

MEETING OF THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Minutes of the February 25, 2025 Meeting
200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

The Maryland State Board of Education met on February 25, 2025, at 9:03 am in the State Board room located within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

The following Board members were present in the Boardroom:

Dr. Joshua Michael (Board President), Dr. Monica Goldson (Board Vice President), Ms. Rachel McCusker, Mr. Clarence Crawford, Mr. Nick Greer, Mr. Kenny Clash, Dr. Kim Lewis, Ms. Xiomara Medina, Mr. Chet Chesterfield, Mr. Abhiram Gaddam, Ms. Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, and Dr. Irma Johnson were in attendance. Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy and Mr. Samir Paul were not present.

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

MEETING OPENING

Dr. Michael called the meeting to order at 9:03am and led the pledge of allegiance. Mr. Schoen declared that a quorum was present.

Dr. Michael offered opening remarks that emphasized the State Board’s responsibility to provide a high-quality education to every student, of every background. He shared a preview of the state’s National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores that will be discussed in more detail at the day’s meeting. Lastly, he discussed the Blueprint’s vision, the Governor’s bill, and the importance of the Blueprint’s minimum school funding provision.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Cindi Webb – Blueprint and EXCELS
2. Sharon Saroff – Special Education (virtual)
3. Bill Hudson – SBOE ECE Committee and Joint AIB Policy on PreK (virtual)

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- Personnel Actions
- Budget Adjustments, January 2025
- COMAR 13A.15, 13A.16, 13A.17, 13A.18 Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (Permission to Adopt)
- Social Studies and American Government Alternative Academic Achievement Standards
- Somerset County Public Schools Waiver Request
- Wicomico County Public Schools Waiver Request
- Charles County Public Schools Waiver Request

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

Dr. Michael requested that the meeting minutes be considered separately to consider an amendment that corrects naming of AIB members Doss, Robinson, and Manko.

Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the meeting minutes. Mr. Chesterfield motioned, Ms. Medina seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2).

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION: MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS (MASC)

MASC leadership committee shared an overview of the organization's work and introduced the incoming student member of the State Board Mr. O'Marie Barnes. Mr. Gaddam and Mr. Crawford thanked MASC leadership for their support.

UPDATE FROM THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Wright shared information about the inaugural meetings of the Teacher and Principal Advisory Councils. She also discussed an event she held at Planet Word with Emily Hanford on the science of reading. She provided an overview of her work in Mississippi and the sustained positive student outcomes as evidenced by recent NAEP scores. Further, she discussed proposals in the Governor's education bill, particularly the importance of the School Leadership Academy to ensure principals receive the mentorship and support they need to stay in school buildings long-term.

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA) UPDATE - CHARLES COUNTY (CCPS)

Dr. Navarro, Charles County's Superintendent, shared an update about Dr. Wright's visit to CCPS's only dual language school. Mr. Chesterfield asked about the stakeholder and family engagement for school models like this.

2024 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP) DATA DEEP DIVE

Mr. Geoff Sanderson provided an overview of Maryland's NAEP data. Gaps between higher- and lower-performing students have widened over the past decade across 4th and 8th grades in both reading and math. These gaps are driven by declining scores for our lowest-performing students. Dr. Wright said that Maryland bucked the national trend in 2024 because our state's lowest-performing students leveled off from declining scores in 2022. She emphasized the importance of remaining consistent with implementation of the science of reading and getting instructional coaches in schools to support teaching and learning. Mr. Sanderson then broke out NAEP scores by student groups and race and ethnicity.

Mr. Gaddam asked if NAEP demonstrated what skills and content were being tested. He wanted to know how these NAEP scores aligned with our efforts in science of reading and our state test results. Mr. Greer highlighted outlier trends and inquired about Trial Urban District Assessment

(TUDA) results for the state's larger districts. Mr. Crawford emphasized the importance of focusing on transparency in the data at the state, local, and school level. Ms. McCusker agreed and said that the State Board cannot be the only body doing these kinds of data dives. Dr. Johnson asked what the State Board's role is in supporting local boards in strengthening their analysis of this data. Dr. Goldson said that there are local boards doing this work. Dr. Michael said this is something the Board can work with MABE to discuss further.

Dr. Johnson asked about scores for students with disabilities. Dr. Wright said students with disabilities generally learn best in general education classrooms, which means that we must better equip general education teachers to support their learning. Dr. Johnson said that means we must go to colleges and universities to ensure they are instructing future teachers in this pedagogy. Dr. Lewis asked about ensuring our assessment RFP looks for vendors that offer sensitivities toward types of disabilities.

Dr. Michael asked about the implications of widening gaps on classroom instruction. Dr. Michael also asked about the State Board receiving this analysis for MCAP.

2024 COHORT GRADUATION RATE DATA (INFORMATION ONLY)

Mr. Sanderson provided an overview of four- and five-year adjusted cohort graduation rates. The four-year cohort rate was 87.6%, compared to the national average of 87%. In 2023, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, white, students of two or more racial groups, and female students' graduation rates exceeded the state average. The five-year cohort graduation rate was slightly lower in the 2022-2023 school year than prior year. The four-year cohort dropout rate has remained fairly stable since 2015, around 8%. Black and Hispanic students each represented about 40% of the students that dropped out in 2024. More than 62% of students in the 2023 graduating class enrolled in postsecondary education within 12 months, slightly higher than the prior year, though still lower than pre-pandemic. The majority of students that enroll in college attend public institutions; four-year institutions; and in-state institutions.

Ms. Medina asked if the postsecondary outcomes included students enrolling in trade schools outside of college and universities. Ms. McCusker also asked what the outcomes are for students going directly into careers and if certificated students are included in the cohort graduation rates. Dr. Lewis asked if we could get a disaggregated look at students who earn certificates. Mr. Sanderson said he will follow-up. Mr. Chesterfield asked for a breakdown in graduation rates by district. Mr. Sanderson said you can also find that information on the Maryland Report Card website. Mr. Greer asked about Hispanic students' fast-growing rates and what we can elevate and learn from districts that have improved their graduation rates for these students. Dr. Michael asked what strategies we are utilizing to close the gap between Hispanic and white students' graduation rates as we enter into this era of heightened fear related to immigration. Dr. Michael also asked for side-by-side, year-over-year comparison for each of the LEAs.

EDUCATOR WORKFORCE OVERVIEW (INFORMATION ONLY)

Mr. Sanderson and Ms. Meadows provided an overview of Maryland's teacher workforce, which is majority white. The state's attrition rate decreased by 1.3% in school year 2024-2025. Teacher vacancies declined by 17% this school year.

Dr. Goldson asked about the state's targeted support to recruit and retain Hispanic teachers. Dr. Michael asked about the state of the teacher workforce in community schools and if the National Board Certification (NBC) incentive is directing teachers into more low-performing schools. Ms. Chang asked if there was any increase in teacher recruitment from neighboring states. Ms. Meadows said MSDE does not track the number of employed teachers from out of state working in school districts. Dr. Michael asked if we could bring in the data on teacher licensure applications Maryland receives from out of state.

PRE-K EXPANSION GRANT AND EXCELS RATING UPDATES (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Smith, Ms. Phillips, and Dr. Washington of MSDE provided an overview of the mixed delivery model of pre-K in Maryland, the Pre-K Expansion Grant, and Maryland EXCELS. The Pre-K Expansion Grant is a competitive grant program that provides funding for districts and private providers to administer high-quality pre-kindergarten and school readiness services throughout the State for three-year-old and four-year-old students from families with household incomes up to 300% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Maryland EXCELS is the state quality rating and improvement system for early childhood education providers including licensed child care programs, registered family homes, and public pre-kindergarten programs (local education agencies). Currently 70% of eligible licensed child care programs - including registered family child care homes - are participating in Maryland EXCELS. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future requires all public schools and any child care programs wishing to provide Public Pre-K services to publish a Maryland EXCELS Quality Rating 5 within five years of receiving funds.

STATE BOARD ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 12:00pm, Dr. Michael called for a motion to adjourn to an Executive Session. Ms. McCusker motioned, Mr. Chesterfield seconded. (In Favor: 12, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 2)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to § 3-305(b)(7) and (13) of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon motion of Rachel McCusker and seconded by Chet Chesterfield and with unanimous approval, the State Board of Education met in closed session on Tuesday, February 25, 2025 in Conference Room #1, 8 th Floor, at the Nancy S. Grasmick Building. All board members were present. Xiomara Medina left at 12:50. Also in attendance were State Superintendent Carey Wright, Executive Director Zachary Hands, Deputy Executive Director Hannah Oakley, and Assistant Attorneys General Elliott Schoen and Jackie LaFiandra. The Executive Session commenced at 12:04 p.m. and ended at 1:45 p.m.

The State Board reviewed and approved five Opinions and two Orders.

- *D.E. and J.E. v. St. Mary's County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-08. The Board affirmed the local board's decision denying request for grade change.
- *In the Matter of Request for Removal of Local Board Member Stephen Whisler* – Opinion No. 25-09. The Board declined to issue charges for removal.
- *Andrew Rowden v. Carroll County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-10. The Board affirmed the local board's decision excluding the Appellant from substitute teaching at any CCPS schools in the future.
- *S.P. and K.S. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-11. The Board affirmed the local board's decision denying literacy enrichment and placement in the lottery pool.
- *Holly Thomas v. Prince George's County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-12. The Board adopted the ALJ's Proposed Decision and affirmed the local board's decision of suspending the Appellant from her position for three days without pay on the grounds of misconduct in office.
- *Autoflex Fleet, Inc. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Order No. OR25-03. The Board remanded this matter again to the local board to issue a decision with rationale consistent with the Opinion of the Appellate Court of Maryland and consistent with this Order.
- *Anna Hinton v. Frederick County Board of Education* – Order No. OR25-04. The Board stayed the consolidated appeals until such time that the circuit court case and any appeals are resolved.

President Michael gave updates to the Board.

Assistant Attorney General Elliott Schoen updated the Board regarding litigation.

COMAR 09.37.01.02 GED TESTING PROGRAM (PERMISSION TO ADOPT – MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR)

The Maryland Department of Labor presented proposed updated regulations that now allow for online assessment options for High School Equivalency test-takers, Spanish and English versions of tests, and expanding beyond only the GED to include other High School Equivalency tests. The State Board is required by statute to jointly adopt regulations governing this section of COMAR.

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the GED Testing Program regulations . Ms. McCusker motioned, Ms. Chang seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

COMAR 13A.12.05.05 ADMINISTRATOR LICENSURE (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

Ms. Meadows of MSDE shared that a statewide workgroup convened to draft these regulations for initial licensure for Administrator I/II. The most significant changes made by the workgroup were ending the two-tier structure and requiring an Administrator License for those who serve as supervisors of instruction, assistant principals, and principals. Additionally, the workgroup proposed eliminating the assessment requirement for those candidates who are prepared

through a Maryland-approved administrator licensure program or who demonstrate five years of effective performance as a principal in another state. Ms. McCusker shared that the Education Policy Committee voted unanimously to approve.

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the Administrator Licensure regulations. Ms. McCusker motioned, Mr. Chesterfield seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

REVIEW OF ESSER SPENDING AND FEDERAL GRANTS (INFORMATION ONLY)

Mr. Crawford emphasized the Education Transformation and Finance Committee's focus on connecting student outcomes to spending. Ms. Gunning and Mr. Tallur of MSDE presented a review of the categories and objects districts spent their federal COVID dollars on. Ms. Gunning then shared more about Maryland Leads initiative, a grant program to districts in utilizing the state set-aside from Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA) to implement one of seven high-value strategies. For federal grants more broadly, MSDE has cleaned up and brought up to date both federal spending data and reimbursement data.

MARYLAND INFANTS AND TODDLERS PROGRAM BRIEFING (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Hickman provided an update on Maryland's Infants and Toddlers Program, the state's early intervention program for children age three and younger. He added that Asian and Hispanic children are underrepresented in receiving early intervention, illustrating that equitable outreach is critical, which the regulations the Board passed on consent attempt to address. Maryland is one of five birth mandate states, meaning the state cannot charge families' fees or bill private insurance.

Dr. Lewis emphasized the importance of early intervention and the fact that it's free to families. Mr. Greer asked if there are any lessons to be learned about more closely connecting health and education systems. Ms. McCusker asked if the brochure and referral processes were available in other languages. The MSDE team affirmed selected languages are available. Ms. Chang asked what the state does for applicants that aren't eligible. MSDE staff shared that sometimes families don't respond since it is a voluntary program and rethinking communication and outreach. Mr. Chesterfield asked if there are any income restrictions for families. MSDE staff said there are not.

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

MSDE staff presented an overview of actions the legislative subgroup has taken this session and presented nine bills for the Board to approve positions on. The State Board voted to take positions on nine bills pending in the General Assembly.

- The State Board voted to **support** HB1006 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act), HB1025/SB0845 - Local Education Agencies - Educator Screening - NASDTEC Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act), and HB0807 - Information Technology -

Modernizing Data Governance - Office of Enterprise Data and Council for Open Data Advancement.

- The State Board voted to **support with amendments** SB0687/HB1121 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Youth Transitioning From Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program – Establishment, SB0906/HB1391 - Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Task Force, and HB1303 - Child Care Centers - Teacher Qualifications- Alterations.
- The State Board voted to **oppose** HB1326 - Prekindergarten Saving Account Program – Establishment, HB1264 - Public Schools- Mathematics Credit - College Preparatory Computer Science or Computer Programming Course, and HB1323 – Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement.

ACTION: Dr. Michael requested Board approval of the legislative session recommendations. Ms. McCusker motioned, Dr. Lewis seconded. (In Favor: 11, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 3)

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE DRAFT PREK-12 MATHEMATICS POLICY

The State Board received public comment on the draft Pre-K-12 Mathematics Policy. Dr. Michael explained the procedures and welcomed speakers. The following individuals provided comments:

- Manhar Dalal (In-Person)
- Ellie Mitchell – Maryland Out of School Time Network (In-Person)
- Liz Zogby – Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition (In-Person)
- Ryan Powers (Virtual)
- Paul Lemle – President, MSEA (Virtual)
- Dr. Zamira Simkins – BCPS Citizens Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Education (Virtual)
- Jacob Bennett (Virtual)

STATE BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Ms. McCusker announced the next Education Policy Committee will be held on March 13th at 4 pm, and Mr. Crawford announced that the Education Transformation and Finance Committee will be held on March 11th at 4 pm. Mr. Greer shared a brief update on the Workgroup on Early Childhood Education and Care’s first meeting where the group discussed the release of the Market Rate Survey and the Joint Policy on Pre-K with the AIB.

FUTURE BOARD AGENDA ITEMS

The stakeholder group for March will be Arts Education in Maryland Schools.

LEGAL OPINIONS AND ORDERS

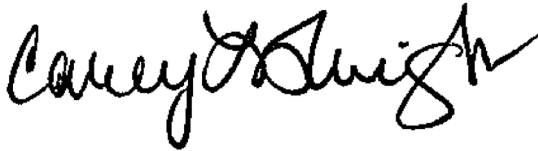
Mr. Schoen announced the following opinions and orders:

- *D.E. and J.E. v. St. Mary’s County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-08
- *In the Matter of Request for Removal of Local Board Member Stephen Whisler* – Opinion No. 25-09

- *Andrew Rowden v. Carroll County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-10
- *S.P. and K.S. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-11
- *Holly Thomas v. Prince George’s County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-12
- *Autoflex Fleet, Inc. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Order No. OR25-03
- *Anna Hinton v. Frederick County Board of Education* – Order No. OR25-04

Dr. Johnson motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Chesterfield. With no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



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

Date: March 25, 2025

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, March 25, 2025**.

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.