

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools

DATE: May 29, 2025

SUBJECT: Career Ladder Policy: Level 4 Pilots



Purpose

The purpose of this item is to adopt a joint policy with the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) that establishes the criteria for local education agencies (LEAs) to participate in a Level Four Teacher Leadership pilot during the 2025-2026 school year.

Background

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future establishes a career ladder for educators that incentivizes earning National Board Certification, encourages teachers to become teacher leaders, and provides a framework for teachers to engage in professional learning opportunities, collaborate with colleagues, and support struggling students.

Local education agencies (LEAs), in agreement with local employee representatives, were required to submit Levels one through three of their career ladder to the AIB in 2024. LEAs and their teachers' union partners are required to submit Level Four of the Teacher Leader Track by July 2025. Md Code, Education §6-1004 establishes the minimum percentages of teaching time for Level Four teachers. The statute requires Lead Teachers to teach 50% of their working time and Distinguished Teachers to teach 40% of their time.

Preliminary feedback from Level Four pilots conducted by LEAs during the 2024-2025 school year suggests that the minimum teaching time requirements for the Lead and Distinguished Teacher positions do not provide sufficient time for those teachers to perform their roles on a regular basis.

Executive Summary

This joint policy provides implementation guidance for LEAs and partners to pilot Level Four teacher roles and responsibilities with a minimum teaching time of less than 50% during the 2025-2026 school year. This will allow the Maryland State Department of Education to collect additional data regarding the time needed for Level Four teachers to successfully fulfill their career ladder duties while at the same time maintaining their connection to the classroom. The AIB and State Board of Education (SBOE) will use this information to inform possible recommendations for changes to the career ladder that may require legislation.

The AIB granted permission to adopt the career ladder joint policy during their May 15, 2025, meeting.

Action Required

The MSDE is requesting that the SBOE adopt Joint Policy #4, Career Ladder.

Attachments

Draft Joint Implementation Policy #4, Career Ladder
Presentation

Career Ladder

Joint Implementation Policy #4
Blueprint for Maryland 's Future

May 2025



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Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools

Table of Contents

Background	3
Discussion	3
Policy Statements	4

Draft

Background

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future established a career ladder for educators to incentivize teachers to stay in the classroom and to provide professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders embedded in the regular working schedule to support time for teachers to collaborate with their colleagues, and participate in professional learning to identify students who are not progressing, design interventions to support those students, and work with students one-on-one and in small groups to provide interventions to lead to improved outcomes for students.

Local education agencies (LEAs) in agreement with local employee representatives were required to submit Levels 1 through 3 of their Career Ladder to the State Board of Education (SBOE) and the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) in 2024; all 24 career ladders have been approved by the AIB. LEAs and their teachers' union partners must submit Level 4 of the Teacher Leader Track (excluding Tier 3 - Professor Distinguished Teacher) by July 2025. A few LEAs included piloting Level 4 of the career ladder in their 2024 submission in order to identify what roles/responsibilities and scheduling works to support the Lead Teacher (Tier I) and Distinguished Lead Teacher (Tier II) positions. The statute requires Tier I teachers to teach 50% of their working time and 40% of time for Tier II positions, which includes collaborative time for all teachers.

The AIB and SBOE have deferred submission of Level 4 of the School Leader/Administrator Track and other required components of the career ladder pending further policy and guidance.

Discussion

Preliminary feedback from the Level 4 pilots conducted by LEAs during the 2024-2025 school year suggest that the teaching time expectations for Tier I and II positions in the law do not provide sufficient time for those teachers to perform their career ladder roles on a regular basis. The AIB and SBOE do not believe that asking LEAs and teachers to implement infeasible goals, particularly in light of the "pause" or "pacing" of collaborative time for all teachers, will lead to successful implementation of the career ladder.

This joint policy provides implementation guidance for local school districts and partners to pilot Level 4 teacher roles and responsibilities with a minimum teaching time of less than 50% during the 2025-2026 school year in order to provide additional data regarding the time needed for Level 4 teachers to successfully fulfill their career ladder duties while at the same time maintaining their connection to the classroom

by teaching at least one course/subject. The AIB and SBOE will use this information to inform possible recommendations for changes to the career ladder that may require legislation.

Policy Statements

The AIB and SBOE establish the following implementation direction to pilot Level 4 of the career ladder for teachers during the 2025-2026 school year to identify innovative and feasible models to meet the goals of the career ladder:

1. For the purpose of this policy, “teacher or co-teacher” means a teacher (including a multilingual learner or special education teacher) who delivers instruction and is responsible for a student’s or group of students’ academic progress in a Pre-K-12 public school setting.
2. Level 4 Lead and Distinguished Lead Teachers shall be a teacher or co-teacher for at least one course/subject for all marking periods, which means being the teacher or co-teacher of record for a course/subject. The maximum time that a Lead or Distinguished Lead Teacher may teach is 50% on average as specified in Md. Ann. Code, Ed § 6-1004.
3. Teachers who participate in Level 4 pilots are eligible to receive the salary increase in Md. Ann. Code, Ed § 6-1009 if they are a teacher or co-teacher for at least one course/subject for all marking periods and meet other career ladder requirements.
4. Lead and Distinguished Lead Teachers are not required to teach the same students, course, or subject throughout the school year.
5. The AIB and SBOE will review the results of Level 4 pilots during the 2025-2026 school year to inform any recommendations to modify the statutory requirements for teaching time on Level 4 of the Teacher Leader Track.

ADOPTED:

ISIAH LEGGETT

DATE

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Educator Effectiveness

Career Ladder Policy: Level 4 Pilot

May 29, 2025

Presented By | Kelly Meadows, Assistant State Superintendent

A photograph of a smiling female teacher with curly blonde hair, wearing a green shirt, giving a high-five to a young student with curly dark hair wearing a yellow and black striped shirt. They are in a classroom with other students in the background.

Presentation Outline

1. Legislative Session Update
2. July 2025 Submission Requirements
3. Implementation Challenges
4. Policy Recommendations

Career Ladder Status Update

- **Funding for collaborative planning is paused until FY29**
 - Three-year operational pause to collaborative time; school systems begin implementation in 2029
 - In FY26, funding at \$163 per pupil remains in place as a portion of the foundation per pupil allocation
 - In FY27 and FY28, funding is paused, although the foundation in these years will include the \$163 per pupil amount from FY26 and increase by the inflation factor
 - In FY29, when implementation begins, school systems receive \$334 per pupil for the program
- **Career Ladder development and implementation do not pause**
 - On July 1, 2024, LEAs submitted plans for Levels 1-3*
 - On July 1, 2025, LEAs must submit a plan for the Level 4 Teacher Leadership track
 - LEAs are not required to implement Level 4 roles during the 2025-2026 school year

*LEAs were not required to include the Assistant Principal role with the 2024 submission

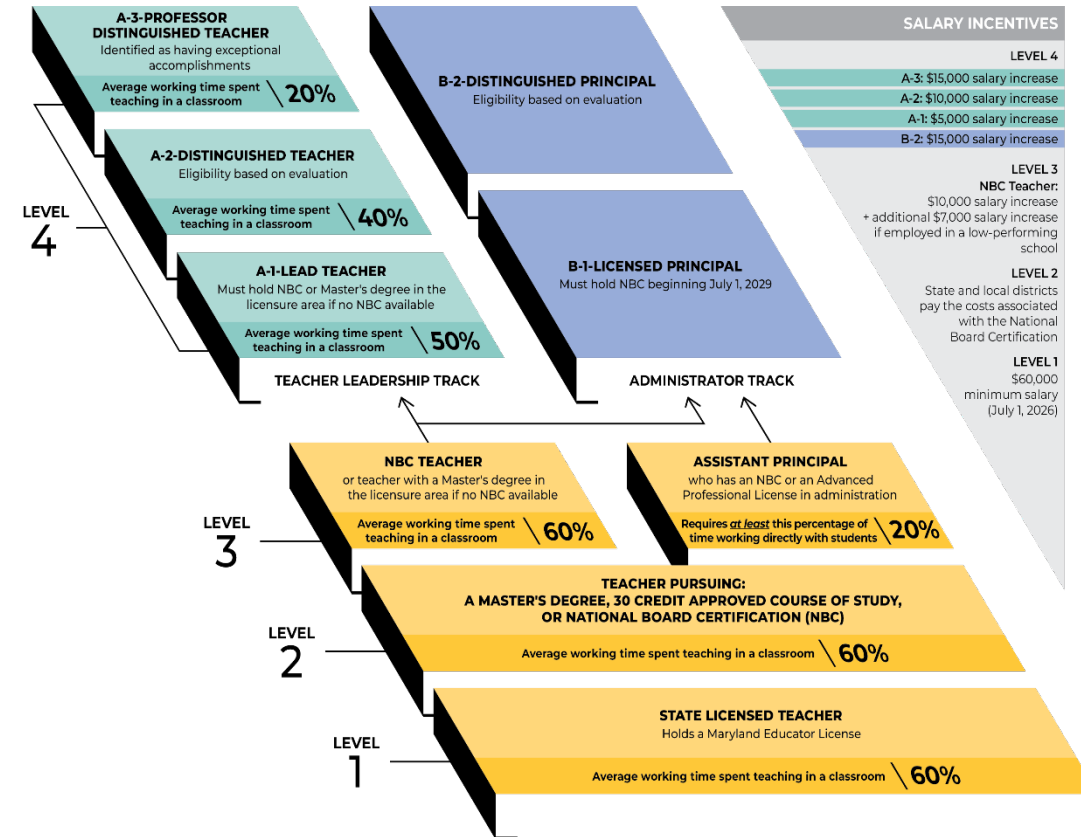
Career Ladder Submission

The July 1st submission requires LEAs to provide their plan for the following:

- Roles and responsibilities for teachers on Level 4 (excluding Professor Distinguished Teacher)
- Requirements for movement up the ladder
- Salary information
- Technical components

Career ladder components deferred to a later day:

- 8-Year plan to phase in collaborative time
- Professor Distinguished Teacher
- Teacher evaluation and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) system
- Level 3 Assistant Principal
- School Leader/Administrator Track



Lead Teacher Pilots



Implementation Challenges

- 50% teaching load is difficult
- The time it takes to plan, grade, collaborate with families, and support struggling learners leaves little time for Lead Teacher activities
- Lead Teachers did not have enough time to plan for coaching and engage with new and struggling teachers
- Insufficient number of NBCTs to fill Lead Teacher roles

Level 4 Pilot

Provide districts with the opportunity to pilot the Lead and Distinguished Teacher roles

1

**Experiment with
Level 4
implementation
across school
settings and grade
levels**

2

**Monitor and
analyze pilot data
to inform future
recommendations**

3

**Lessons learned
from pilots will
shape effective
implementation
across the State**

Career Ladder Policy

- Establish a policy **in partnership with the Accountability and Implementation Board** that allows districts to **pilot the Level 4 Teacher Leadership level** of the career ladder
- Define **minimum and maximum thresholds** for Level 4 Lead and Distinguished teachers:
 - Must be a **teacher or co-teacher** who delivers instruction and is responsible for a student's or a group of students' academic progress in a PK-12 public school setting
 - Shall be a teacher or co-teacher for **at least one course/subject for all marking periods**
 - The **maximum average** amount of time a Level 4 teacher may teach is **50%**
- Districts that choose to implement a pilot will **receive funding for Level 4 teachers who meet the criteria** established in the policy
- The SBOE and AIB will review the results of the Level 4 pilots during the 2025-2026 school year to **inform recommendations to modify the statutory requirements**

Questions