge of allegiance. Mr. Dunklow declared that a quorum was present.

Dr. Michael provided opening remarks, welcomed new Board members, and shared updated Committee assignments.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Trish Brennan - Maryanne Wolf's research related to cell phones in schools and impact on reading
2. Nikki Woodward - MSDE Literacy Policy
3. Liz Zogby - Pre-K expansion and students with disabilities
4. Justin Gallucci - Parent engagement: Budget transparency, planning & material selection
5. Sharon Saroff - Special education and literacy
6. Dr. Zainab Chaudry - Islamophobia in Maryland public schools
7. Bill Hudson - The growth of the ASPIRE PreK program

**NEW BUSINESS**

- Approval of the Consent Agenda
  - Approval of August 27, 2024 Meeting Minutes
  - Personnel Actions
  - Budget Adjustments, August 2024
  - COMAR 13A.03.02.12 Graduation Requirements (Permission to Adopt)

ACTION: Dr. Mele-McCarthy motioned, Dr. Getty seconded. The State Board granted approval by unanimous consent.

## **STATE SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Dr. Wright welcomed the new Board members. She shared that MSDE submitted their 2024 Implementation report to the Accountability & Implementation Board (AIB) and are awaiting their feedback and approval. She detailed this past month's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee meeting where they discussed their industry-recognized credential policy and apprenticeship policy and the AIB's feedback. CTE Committee members decided not to update the industry-recognized credential policy and submitted the Committee's apprenticeship policy. She discussed the Children's Cabinet meeting which focused on older youth and shared which MSDE staff serve on Cabinet committees. Dr. Wright also presented at the Governor's Performance Cabinet meeting and focused on training and professional development for teachers on the science of reading, the federal grant for literacy, and high-dosage math tutoring. She also had her first meeting with MD Philanthropy Network. She then shared more about her meeting with Maryland House Speaker Adrienne Jones and Maryland Senate President Ferguson to share MSDE's legislative priorities.

She then introduced a video highlighting her first day of school visits and shared more details about each visit. She held a Community Forum in Wicomico County and invited Mr. Gaddam to talk about his experience visiting his old school. She mentioned her interview with WYPR, her honor to be recognized with the Influential Marylander Award, and encouraged those in the room and listening to attend the Teacher of the Year Gala on October 4th. She shared that MSDE will hold a working group on cell phones in schools. She ended by congratulating the state's four National Blue Ribbon public schools.

## **LOCAL SUPERINTENDENTS UPDATE**

Superintendent Cindy McCabe of Carroll County shared an update on her district's MCAP performance. She highlighted her student subgroups' performance, particularly the growth shown by Black students. However, she said there are still large opportunity gaps between subgroups. Students' proficiency in Algebra I grew by 10 percentage points, though they are focusing more on students' flagging science performance.

The district is transitioning their half-day Pre-K to full-day, and the district aims to double Pre-K slots by 2028 and add additional Pre-K classrooms. However, these investments are competing with capital projects and Blueprint priorities. Dr. McCabe urged the State Board and MSDE to provide any additional resources they could. In Carroll County, private Pre-K partners doubled from 2 to 4 but it has been difficult.

Speaking on behalf of Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), she said it is an extraordinary expectation on LEAs to support private businesses. Carroll County rolled out a centralized Pre-K application and made special efforts to enroll homeless students, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities in Pre-K. Her district is working to ensure Pre-K curriculum and instruction are aligned with K-2.

## **MARYLAND INITIATIVE FOR LITERACY AND EQUITY (MILE)**

Dr. Bolger and Dr. Gibson shared an overview of MILE's literacy implementation evaluation process, which included elementary school visits, classroom observations, and teacher leader surveys. MILE created rubrics for Expert Review Teams and then determined at which phase of implementation each district was. According to MILE, effective literacy implementation includes high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), knowledge building, and writing instruction. Aligned teacher professional development and a culture of literacy leadership are also key components. Barriers to effective implementation include a lack of consistent training on interventions, data analysis, and structured literacy as well as shortened literacy blocks and misperceptions of science of reading.

MILE found that all LEAs have provided training on science of reading, though training is more inconsistent in grades 4 and 5. Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) implementation challenges include effective differentiation, tiered intervention, and scaffolding for multilingual learners. Communication of data and goals is also a growth area for LEAs.

Broadly, reaching grades 4-12 teachers and new teachers on science of reading are issues, compounded with the sunseting of the federal Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding. Siloed administrative structures are impacting implementation in LEAs. MILE found that the majority of LEAs are in pre-implementation and early implementation stages.

MILE recommends districts train teachers both on science of reading curriculum and the science of reading principles; improve writing instruction; train personnel on using student data to target instruction; and enhance job-embedded coaching.

MILE also recommends standardizing MTSS frameworks at the state level; targeting professional development to school leaders to improve consistency; improving cultural competency; and improving communication with parents.

Dr. Collins thanked Morgan State for their partnership throughout this process. Dr. Michael highlighted that Dr. Bolger and Dr. Gibson are two of the nation's leading teacher educators.

Mr. Paul asked what drives "flipped triangles" in MTSS. Dr. Bolger and Dr. Gibson said it's the breadth of student need, underprepared teachers and potentially ineffective curriculum, a mismatch of school leadership priorities, and teachers' time for reflective practice.

Mr. Greer asked about overlay of LEAs' implementation stage and their MCAP performance. Dr. Bolger and Dr. Gibson emphasized that the outcomes won't be reflected in MCAP, more so through DIBELS or i-Ready. Mr. Greer expressed appreciation for emphasis on parent engagement and asked about bright spots, particularly for multilingual learners' families.

Mr. Crawford asked what this data tells the Board what next steps should be. Dr. Gibson said higher education needs to prepare teachers better for this type of instruction and better support their analysis of student data. Dr. Bolger said improving Tier 2 and 3 interventions is also critical. Mr. Crawford also asked about professional development availability at LEA level for science of reading and data synthesis. Dr. Bolger said the timing of professional development within the school day is important.

Dr. Michael emphasized that for schools where “flipped triangles” are prolific, should LEAs and the state adjust the approach?

Ms. Medina asked about clarity on findings related to culturally responsive instruction. Dr. Gibson said that there is a misunderstanding among teachers and administrators of what cultural responsiveness is, how to evaluate the impact of cultural responsiveness, and encouraging teachers to supplement structured literacy with student feedback and needs.

Dr. Lewis asked about the consistency of high quality instructional materials across LEAs. Dr. Gibson said it really varied.

Dr. Johnson asked about leadership support and training needs and if a state-led data cycle would be helpful. Dr. Bolger said that most districts do have data cycles, but their implementation varies. All LEAs have literacy implementation plans that include administrative professional development, but many are in the planning phase of implementation.

Dr. Mele-McCarthy emphasized the importance of non-evaluative coaching, professional development for administrators, and raising awareness of bi-dialectal needs. She asked if the size of the LEA mattered in terms of effective implementation. Dr. Bolger said it is pretty clear that it's easier to implement in smaller districts.

Ms. McCusker asked if the way that teachers provide instruction and deliver curriculum - with 180 days of lesson plans that might prevent them from being able to go back and reteach skills students may have missed - impeding their ability to meet the individual student's needs. Dr. Bolger said the system needs to be set up for skill mastery and that curriculum pacing is important - ensuring students are getting to skill mastery while carving out time for reteaching. Districts need to make sure that the curriculum they are purchasing includes time for additional support. Dr. Gibson said supporting teachers in supplementing curriculum is also key.

Dr. Johnson asked how higher education is preparing teachers to support “flipped triangle” classrooms. Dr. Gibson said it's about hands-on practicum and pairing future teachers with teachers that do this work well.

Dr. Michael asked about Transitional Supplemental Instruction (TSI) fund impact. Dr. Bolger said they saw Title I, community schools as high fliers.

Dr. Getty emphasized the importance of including Pre-K teachers in this work.

Ms. Chang asked about which schools or districts had strong family engagement. Dr. Gibson said the schools that seemed to flourish in this respect had strong community partners. Dr. Bolger said community schools and Judy Centers excel and recommended that the state circulate these promising practices more broadly.

Mr. Gaddam asked for more clarity on the LEA implementation stages table and how LEAs move on to new stages.

Dr. Michael called a break for 10 minutes.

### **DEEP DIVE ON 2023-2024 MCAP DATA**

Mr. Sanderson began by sharing cohort proficiency trends in English Language Arts (ELA). He reminded the Board that the 2019-20 year did not have annual assessments, and the 2020-21 assessment was conducted in an abbreviated format in the fall of the 2021-22 year. Four of the five cohorts tracked in ELA performance grew their test scores. The likelihood of students who scored proficient in 2023 to again score proficient in 2024 was very high. The majority of students scored at the same level of proficiency in 2024 as they did in 2023. In math, there were large drops in proficiency across all cohorts.

Mr. Sanderson also reviewed analysis by school poverty level, Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) status, and community schools identification.

Dr. Mele-McCarthy asked for clarification for increases versus statistically significant increases. She also highlighted the need for a research agenda related to math instruction.

Dr. Goldson said the time and attention that the department dedicates to literacy needs to be dedicated to math.

Mr. Greer asked for clarification on the state's move from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) to MCAP. Geoff said 2019 was mostly PARCC, 2021 was condensed MCAP, and 2022 was full MCAP.

Dr. Getty asked if the issue with these low scores is teacher training, the curriculum, or the tests. Dr. Johnson said she thinks it's ensuring all three are aligned.

Dr. Wright emphasized that MCAP is not aligned to any curriculum but to the state standards. Curriculum must be aligned to state standards. MSDE will be putting out a Request for Proposals

for a new state assessment, but before that, MSDE will have finalized all state standards so that any future assessment is fully aligned. She said it is up to the Department to ensure once the new standards are finalized that they are supporting teachers' knowledge.

Dr. Michael asked about the efficacy of our CSI work.

### **BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: PRE-K MIXED DELIVERY SYSTEM**

Dr. Cook provided an overview of the Blueprint vision for a mixed-delivery system in which public and private providers meet state standards while maintaining flexible options for families. She also shared an updated timeline for meeting the Blueprint's required mix of 50 percent public and 50 percent private providers, which is set as a goal for the 2028-29 school year per law. She highlighted both the state's and individual LEAs' progress toward these goals.

To scale Pre-K, Dr. Cook highlighted the importance of more funding and TA for teachers, more per-pupil funding, raising awareness among private providers about Expansion Grants and supporting them with administration, and supporting partnerships between LEAs and private providers.

Goals for the mixed-delivery system include increasing the number of accredited private providers at an EXCELS level 4 and 5.

Mr. Greer asked what is holding back private providers from reaching higher levels within EXCELS compared to public providers. Dr. Cook said they are comprehensively looking at the EXCELS process to identify barriers.

Ms. Chang asked about how they're navigating supply and demand fluctuations as they move toward goals. Dr. Cook said they are conducting supply and demand studies in each LEA and a cost modeling study for private providers across each setting.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Pursuant to § 3-305(b)(7) and (13) of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon motion of Nick Greer and seconded by Rachel McCusker and with unanimous approval, the State Board of Education met in closed session on Tuesday, September 24, 2024, in Conference Room #1, 8th Floor, at the Nancy S. Grasmick Building. All board members were present. 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. Deputy State Superintendent Krishnanda Tallur and Assistant State Superintendent Donna Gunning joined for the budget presentation. The Executive Session commenced at 12:35 p.m. and ended at 2:00 p.m.

The State Board reviewed and approved three Opinions.

- *Deborah Evans v. Prince George’s County Board of Education* – employee reassignment and alleged discrimination – Opinion No. 24-17. The Board affirmed the local board’s decision.
- *Meredith W. and Scott H. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – magnet school admission – Opinion No. 24-18. The Board affirmed the local board’s decision.
- *Deborah Wilson v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – employee retaliation and bullying complaint – Opinion No. 24-19. The Board affirmed the local board’s decision.

President Michael provided an informational briefing and there was a discussion regarding the FY 26 budget.

**FY 2026 BUDGET ESTIMATES AND REQUESTS (ACTION)**

Dr. Michael called the Board back and asked for a motion to approve the FY26 budget for submission to the Governor. Mr. Crawford motioned, Ms. McCusker seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 1, Absent: 1)

**REPORTS TO THE STATE BOARD FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION**

***State Board Regulatory Review Work Plan (Action)***

Dr. Akilah Alleyne reported that MSDE is required to complete a regulatory report over the 2024-25 year. MSDE is also proposing to move to three 2.5 year cycles instead of two four-year cycles since the volume of regulations under Title 13A is so large. Once the Regulation Review Committee has reviewed MSDE staff recommendations, they will conduct stakeholder outreach. Staff review is scheduled to be completed in January 2025. The final report will be submitted to the Governor and the Administrative, Executive & Legislative Review (AELR) Committee. The Board’s Education Policy Committee recommends adoption.

ACTION: Upon motion by Ms. McCusker, seconded by Mr. Paul, the State Board voted to adopt the Regulatory Review Work Plan. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0)

***Praxis Subject Assessments – Adoption of Regenerated Tests (Action)***

The regenerated tests are for Family and Consumer Sciences and Technology and Education. The Board’s Policy Committee recommends passage.

ACTION: Upon motion by Dr. Getty, seconded by Dr. Goldson, the State Board voted to adopt. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0)

***COMAR 13A.06.10 Purple Star Schools (Permission to Publish - Action)***

The Board’s Policy Committee recommends granting permission to publish. Ms. Gable outlined the changes which includes other states’ National Guards and is limited to public schools only. Dr. Mele-McCarthy urged the Board to pursue legislative action to include nonpublic schools in this area of the law.

ACTION: Upon motion by Dr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. McCusker, the State Board voted to publish. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0)

***COMAR 13A.15 Family Child Care (Educational Programs in Nonpublic Nursery Schools) (Permission to Publish - Action)***

The Board's Policy Committee recommends granting permission to publish. These regulations support mixed age classrooms and allow family child care providers to complete their practicum in their home setting.

ACTION: Upon motion by Ms. McCusker, seconded by Mr. Paul, the State Board voted to publish. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0)

***COMAR 13A.15, 13A.16, 13A.17, 13A.18 Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (Permission to Publish - Action)***

The Board's Policy Committee recommends granting permission to publish. The Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program supports early intervention services for children aged 0-3. Per statute, MSDE should ensure child care programs share information about this program with parents and families and will create a brochure for consistent messaging.

ACTION: Upon motion by Dr. Johnson, seconded by Dr. Mele-McCarthy, the State Board voted to publish. (In Favor: 14, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0)

**PROPOSED LITERACY POLICY**

Dr. Wright shared an overview of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data that has informed MSDE's literacy policy development. Maryland experienced a dramatic drop in proficiency levels across all student subgroups. She highlighted that the improvements in literacy proficiency in Mississippi have been sustained past 4th grade and through 8th grade.

Dr. Wright then shared an evaluation of Mississippi's test-based promotion policy, which showed that improvement overall was driven by Black and Latino students' growth. She shared Mississippi's graduation rate which went from 75.5% to 89% for all students and students with disabilities' graduation rate went from approximately 25% to closer to 70%.

Dr. Johnson asked about the total number of 4th graders who took NAEP.

Dr. Mele-McCarthy asked about the percentage of students retained in Mississippi before the policy and the number retained after policy implementation. Dr. Wright said before the retention policy the state retained approximately 3%, then immediately after the policy was implemented the retention rate shot up to 9%, but dropped down to 3% before the pandemic. It hovered at 6% as a result of the pandemic.



Dr. Lewis asked about the size of districts in MS. Dr. Wright said there 150 districts of varying sizes. Dr. Lewis mentioned the implementation challenges for smaller districts. She also highlighted that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA) Child Find is the law that usurps all MTSS requirements.

Ms. Medina asked about accountability and the disconnect between LEAs' family engagement practices as evidenced by the MILE presentation and the parent choice aspect of retention. She also said the policy is missing the cultural competency component.

Mr. Crawford said that Maryland might not be as comfortable with top-down approach as Mississippi. He also spoke to the difficulty of system-wide transformation.

Dr. Getty expressed frustration with the lack of inclusion of Pre-K throughout the literacy policy.

### **BACKGROUND AND TRENDS ON CELL PHONES IN SCHOOLS**

State Board Deputy Director Hannah Oakley presented on the changes schools are experiencing after the return to in-person learning with students' use of cell phones during the school day. Many states and school districts have begun taking action to limit students' use of cell phones at school. As of September 2024, 15 states have passed statewide policies restricting cell phone use at schools, and 19 of Maryland's 24 LEAs have also updated or established new policies on cell phone use during the school day.

She shared research findings on the impact to students and the learning environment of students' cell phone use in schools; stakeholder views; an overview of state and Maryland LEAs actions; and policy trends across states and Maryland's LEAs.

Dr. Wright announced that MSDE will convene a working group to study this issue.

Mr. Greer asked about parent representation on the working group. Dr. Wright said they would look at it but had not formally set the members yet.

Ms. McCusker encouraged MSDE to also include other technology beyond just cell phones, such as smart watches and wireless earbuds.

### **STATE BOARD MEMBER COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

Ms. McCusker reported that the Education Policy Committee will meet in October and will be focused on the literacy policy. Mr. Crawford said the Transformation Committee will meet on October 8th and will consider further fiscal matters.

### **FUTURE BOARD AGENDA ITEMS**

None.

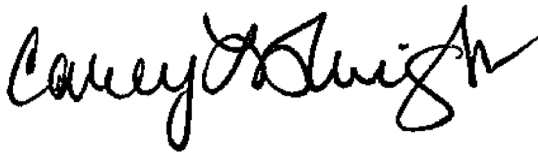
## LEGAL OPINIONS AND ORDERS

Mr. Dunklow announced the following opinions:

- *Deborah Evans v. Prince George's County Board of Education* – employee reassignment and alleged discrimination – Opinion No. 24-17
- *Meredith W. and Scott H. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – magnet school admission – Opinion No. 24-18
- *Deborah Wilson v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – employee retaliation and bullying complaint – Opinion No. 24-19

Dr. Getty motioned to adjourn, seconded by Dr. Mele-McCarthy. With no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 3:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,



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

Date: October 22, 2024

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://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Pages/Meetings-2024.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, October 22, 2024.**

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.