Building Bridges for a Better Future

Together, We Move Forward

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

Preparing for the future, as we overcome the challenges of today.

As I write this, education is still experiencing disruption as a result of the global pandemic. Yet I am confident in our ability to exit this turbulent period stronger, a confidence grounded in the strength of our strategy, the progress of our transformation, and the resilience of students, MSDE staff, educators and support staff.

Uncertainty and isolation impacted us all with the onslaught of the COVID-19 virus. Education had to adapt, innovate and overcome. Working together with local school systems, continuity of learning plans were developed and implemented. Food services adapted to continue providing needed meals and child care provided services for essential employees. A recovery plan, with stakeholder input, continues to be updated. I am pleased to report that the majority of our local school systems have been providing opportunities for in-person learning since March.

As we do the reactive work of meeting the challenges of this current global pandemic, the proactive work of building for the future continues. It requires the combined efforts of parents, students, teachers, administrators, government, business and stakeholders. We have seen what can be accomplished when we all work together and we must continue our work building the bridges to a successful future for our students.

This publication provides an overview of some of the accomplishments during my tenure as State Superintendent, as well as new initiatives implemented this year. During my tenure we have made a series of decisive moves to support future growth. MSDE has been restructured to be more service-oriented and productive in order to lead the State's educational programs. A regionalized approach was initiated, resulting in a more effective outreach to local school systems. All Divisions at MSDE are functioning as a cohesive team and are providing the synergy to accomplish the hard work ahead.

A Research Department was created and expanded. The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) has been developed, providing a more effective, timely and efficient method to measure student achievement. Initiation of a High School Graduation Task Force to address outdated graduation standards resulted in course requirement changes/additions and utilizing State assessments in calculating grades at the end of the appropriate course. Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH) expanded through new grants and ongoing technical assistance. Implementation of the strategic initiative in special education resulted in an increase in the graduation rate of students with disabilities by 7.5%, and 68% of students in third-grade who received early intervention no longer need special education services. A curriculum vetting process for English Language Arts and the mathematics curriculum was established, and a root-cause analysis has been completed for Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI) schools.

The more than two years of work on Maryland's Every Student Succeeds Plan resulted in the publication of the Maryland Accountability Report Card, offering parents and stakeholders the most information and data about individual schools in State history. We reached out across the State gathering stakeholder feedback, holding focus groups, completing a listening tour and utilizing an on-line survey – resulting in more than 3,000 responses.

Propelled by the importance of equity and excellence for Maryland students, equity is being infused as an overarching construct. An Equity Coalition has been formed to work together on specific equity initiatives with local school systems and other stakeholders. An equity regulation has been developed and approved by the State Board.

Looking forward, a regional approach to support local schools systems with Mental Health is being implemented. Acceleration academies will be initiated. Monitoring teams will provide accountability and technical assistance. Complex problems cannot be solved by technology alone, but we will seize the opportunities associated with technology and digital learning.

I am excited about our ability to emerge stronger as the world recovers from the effects of the global health crisis. I am proud of the work MSDE has done to bring us to this point and grateful for support from our stakeholders on the journey. I would like to thank our staff for their tireless dedication. I am also encouraged by what I have observed in each of our 24 school systems. During my tenure I have visited over 290 schools. Each visit has reflected effective techniques, strategies, resources and innovative ideas by educators. I always left these visits inspired by the energy, enthusiasm and potential of our students.

It has been the privilege of my life to lead MSDE during this time of unprecedented challenge and significant transformation. I am honored to have had the opportunity to lead education for Maryland and enormously proud of the work accomplished by my staff at MSDE. With the foundational resources to meet the challenges of the day and the vision to meet the challenges of the future, the journey continues.

Providing our students with an excellent education is the goal we all share and I believe MSDE is essential in meeting that goal. I invite you to continue on this journey with MSDE, each of us doing our part to build bridges for the future success of our students.

Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.

– Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

The MSDE website displays helpful COVID-19 resources and updates.

> "Our priority during this uncertain time is to keep the classroom accessible to our students while also keeping them safe… We are pleased to support efforts by these institutions to bridge gaps created by the pandemic, and maintain connections between educators and students as we navigate learning in an online environment together.
>
> – Dr. Karen B. Salmon
> *State Superintendent of Schools, 2020*

Resilience and Transformation

Over the past year under the tireless guidance of State Superintendent Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) led the response to the historic education and child care challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

MSDE worked relentlessly through the public health crisis to secure the safety, care, and nourishment of children; continue learning; and provide financial and other supports to local school systems. After Governor Larry Hogan declared a State of Emergency, and eventually closed public schools on March 16, 2020, as well as child care 11 days later, MSDE immediately pivoted to engage students through virtual learning and constructed an entirely new essential personnel child care program. Demonstrating resilience and a spirit of innovation, the MSDE team researched, created and implemented two recovery plans: one for public education and another for the child care community. Prioritizing our children, MSDE, along with stakeholders and partners, proved that we are better and stronger together.

CONTINUITY OF LEARNING

Together with partners, MSDE led an entirely new education campaign, moving learning from physical school buildings and classrooms to an all new, uncharted, virtual domain. Each local school system developed a continuity of learning plan that MSDE collected and evaluated using a rubric. From live video chats to social media engagement, local school systems and teachers provided asynchronous and synchronous lessons to students. MSDE harnessed the experience of its Digital Task Force, which guided the transition to online learning with the expansion of broadband, distribution of devices and new learning management systems, security efforts and professional development classes. To support special education in the virtual and hybrid environments, MSDE established five statewide regulatory committees and developed Technical Assistance Bulletins (TABs) to support local school systems and Public Agencies (PAs) with special education provisions. Additionally, the State Board took actions and approved several waivers to support continuity of learning, graduation requirements, and statewide testing mandates.

OFFERING CHILD CARE AND NOURISHMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the landscape of child care more dramatically than any other phenomenon in the history of our State. Just three days after child care programs closed on March 27, 2020, in accordance with the State of Emergency, MSDE's Division of Early Child Care opened Essential Personnel Child Care Programs (EPCC) and Essential Personnel School Age Programs (EPSA) to serve essential persons and first responders on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. In effect, child care providers became the foundation of Maryland's pandemic mitigation and recovery efforts. In a massive communications effort, MSDE guided child care providers and parents through the new programs and the safe care of children during the pandemic. By the end of April, MSDE early childhood team worked together with over 3,700 child care providers to provide care for more than 25,000 children across the State. Including payment for invoiced child care and two grants for COVID-19 operating costs, the State invested more than $95 million in grants, scholarships and other initiatives to support child care programs going forward. Further federal funding provides an additional $252.8 million for child care stabilization grants, as well

Daycare and child care safety recommendations and protocols were drafted and implemented at centers all over the State. Mask-wearing, sanitization, and other public health mitigation strategies have allowed Maryland children to continue growing and learning in a safe environment.

Emergency school meals in Carroll County are prepared and ready for distribution to families and students.

> Serving millions of meals on the frontlines since the pandemic began, our school nutrition program staff are truly heroes. They are making school meals safe for in-person learning, and continue to serve emergency meals as well... As part of National School Lunch Hero Day, we are proud to recognize our school nutrition teams' unwavering commitment to nourishing our State's children.
>
> - Governor Larry Hogan

as child care scholarships to assist low-income families.

RECOVERY PLANS AND REOPENING SCHOOLS AND CHILD CARE

To prepare for in-person learning and the reopening of school buildings, MSDE, alongside education and health partners, developed a framework to envision the opening of schools in an environment that is safe for students, educators and school staff. The Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education addresses processes and procedures during the current COVID-19 pandemic and also provides a roadmap for future instances of school closures. One of the first comprehensive plans of its kind in the country, Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education was drafted in collaboration with the State Board, local school superintendents, and with input from a wide array of stakeholders throughout our State. The document lays the groundwork for improved online learning opportunities, provides models for hybrid and in-person learning, and identifies methods for recovering lost instruction time.

MSDE also prepared a recovery plan for child care to provide early childhood caregivers guidance as they continue to serve Maryland's children. The plan supported the reopening of child care and provided educational and developmentally appropriate environments conducive to learning and growth, while maintaining the health and safety for children, staff, and parents. MSDE remains committed to supporting child care access in order to maintain equitable learning opportunities for all families.

EMERGENCY MEALS

Immediately recognizing that school closures would significantly impact children who depend upon free and reduced school meals, MSDE collaborated with local school systems and other State agencies to provide safe, emergency grab-and-go meals to children. From mid-March through the end of December 2020, local school systems and Maryland agencies served more than 46 million emergency school meals. Just over a year from the beginning of the pandemic, more than 81 million school meals were served through all programs.

INVESTING IN RECOVERY

To support the State and local school systems recovery plans, MSDE has provided financial support with the distribution of federal funds to provide the necessary resources and tools to help Maryland educators and students move forward. In addition to the initial $400 million delivered by the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund through the Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, MSDE provided another $780 million in federal relief for school systems from ESSER II through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) to address the effects of the pandemic.

The funding, totaling $1.2 billion, has been allocated to devices and connectivity, materials and supplies to reopen schools, and measures to combat learning loss with strategies such as intense tutoring. MSDE has swiftly and effectively distributed these funds to local school systems, and is developing monitoring teams to ensure that funds are utilized appropriately.

Additionally, the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act provided another $1.75 billion to Maryland Schools to address learning loss. MSDE set aside $195 million for interventions to address learning loss, summer enrichment programs, afterschool programs, administration and future use.

$347.8 million

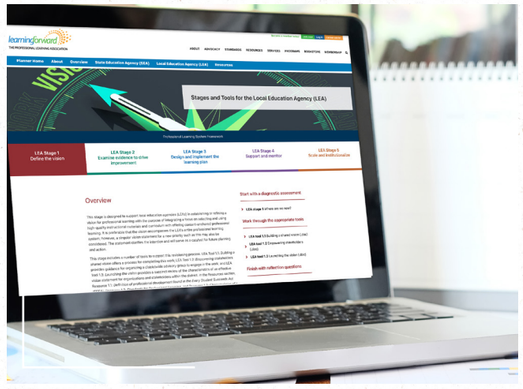
in overall funding to support child care programs, scholarships and other initiatives during the pandemic

- $95 million in grants, scholarships and other initiatives
- $252.8 million for child care stabilization grants and scholarships to assist low-income families

> We must approach equity with urgency so that all children can realize the promise of public education. The importance of educational equity and its relationship to educational excellence is highlighted in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) logo, but more importantly, it is, and must continue to be, evident in our work.
>
> – Dr. Karen B. Salmon
> *State Superintendent of Schools, 2020*

Through specific recommendations for local school systems and schools, the MSDE Equity Guidebook provides a roadmap to actuate equity regulations adopted under State Superintendent Dr. Karen B. Salmon.

Equity in Education Excellence



MSDE worked with the international non-profit Learning Forward to develop and pilot a national toolkit designed to help implement Title II, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Learn more at essa.learningforward.org

Educational Equity has been a cornerstone of the work and mission of MSDE. Under Dr. Salmon's leadership MSDE collaborated with the Maryland Network for Equity and Excellence in Education, which included representatives from each local school system, to develop new regulations making equity a matter of policy and priority.

In 2019, the State Board of Education adopted the new regulations. The regulations require each local school system to develop an educational equity policy, and each year local school systems must address implementation of their equity policies. MSDE and the Maryland Network for Equity and Excellence in Education created the Maryland Educational Equity Guidebook, which includes strategies and resources for implementation of equity initiatives.

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ADVANCED COURSEWORK

MSDE has collaborated with Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) to build a culture of rigor, belonging, and success in Advanced Placement courses through College Board by finding and enrolling students of color and those from low-income backgrounds. EOS contributes: onsite technical assistance to analyze data; strategy to reach and recruit students; as well as ongoing planning support, data tools, and enrollment tracking.

Local system participation in the program continues to grow with 51 schools in 11 local school systems. Together with local system partners, EOS provides student coaching, enhances belonging and growth, and facilitates staff workshops. Promoting equity at the highest levels, EOS articulates a shared vision, models the way with visible commitment, challenges the status quo, and empowers staff, students and parents to contribute to the program.

EQUITY MULTIPLIER TOOLKIT

The international non-profit professional learning organization, Learning Forward, the MSDE Title II Office and three additional state education agencies developed, piloted, and revised a national toolkit designed to help support local school systems with the implementation of Title II, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Under ESSA, states have the opportunity and responsibility to expend allocated funds using cycles of continuous

51 Schools

in 11 local school systems participate in the MSDE and Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) program that focuses on finding and enrolling students of color and those from low-income backgrounds into Advanced Placement courses

Through equity-focused guidance and practices, MSDE is working together with local school systems to dismantle barriers and ensure that all students feel valued and welcomed at school.

improvement. ESSA also prioritizes servicing students who are historically disadvantaged and the need for equitable student access to excellent teaching. This toolkit assists state and local school systems in making strategic, evidence-based decisions when designing plans for meeting the needs of their students and teachers. Maryland's Title IIA team played an integral role in the toolkit's content development. Additionally, three local school systems piloted resources from the toolkit and provided valuable feedback on implementation. The partnership produced a robust resource that will be used across the nation to improve teaching and learning.

EXPANDING EQUITY IN CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

To fully understand student participation and equity in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming, MSDE began reporting enrollment and performance trend analysis in data dashboards for local school systems and community colleges that disaggregate data by student groups (e.g., gender, race, and various special populations). The data dashboards provide a foundation for school systems and community colleges to address inequities in CTE. In addition, MSDE developed new procedures through Methods of Administration that local school systems and community colleges must use to ensure equitable learning experiences for CTE students.

GT DISCOVER

MSDE was awarded a five-year federal grant to help increase the number of students gaining access to gifted education programs throughout the state. With the help of the $1.6 million Javits Gifted and Talented Education Grant, MSDE created GT Discover, a set of online tools to help educators, families, and researchers better identify and serve students historically underrepresented in gifted education classes.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON EQUITY

The English Language Arts Office offered professional learning to ELA supervisors to develop antiracist curriculum. The sessions were guided by guest facilitators and the use of Council of Chief State School Officers resources.

> "Thank you for offering this series of Professional Development Classes. I am very happy I participated and cannot wait to incorporate what I have learned into my curriculum.
>
> This was so wonderful and I loved that the presenter gave us many examples of lessons that can be implemented right away, as well as sparking creativity for ways to adapt lessons.
>
> – Summer Professional Development Participant Feedback

At a capstone of the MSDE's Summer Professional Development courses addressing Equity and Social Justice, renowned poet and artist Nikki Giovanni shared her perspective and experiences in art and education to address social justice.

MSDE also offered Summer Professional Development courses addressing Social-Emotional Learning, and Equity and Social Justice. The course served as a primer workshop for educators looking to take ownership of key terminology to launch them into a deeper understanding of educational equity, bias, and inclusion. The series also included a lecture by Nikki Giovanni, one of America's foremost poets, who shared her perspective about the role of art and education in social justice, as well as her reflections of the Black Arts Movement.

$1.6 million

awarded to the State by the Javits Gifted and Talented Education Grant

900+

educators and stakeholders registered to hear "Nikki Giovanni Speaks"

Governor Hogan visits Advanced Manufacturing Engineering Lab at Washington County Technical High School to engage with Maryland's career and technical education students.

> "I would tell an incoming freshman to take a CTE program. With so many choices, I am sure they can find one that focuses on their interests in what they plan on doing in the future. CTE helps to expand your knowledge base and prepare you to go out into the real working world. CTE classes allow you to get the real feeling of the field or industry.
>
> – Jenny R.
> *Student, Glen Burnie High School*

Education That Works

Empowering and preparing the next generation to take on in-demand, high-skilled and high-waged jobs is possible through Maryland's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program.

Pairing academic knowledge and technical skills and cultivating partnerships with industry partners, CTE provides a pathway for students to reach success. The students earn industry-recognized certificates, acquire college credits, and gain valuable work experience – before graduating high school.

FUELING HIGH-IMPACT CTE

Maryland's nationally-renowned CTE program is a result of years of work and expansion. MSDE completed the Maryland Four-Year Career and Technical Education State Plan; it guides the strategic direction for CTE and was one of the first to be approved by the U.S. Department of Education in April 2020. The revised vision and direction for CTE is grounded in the broad range of coursework that paves the way for entry and advancement in specific career choices.

MSDE provides leadership, support, and technical assistance to local school systems and community colleges to provide students with CTE curriculum, tools, resources, and hands-on experiences. Implementing high-quality programs to prepare Maryland students for the workforce of tomorrow, there are more than 60 CTE programs of study.

State regulations were revised to strengthen CTE, ensuring each student has access and opportunities to engage in CTE programs of study that: align to high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand careers; lead to earning industry-recognized and/or postsecondary credentials that will allow entrance or advancement in a specific career cluster; and provide career-based learning experiences that require the application of academic and technical knowledge and skills in a work setting. Most exciting, MSDE has launched a progression of work-based learning sequences (called a continuum) to guide schools and community colleges and engage students across a wide variety of career fields from elementary through post-secondary study.

State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Karen B. Salmon, State Board of Education President Clarence Crawford, and members of the Board visit John Hanson Middle School's robotics class room.

Over the last five years, the following new CTE programs have been implemented in school systems:

- Apple Mobile Apps and Software Development
- Junior Reserves Officers' Training Corps for each branch of the military
- Artificial Intelligence and Cloud Computing
- Aeronautics, Aviation, Aerospace Science, and Technology (Locally Developed)

PATHWAYS IN TECHNOLOGY EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL (P-TECH)

CTE has greatly enhanced and is expanding the new P-TECH program. It employs innovative early college programs that create clear pathways from high school to college and careers for students from all academic backgrounds. In six years or less, students graduate with a high school diploma and a no-cost, two-year Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree.

Each P-TECH program requires a partnership among three entities: a local school system, a local institution of higher education, and a local employer. Over the last five years, P-TECH expanded to include nine programs in six Maryland school systems, with more than 1000 students enrolled.

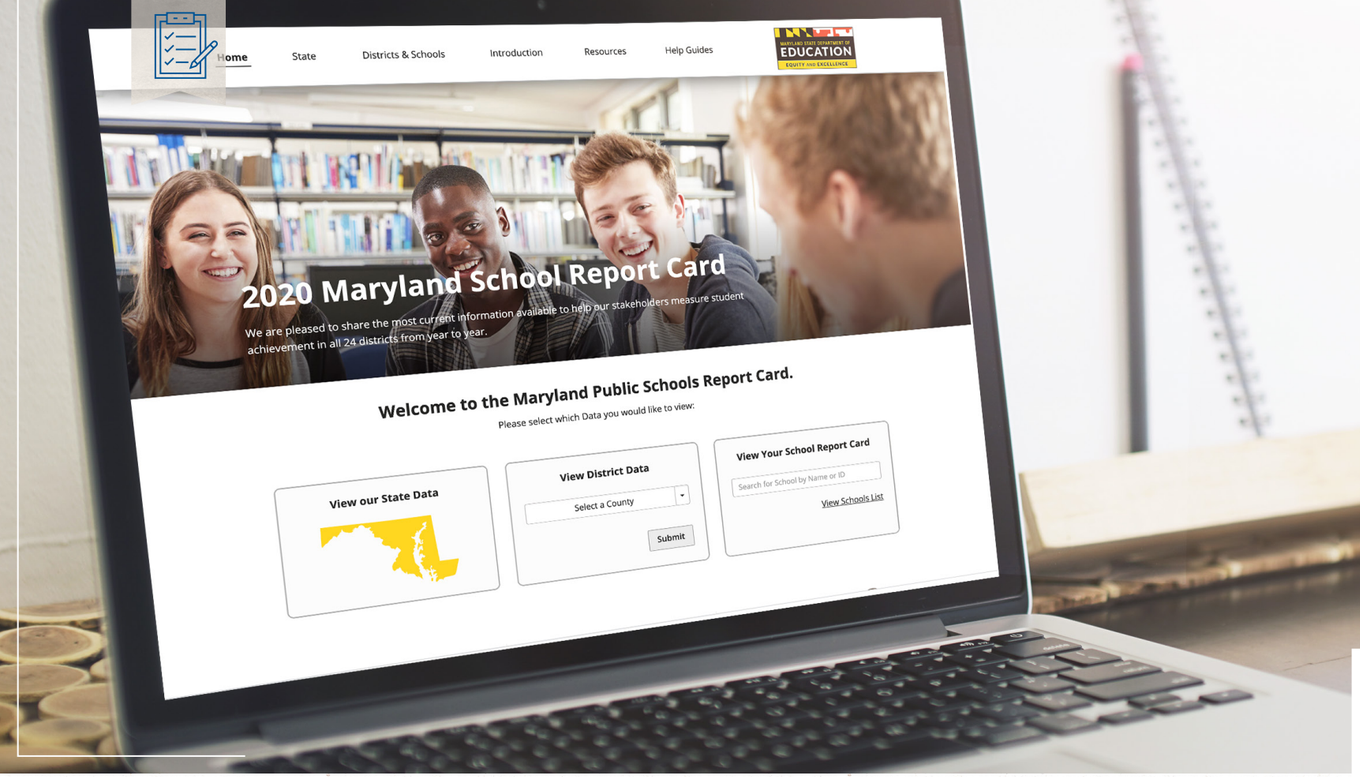
Students can earn degrees and engage in work-based learning in career fields such as: Transportation Technology; Health and Biosciences; Information Technology; Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology; Consumer Services; and Hospitality and Tourism.

School systems with P-TECH Programs include Baltimore City and Allegany, Baltimore, Harford, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties.

APPRENTICESHIP MARYLAND

The Apprenticeship Maryland Career and Technical Education (CTE) program of study offers school-to-work opportunities that bridge the gap between academics and careers.

Youth apprentices earn livable wages and receive on-site career training as they complete their high school diplomas. Over the last five years, participation in the Apprenticeship Maryland Program (AMP) has grown to 20 school systems and 182 employers. More than 60 students completed the AMP program and 74 students are registered as youth apprentices.



> "Education is and will always remain our number one priority, and we owe it to Maryland families to provide them with as much information as possible to make informed decisions about their children's education… The new Maryland Report Card will provide parents, teachers, and students with critical information about our schools and enhance transparency and accountability in our education system.
>
> – Governor Larry Hogan

Accountability Drives Success

Maryland's mission is to provide every student with a world-class education that ensures readiness for college and careers is guided by a strategic roadmap grounded in data, accountability, and transparency.

MSDE's long history of excellence and accountability for school and student performance is evident in its modernized approaches. Refining standards and requirements, enhancing assessments, and expanding reporting– these methods establish a system of accountability to better drive the success of our schools and ensure that we are serving all students.

A NEW REPORT CARD FOR MARYLAND SCHOOLS

MSDE introduced a major upgrade of the Maryland Report Card website (MdReportCard.org) providing educators, parents, and stakeholders with the most comprehensive picture of school and school system performance in State history. The Maryland Report Card, based on the State's plan for the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), was published in 2018, the result of nearly two years of planning and preparation.

Including a broad selection of performance indicators, the Maryland Report Card helps measure how schools are doing. In addition to student success and growth on State tests in English Language Arts and mathematics, the Maryland Report Card factors in progress in achieving English language proficiency for English Learners, reducing chronic absenteeism, preparation for postsecondary success, access to a well-rounded curriculum and graduation rate.

The Maryland Report Card offers detailed information on school success, including high school graduation data.

The Maryland Report Card website and the School Report Cards are designed to ignite conversation, innovative ideas, and solutions for Maryland schools. Teachers and administrators should use these tools to inform their programs and target improvements. Parents and stakeholders can use these tools to ask questions of school and district leaders, especially about plans to improve the results. For state and district leaders, these tools provide information about where resources and supports are most needed in schools and districts.

Enhancements to the Maryland School Report Card include:

- Educator Qualification information by high- and low-poverty schools, including the number and percentage of teachers and leaders who are inexperienced, using an emergency credential, or teaching out of field (2018-2019)
- School-level Per Pupil Expenditure by funding source, including educator salary information (2018-2019)

86.8 %

2020, four-year cohort graduation rate

increase of 4 percentage points from 2011 (82.8%)

Accountability Drives Success

Students with disabilities and students who are English language learners saw improved four-year graduation rates and decreased dropout rates

> In order to best support our students in recovering from the pandemic, it is critical that we determine the level of student content understanding as we move into the upcoming school year. The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) tests will provide data to educators and families about what their students know and understand from the previous school year which will inform how to move forward.
>
> -Jennifer Judkins, Ed.D.
> *Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Information Technology*

- Inclusion of the school survey which asks students and educators about the quality and character of school life with topics including: safety, the instructional and physical environment, student engagement, and relationships within the school community (2018-2019)
- Equity tool which provides comparisons of student groups (2017-2018)
- Similar school comparison tool which provides a side-by-side comparison of a school's performance on the accountability system with a group of similar schools (2018-2019)

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION TASK FORCE

In January 2021, the Maryland Board of Education approved new End of Course (EOC) High School Assessments, replacing decades-old high school graduation requirements. The High School Task Force recommended the end of course requirements based on research that indicates high school GPA and attendance are stronger predictors of student success than standardized assessments. In addition, passing exit exams have a disproportionately negative impact on economically disadvantaged, African American, and the lowest-achieving students. Therefore, this move to EOC Assessments better serves our vulnerable populations and more accurately reflects readiness for college and career success.

The assessments will now count as part of the student's final grade in the respective algebra, science, English, and government courses. Students must pass the courses to satisfy the requirement for graduation.

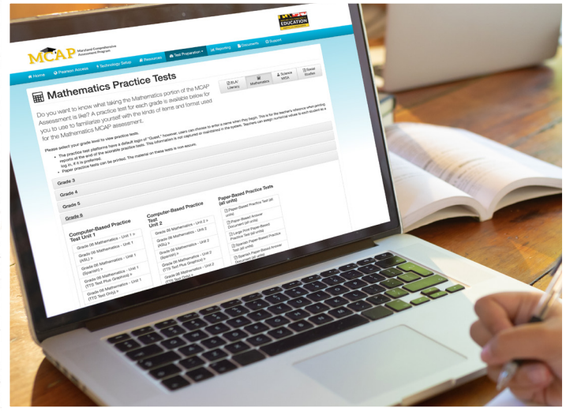
Other graduation-related changes recommended and approved by the State Board include:

- Increase mathematics credit requirements from 3 to 4 credits
- Increase health education credit requirement from .5 to 1.0
- Transition to one credit of Technology Education/Computer Science/Engineering
- Eliminate Advanced Technology option; require two pathways: Successful completion of a State-approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) program and/or completion of 4-year college or university requirements (two years of the same language, Algebra II, and two of three sciences as lab sciences)
- Dual-Enrolled students who successfully complete a college course that is aligned with MD standards should receive high school credit

MCAP

The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) assessments of Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS) build a pathway to college and career readiness by the end of high school, mark students' progress toward this goal from 3rd grade through high school, and provide teachers with timely information to inform instruction and provide student support. Designed, developed and written by Maryland State educators, the all-new MCAP encompasses all state assessments and is designed to provide information that helps strengthen instruction and improve performance.

Since June of 2020, over 325 Maryland educators have been a part of writing items, reviewing items and stimuli, and developing scoring rubrics for mathematics, English Language Arts, science and social studies assessments for the State. All assessments have been shortened in length and have been psychometrically supported to add equitable information to previous assessment results. Future plans include incorporating computer adaptive testing in which the assessments adapt to the student's performance level to give a more accurate measure of ability. Maryland students will take a truncated version of the MCAP in fall 2021, which will be followed by the full MCAP in spring 2022.



All students in 3rd through 8th grades and high school will be tested on math and English this upcoming fall.

> There's a program called the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) which prepares future educators to become teachers while they are still in high school. I tell any student interested to get involved in their local TAM program. The teaching profession is one of the most noble professions in the world. You have the opportunity to help shape the lives of the future, to change the world in little itty bitty pieces.
>
> – Dr. Richard Warren, Jr.
> *2018-19 Maryland Teacher of the Year*

The Teach in Maryland Digital Recruitment Campaign utilized real educators like Jessica Chesson, a culinary teacher at Edgewood High School, to inspire and share the benefits of teaching in the State.

Strengthening Teaching in Maryland

The pursuit of achieving equity and excellence for all Maryland students requires outstanding, innovative educators who spark curiosity, motivate, support, and build confidence.

MSDE understands that effective and quality teaching is the most important school-based factor impacting student learning. Through recruitment efforts, professional development and recognition programs, MSDE honors, promotes and celebrates excellence in the teaching profession.

#TEACHINMARYLAND TEACHER OUTREACH AND DIGITAL RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

With calls to "Dare to be the Difference" and "Jumpstart Your Future," the #TeachinMaryland campaign aims to recruit and retain the high-quality educators Maryland's students deserve and diversify the teaching workforce. Committed to inspiring the next generation of teachers, MSDE formed and led the Digital Recruitment Steering Committee, comprised of a comprehensive set of stakeholders, to guide the mission. The Committee directed the multi-media #TeachinMaryland campaign, which included identifying extraordinary teacher ambassadors to feature in messaging, billboards, transit, radio and social media advertising, a new website (Teach.in.Maryland.gov) and inaugural annual conference.

Utilizing the Maryland Educator Recruitment hashtag #TeachinMaryland, MSDE established a digital recruitment platform to improve the public perception of the teaching profession, encourage the pursuit of a Maryland professional teaching certificate and diversify the education workforce. In addition to the website, state-wide marketing efforts consist of advertising on social media, Maryland Transit Vehicles and bus stop enclosures, billboards, and urban radio stations in the Baltimore and D.C. areas. During the pandemic, #TeachinMaryland became the sponsor for two Radio One virtual proms in 2020 and 2021. Through the partnership with Radio One, an estimated audience of nearly 600,000 will hear the #TeachinMaryland message in the Baltimore and Washington, D.C. metro areas.

To amplify the benefits of teaching in Maryland directly to the State's top high school students, the department organized and hosted the inaugural Teach in Maryland – Rising Toward Excellence Conference. The event invited the top 25% of high school students for a day-long program to introduce the unique challenges and opportunities offered in education. The day long conference featured 45 presenters, 55 vendors, and 27 breakout sessions. The sessions focused on culturally responsive teaching practices, career preparation, teaching in critical shortage areas, as well as STEM fields and technology education. More than 250 students attended and were welcomed with an inspirational address by Dr. Richard Warren Jr., Maryland Teacher of the Year 2018-2019.

Out of the 135 student attendees who completed the conference evaluation nearly 78 percent rated the event as excellent and 77 percent indicated that the conference increased their interest in pursuing teaching. Additionally, 77 of the participants are willing to be contacted through 2025 to determine if they pursued a career in education. One student commented: "Knowing that there are so many others who are interested in educating has truly inspired me… I want to be part of making that change." Another student recognized the importance of diversity, stating: "I want to increase the amount of Black male teachers."

NEW TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND LICENSING SYSTEM

Striving for excellence in every aspect, MSDE is replacing its antiquated Educator Information System with TEACH, an automated web platform providing several benefits to teachers. TEACH features a modern user

77%

of student respondents stated that the Teach in Maryland – Rising Toward Excellence Conference increased their interest in pursuing teaching as a career

Strengthening Teaching in Maryland

The Division of Curriculum, Instructional Improvement and Professional Learning exemplifies leadership and support that empowers stakeholders to develop world-class students in Maryland who are life-long learners and productive, responsible citizens of a global society.

Passionate educators vested in improving instruction for students, teachers, and administrators participate in a session during the 5th Annual EdCamp that was held on November 23, 2019.

4,000 +

professionals registered for MSDE's Office of Instructional Assessment and Professional Learning virtual workshop series for the summer of 2020

interface that expedites services and eliminates the need for paper mailings. The platform allows teachers to make online payments, access real-time updates of application statuses, communicate with MSDE through an educator application dashboard, order transcripts and test scores, and verify experience within the application. The public educator certification search function will allow interested parties to auto-verify the certification status of Maryland educators. The portal will also store Maryland's disqualified bus drivers, bus attendants, and substitutes for instant local school system access. TEACH is scheduled to go live in the fall of 2021.

FOSTERING GROWTH OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS WITH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

MSDE's investment into the future does not end with recruitment, but continues well through the professional careers of Maryland educators with leadership development resources to grow teacher leaders.

For example, the department led the Promising Principals' Academy, a year-long professional learning experience designed to equip participants with the skills and knowledge to successfully transition to the principal position. The program featured 58 future principals representing all 24 school systems, SEED School, and Juvenile Services Education System. Additionally, MSDE's Teacher and Principal Evaluation Improvement Workgroup developed recommendations to improve the teacher and principal evaluation system in Maryland. The workgroup consisted of 28 local school system representatives, collective bargaining units, professional organizations, higher education, and the business community. From this workgroup emerged a revised principal evaluation process and supporting resources such as an evaluation rubric and evaluation training. The Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement also partnered with Insight Education Group to facilitate the evaluator training on the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which featured over 300 principals, assistant principals, and principal supervisors from across the State. To ensure quality and consistent mentorship, MSDE penned the Leadership Coaching Guide for the Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement Leadership Coaches, which provided a common foundation and clear expectations for effective coaching practices.

MSDE's English Language Arts Office offered professional learning to educators around the state. All local school systems identified a team that included special educators, English Learners, mentors, and literacy coaches. This team was offered professional learning on the Science of Reading. The English Language Arts Office collaborated with the University of Maryland to offer a literacy summit, "Literacy and Equity in the 21st Century" with a focus on the Science of Reading. Additional summits are being planned.

On-Going Statewide Professional Learning for Teachers
The English Language Arts Office is offering professional learning on the Science of Reading for the evidence-based program, Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) to cohorts of elementary teachers and PreK teachers. The program will be sustained as local school system educators become certified LETRS facilitators.

Support of Ready to Read (R2R) Act
The English Language Arts Office offered all ELA supervisors in local school systems training in the tenets of R2R Act, including the screener and supplemental instruction aligned to phonemic/phonological awareness deficits. Each local school system has submitted an implementation plan for the R2R Act that is aligned to the Science of Reading. The local plans include the identified screeners, supplemental instruction, and timeline for implementation.

Summer 2020 Virtual Workshop Series
During the summer of 2020, MSDE's Office of Instructional Assessment and Professional Learning offered a virtual workshop series due to the pandemic. Sessions offered included Fine Arts, English Language Arts, Social Studies, American Government, Coaching, Culturally Responsive Education, Social-Emotional Learning, Pedagogy for Virtual Environments, Student Voice and Agency, and Arts Integration. The virtual workshop series had over 4,000 registrants, spanning all 24 local school systems, various non-public schools, and participants from partner organizations.

Curricular Support Materials Initiative (CSM)
To increase student achievement through data-based decision making, MSDE's Professional Learning Office embarked on an initiative to rate curricular materials across multiple content areas. To date, an online system is used to share statewide team ratings of English Language Arts and mathematics curricular materials. The initiative is instrumental in ensuring that systems and schools select high-quality, standards-aligned and evidence-based classroom materials. Close to 60 classroom textbooks and diagnostic materials have been reviewed by statewide teams of local school system administrators, classroom teachers, mentors, coaches, and department heads. Their reviews covered factors tied to the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards, which are related to cultural responsiveness and equitable teaching practices, universal design for learning, English language learners, and others for which teachers need support.

Located in Baltimore, Arundel Elementary School opened as an early learning center in 2018. The brand-new 21st-century building was designed specifically to meet the needs of our youngest learners.

> The adversity of the last year has served as a real-time case study, and the lessons we've learned will further empower us to do all that we can to mitigate the risks to our schools. Though some threats endure, new threats that are the byproduct of an increasingly isolated student and general population require us to refine and refocus like never before…While certainly a challenge, I see this above all else as an exciting opportunity for us to challenge previous assumptions and grow.
>
> – Kate Hession
> *Executive Director, Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS)*

Build, Protect and Secure

MSDE is committed to creating and maintaining safe environments for Maryland students to learn, grow, be supported, and thrive.

Before the first shovel hits the ground for school construction, the Interagency Commission on School Construction provides the resources and guidance for new school construction and maintenance projects. Then the work of the Maryland Center for School Safety secures student well-being by creating inclusive education environments free from fear, harm, trauma and other hardships through grant, safety, and training.

INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

The Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) remains dedicated to ensuring that every child in every school in Maryland has a reliable and safe place to learn. Dr. Karen B. Salmon, State Superintendent of Schools currently serves as the Chair of the Commission. Over the last five years, the Commission has disbursed more than $1.7 billion in State capital funds to local school systems and contractors.

In an era of limited resources and expanded needs for support and services, simply providing grants to school systems is no longer enough. The IAC serves as a statewide expert in facilities operations and management to support local school systems as they strive to meet the needs of approximately 1,400 school facilities that serve the State's 900,000 students. The Commission has been reevaluating processes and procedures to ensure that they all add value to local school systems—and ultimately to students—without any unnecessary procedural barriers. To facilitate trust and transparency, the Commission added the live-streaming of IAC and Workgroup meetings.

In a major feat, the IAC developed and adopted the State's first Educational Facilities Sufficiency Standards. From building to renovating, the Commission continues to study and adjust to ensure that every decision we make has a positive impact on the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of the Statewide school facilities portfolio to sustain facilities into the future. The Commission developed a TCO Estimate Comparison tool for local school systems to use in evaluating various project options, and added TCO analysis to the Ed Spec submission requirement. Developing policy options and potential funding incentives, the Commission encourages local school systems to reduce the total cost of facility ownership.

In addition to construction and maintenance activities, the IAC worked closely with the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect to develop and adopt Maryland's first Guidelines and Best Practices for the Design, Assessment, and Modification of Physical Facilities and Spaces to Reduce Opportunities for Child Sexual Abuse. During the pandemic, the IAC conducted virtual Summer Site Visits to discuss the local school system project submissions which included new, replacement, renovation/addition and systemic renovation projects.

MARYLAND CENTER FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) promotes collaboration among students, parents, educators, mental health practitioners, law enforcement, and crime prevention practitioners with a particular focus on the physical and emotional well-being of Maryland students. In concert with MCSS, Maryland public, non-public special education, and private schools are committed to fostering collaboration and effective communication among school staff, students, and law enforcement. Our shared efforts serve as a foundation for Maryland's diverse schools to better identify and address the needs and concerns of our students. In the process, we are creating inclusive educational environments free from fear, harm, trauma, and unnecessary hardship. MCSS administered four school safety grants - totaling over $18 million - in Fiscal Year 2020. In order to conform to the updated 2020 MSDE Emergency Planning Guidelines, local school systems submitted to MCSS a total of 1,460 school emergency plans for review and comment.

One of MCSS's most important initiatives is Safe Schools Maryland - an anonymous and free reporting system available to students, teachers, school staff members, parents, and the general public to report any school or student safety concerns, including mental health concerns. Safe Schools Maryland operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. Since its launch in October 2018, Safe Schools Maryland has received almost 900 anonymous reports/tips, and 439 of those were received during the 2019-2020 school year despite a significant reduction in tips received starting in March 2020 as a result of COVID-19-related school closures.

Since the inception of the SRO training in 2019, MCSS has trained over 1,000 people in the mandated SRO/SSE program, including more than 90 since the beginning of 2021. While the global pandemic upended plans for a traditional in-person conference in 2020, it didn't stop MCSS from offering a summer professional development opportunity in the form of a four-part virtual webinar series that featured both keynote speakers and a panel discussion. Sessions averaged 240 registrants and 94% of those who attended felt the sessions were relevant to their needs and 92% learned something new.

> Athletics not only introduced me to many new friendships, but a whole new family altogether. Playing both lacrosse and field hockey throughout high school has taught me the value of your mentality and persistence, as well as the importance of facing adversity. The athletic experience has encouraged me to strive for success in my education and my life.
>
> – Makenna Quigley
> *Student, Broadneck High School*

The girls basketball teams from River Hill High School (Howard County) and Middletown High School (Frederick County) face off in the 2019 MPSSAA State Championship.

Promoting Healthy Student Outcomes

Evan Demos, 2020 graduate of Aberdeen High School, poses in his cap and gown with his congratulatory sign for being awarded the MPSSAA Minds in Motion Scholarship. Evan now attends the University of Maryland, playing intramural soccer and tennis.

Healthy and safe students are engaged, active and successful learners. MSDE provides a solid foundation for educational growth that safeguards the physical, social and emotional health of students.

The Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association (MPSSAA), celebrating its 75th year, was founded in 1946 to promote equitable athletic competition and support mental and physical well-being. MPSSAA redefined athletics during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure opportunities for play during the past year. Understanding that the pandemic further exacerbated ongoing mental health and addiction illnesses, MSDE provided new guidance on socio-emotional and mental health, and continued to support the Opioid Command Center.

MPSSAA

Serving over 112,000 student-athletes and administering 24 State Championships across Maryland, the Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association (MPSSAA) has continued to expand athletic programming that contributes to the entire educational experience in Maryland schools. MPSSAA has increased participation through additional tournament opportunities for all school systems, new and innovative sport offerings, and modifications to COMAR regulations to improve equity in state tournaments.

MPSSAA leads Minds in Motion, a scholarship and recognition program, that encourages student-athlete academic achievement. Over the past four years, the program has recognized more than 40,000 students earning a 3.25 GPA while participating in interscholastic athletics, and provided more than $50,000 in scholarships to graduating student-athletes.

Continuous development and enhancement of student-athlete health and safety standards remains ongoing. The MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee and athletic association collaborated in a recertification program for the care and prevention of athletic injuries. This program utilizes the local school system approved online course and certification process through coursework with the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations (NFHS) learning systems.

The Medical Advisory Committee, a cohort of medical and infectious disease professionals, developed interscholastic athletic guidance, mitigation strategies, and documents for the return of high school sports amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the committee developed Return to Interscholastic Athletics guidance detailing the local school system requirements to restart interscholastic athletics – a product of collaboration by MPSSAA, local school systems, the MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee and a cohort of sport physicians and infectious disease professionals from Johns Hopkins, Towson Sports Medicine, Lifebridge Health, University of Maryland, and Medstar.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Part of the Opioid Operational Command Center (OOCC) since its inception in 2017, MSDE developed an Opioid and Heroin Toolkit containing resources and information to support students, teachers and parents in combatting the crisis.

18

Minds in Motion scholarships were awarded by MPSSAA to student athletes across the State

recipients of the scholarship, furnished by the Allstate Foundation, came from 13 of the 24 local school systems

Staff proudly show how they keep students fueled for learning during the pandemic at Meade Middle School in Anne Arundel County.

In the 2019-2020 school year, MSDE issued $3 million in grant funding to all 24 local school systems for countermeasures to address the heroin and opioid challenge. Local school systems used these funds to hire a community action official for support, create programs for student leader development, and produce video and digital media announcements.

MSDE has provided and improved student access to high-quality mental health to deliver students the support they need to stay engaged in learning. Through the Project AWARE I (five-year) grant, MSDE has provided Youth Mental Health First Aid Training, which instructs adults to recognize and respond to a student who may be experiencing a mental health crisis. Through the successful completion of the Project AWARE I grant that served Baltimore County, Dorchester County and Somerset County public schools, 638 local school system personnel were trained as First Aiders in Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid. MSDE has been awarded a Project AWARE II grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for $1.8 million, which will increase Maryland's capacity for mental health education and referrals, trauma-informed care, adverse childhood experience (ACE) interface; Question, Persuade and Response training; Cultural Responsiveness, and other multi-tiered systems of support.

MSDE developed guidance entitled The New Normal: Understanding and Responding to Student and Staff Needs to assist teachers and students as they transition back to school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Focused on establishing a sense of safety and readiness for learning, the resource addresses staff readjustment to school and the mental health needs of students and staff.

In collaboration with stakeholders across the State, MSDE developed the Trauma-Informed Approach for Maryland Schools. This guidance provides a framework for local school systems to establish a holistic approach to education in which all teachers, school administrators, staff, students, families, and community members recognize and effectively respond to the behavioral, emotional, relational, and academic impact of stress on those within the school system. The purpose of this guide is to assist school systems in implementing trauma-informed approaches through a multi-tiered system of support.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

The importance and nutritional value of school meals are well-documented. For many children, school lunch is the most nutrient-rich meal of their day. MSDE's Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs provides Marylanders with a variety of nutrition program options for infants, preschoolers, school-aged children, and certain adult groups as well. Through the receipt of grant funds, the Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs enhanced the nutrition standards of the Child and Adult Care Food Program,

Nutrition staff member at Tyler Heights Elementary School gives out school lunches to a student during the pandemic.

National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program in Maryland schools. MSDE also provided core nutrition training to local school systems. During 2016 – 2019, MSDE trained school nutrition staff on food service operations, culinary skills, and Smarter Lunchrooms strategies, as well as 40 middle school teachers on nutrition education toolkits.

In response to the global pandemic, local school systems and Maryland agencies responded within one business day to redesign meal service to continue meal services in response to school closures. Local school systems and Maryland agencies have served over 17 million grab and go meals using safe social distancing practices. Just over a year from the beginning of the pandemic, more than 81 million school meals were served through all programs. In partnership with the University of Maryland School of Medicine (Department of Pediatrics, Growth and Nutrition Division), MSDE is studying the success of school meals operations during the pandemic-related school closures. The study used a five-point framework to document and understand reach, effectiveness and other attributes of school meals service between mid-March and the end of June 2020.

81 million +

meals have been served through all programs by Maryland agencies since the closing of schools due to COVID-19

433,000 +

Maryland children received free and reduced meals accross the State (2020-21)

6 million +

meals were served in Baltimore City alone during the COVID-19 child nutrition program (March–Aug 2020)

> I feel certain that—guided by Moving Maryland Forward—we will together improve outcomes for all children and families and narrow achievement gaps for specialized populations.
>
> – Marcella E. Franczkowski, M.S.
> *Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Department of Education*

DORS' Pathways Social Skills group touches base via video conference for Autism Awareness Month. Pathways is a program of DORS' Workforce & Technology Center that provides educational support service, for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Meeting the Need

Luke, the first DORS consumer to successfully complete DORS' Workforce & Technology Center's (WTC) new Pharmacy Technician training program, stands outside the CVS store where he is employed.

The goal of education is to help every student succeed. Together with partners, MSDE remains committed to elevating all students to their limitless potential.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) offers programs and services that help people with disabilities go to work. Our shared vision is that the State of Maryland should be the best place in our nation for persons with disabilities to live, work and raise a family. Individuals with disabilities are welcome and fully included, and they actively participate in all Maryland communities.

In 2020, the Division of Rehabilitation Services provided vocational rehabilitation services to 21,898 individuals with significant disabilities. It also prepared 7,282 students with disabilities to move from high school to employment, higher education, or career training through vocational rehabilitation services. The agency's Pre-Employment Transition Services program has an additional 6,124 students. Forty-seven percent of the individuals served by DORS are between the ages of 14 and 24. Personnel and programs helped 1,145 Marylanders with significant disabilities to become successfully employed in competitive integrated environments.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

Recognized as a national leader in COVID-19 guidance for students with disabilities, MSDE developed and issued COVID-19-related communications to students, families, local school systems, public agencies, and other stakeholders. This included providing 2,500 professional learning hours to local school systems, 12 virtual statewide leadership updates, 27 technical assistance bulletins, numerous guidance memos and FAQs/Tips documents, three presentations to national audiences, three parent guides, two websites/online resource portals, and three digital newsletters.

NARROWING THE GAP

The Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) provides leadership, support and accountability to local school systems, public agencies, and stakeholders in Maryland's comprehensive system of services for children and students with disabilities, from birth through age 21, and their families. MSDE's Division of Early Intervention and Special Education released its Strategic Plan, Moving Maryland Forward: Sharpen the Focus for 2020, to close opportunity and achievement gaps for all children. The DEI/SES strategic plan's goal to narrow the gap consists of three key elements:

- Measure results in three action imperatives: Early Childhood; Access, Equity, Progress; and Secondary Transition
- Employ five key implementation strategies: Strategic Collaboration, Family Partnerships, Evidence-Based Practices, Data-Informed Decisions, and Professional Learning

7,282

# of students with disabilities who received preparation from DORS to move from high school to employment, higher education or career training through vocational rehabilitation services

Stakeholders in Maryland's early intervention and special education community gather for the November 2019 Elevate Conference hosted by DEI/SES in Ocean City.

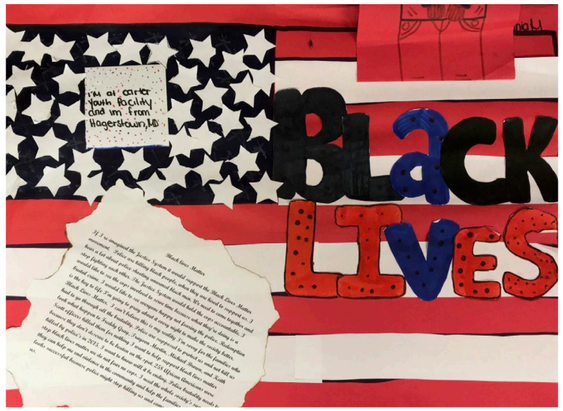
- Implement a Statewide Differentiated Framework of general supervision and performance support to operationalize the strategies to narrow gaps

In 2019, the division gathered more than 500 stakeholders within Maryland's early intervention and special education community for the DEI/SES Professional Learning Institute (PLI), Elevate. This three-day summit focused on advancing a national, state, and local lens to narrow the gap as State and local leaders continue to elevate implementation of the division's Strategic Plan, Moving Maryland Forward. The Elevate PLI delivered hundreds of effective, evidence-based strategies, practices, and tools for system-building within the strategic imperatives.

JUVENILE SERVICES EDUCATION SYSTEM (JSES)

Student growth is at the heart of our community. In JSES schools, the goal is to empower our students, no matter their background or circumstances, to successfully re-enter/re-engage with the community. JSES prepares students to experience success in both academics and careers by connecting them to meaningful and challenging learning pathways. JSES implemented Performance Matters, a dynamic tool for educators to administer assessments (pre-made or locally-created) that makes gauging instructional gaps simple and straightforward. These assessment results can also be quickly compared to state assessments, third-party diagnostic assessments, and attendance. This provides JSES with a comprehensive view of student performance, which can be securely shared with staff to ensure that the entire organization has a more data-driven approach when delivering personalized instruction to students.

JSES offers CTE classes in three pathways: Business Management and Finance; Career Research and Development; and Construction and Development. Additionally, JSES partnerships with Frederick, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore City Community Colleges to provide online college courses for credit and workforce development to JSES students.



Youth in the Department of Juvenile Services participated in the Justice Policy Institute Art for Justice competition to honor those most impacted by incarceration. The winner proudly accepted her ward at JPI's 20th Anniversary event held at the Miller and Chevalier Chartered Building.

2,500

# of hours of statewide professional learning opportunities provided on best practices, system building, and implementation within the strategic imperatives

17,760

# of children from birth through four years old with developmental delays or disabilities who received early intervention services

33,728

# of students ages 14-21 receiving transition services

> The Office of Research and Strategic Data Use conducts research reviews, data analyses, and rigorous empirical research to ensure that MSDE's policies and programs are achieving their intended outcomes. It also supports local school systems to do the same. The result is stronger and more evidence-based programs for Maryland students, and more informed state and local decision-makers.
>
> – Dara Zeehandelaar Shaw, Ph.D.
> *Executive Director, Office of Research, Maryland State Department of Education*

Students and staff celebrating the 2019 opening of Watershed Public Charter School in Baltimore County, made possible through a USED grant.

Together We Innovate

Lasting school and student improvement depends on solid data, accurate research and support, and meaningful application. In the interest of building a better, stronger foundation for student progress, MSDE relies on a data-driven approach to enhance programs and move forward.

RESEARCH

In the spirit of constant improvement, Maryland created the Office of Research and Strategic Data Use, which aims to innovate education by understanding the needs of local school systems and implementing its vision through new business practices. The office was first established at MSDE in February 2017. At that time, Maryland joined a small group of states with a clear commitment to conducting rigorous empirical research. Since then, the office has been recognized by national education research organizations as a leader and a model in this area.

The office has three core purposes:

- Create and implement a research agenda to support MSDE's mission.
- Support and assess MSDE's progress toward its mission by describing data, supporting evidence-based decision making, evaluating the implementation and outcomes of state programs, conducting large-scale empirical research, and supporting MSDE's offices and divisions to do the same.
- Support Maryland's local school systems in using data, conducting original research, and making evidence-based decisions and policies.

To date, the Office of Research has conducted or facilitated numerous rigorous empirical studies, as well as detailed data analysis to support and inform MSDE's mission. Recent research has been conducted on: the validity and reliability of the Maryland accountability system, the impact of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) on student outcomes, the impact of Senate Bill 651's limits on suspensions and expulsions of pre-kindergarten through second grade students, the association between Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores and third grade achievement, and the impact of the Equal Opportunity Schools program.

Additional topics for empirical research and data analysis have addressed educator diversity, charter schools, chronic absenteeism, school improvement, and supports for English learners and students with disabilities.

The office has also facilitated the use of research to develop and support education policy and agency decision-making at the state level. This has included: providing research to the High School Graduation Task Force, developing internal databases of curricula and social-emotional learning materials, designing data collection instruments to support teacher recruitment efforts, and creating a survey for students and educators to assess the learning/working environment of each school.

Most recently, the Office of Research has partnered with local school systems to develop a variety of data collection instruments to assess local needs, including evaluating the impact of interrupted instruction due to COVID-19. Workshops and hands-on training have also been provided to aid school system personnel in accessing, analyzing, and planning to act on their own data in specific instructional areas.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

MSDE has developed a process and resources to vet English Language Arts and mathematics curricula to ensure full alignment with the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. The process and tools were developed and piloted during the 2017-2018 school year and were fully implemented in the 2018-2019 school year. Any school system with schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement will be required to use curricula that have been vetted by MSDE.

An essential step in the school improvement process is conducting a root-cause analysis to uncover core causes of school performance problems.

The University of Maryland, College Park and MSDE collaborated with the American Institutes for Research to develop a Root Cause Analysis Facilitator Guide. The four steps in the root cause analysis process are: 1) Craft a Problem Statement Based on Data, 2) Brainstorm Causal Factors, 3) Analyze Underlying Causes to Identify Root Causes, and 4) Prioritize Root Causes for Intervention.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

To further support students, MSDE secured a $21 million competitive grant (USED Charter Schools Program) for the startup of new charter schools and the expansion or replication of existing quality charter schools. Sixteen awards have been made. Ten new schools have opened or will open. Six of the grants enable existing schools to expand. MSDE projects that 6,800 seats will be created by these schools, increasing options for Maryland families. Models that have support of the grant include Montessori, language immersion, STEM, and arts.

> “The Hogan-Rutherford administration is committed to increasing access to crucial mental health resources for all Marylanders while reducing barriers to treatment like affordability and accessibility…Working collaboratively with our local, state, and federal partners will improve safety, quality of life and health outcomes for those Marylanders and their families.”
>
> – Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford

Bridges to the Future

The promise of a bright future requires listening to the input from our students, educators, parents, and community—and having those insights inform our strategies on an ongoing basis.

MSDE collaborates with legislators and government agencies to craft effective solutions that align with national initiatives. MSDE broadens its reach through partnerships with other Maryland organizations that serve students and educators. MSDE champions technology and innovation, staying abreast of new trends in education around the globe and integrating practices that facilitate effective learning. These insights are blended to forge a clear vision and strategy for standards and policies that are effective, actionable, and consistently supportive of students, educators, and administrators in their everyday lives. But it doesn’t stop there. At MDSE, we’re constantly evolving to best serve the students, schools, and districts across Maryland.

DIGITAL LEARNING

This past year presented Maryland with challenges and opportunities that required a transformation of teaching and learning in a new environment. During the summer of 2020, over 1,500 educators participated in programs such as Online Teaching in Maryland, the Friday Institute’s Remote Teaching Massive Open Online Course, and the International Society for Technology in Education’s summer program. This transformation also required common messages, so MSDE worked with the Digital Learning Advisory committee, as well as other stakeholders, to define and publish these statewide digital learning definitions. MSDE provided numerous collaborative opportunities for local school systems to share and ask questions through various web conference meetings, eCommunities, and Google documents. A hybrid website populated with local school systems, and MSDE resources was posted on the State website to support virtual and face-to-face instruction. A new learning management system was purchased to house student and educator online courses, resources, and eCommunities.

With ESSER funding, the development of new accessible and standard-aligned student and educator online courses has begun. These local school system-requested courses range from data science to fifth grade social studies. Universal design and social-emotional learning will be embedded into each course and supported by synchronous sessions with teachers or facilitators.

MSDE will continue to develop a total of fifteen student and six educator online courses to be housed in the new learning management system. New educator courses will include: SEL; Learning Differences; and Teaching K-8 English Learners.

During the summer of 2021, ESSER funding will support online professional learning courses for educators across the State and for individual local school systems who wish to offer sections of these courses using the MSDE learning management platform.

MONITORING TEAMS

MSDE has launched a comprehensive monitoring process in order to: provide support to school systems in the implementation of practices that have been proven effective; hold school systems accountable for addressing the impact of interrupted instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and foster transparency in the expenditure of funds and the implementation of effective practices.

MSDE partnered with the Region 4 Comprehensive Center Network to develop a research-based approach to monitor the fidelity of implementation and intervention outcomes. Monitoring consists of three phases: readiness, implementation, and analysis and recommendations. Readiness monitoring ensures that structures are in place to implement identified interventions as

1,500 +

educators participated in MSDE-provided programs to help them adapt to a digital learning environment during the pandemic

Dr. Salmon engages with children at the Boys and Girls Club after announcing the establishment of a Maryland Mental Health Response at Governor Hogan's press conference for Project Bounce Back.

> We urgently need to return our students to school. In-person, in-school instruction is the only way to ensure equitable opportunities for all students…The stakes are way too high.
>
> – Dr. Karen B. Salmon
> *State Superintendent of Schools, 2020*

intended. This phase includes reviewing the fund expenditure plan, data targets, implementation plan, materials, and personnel. A readiness tool was developed to provide a consistent approach to assessing the preparedness of school systems to implement identified interventions. The tool identifies the readiness category, readiness indicators, and evidence required to demonstrate readiness. Readiness monitoring is facilitated at the school system level. The second phase, implementation, ensures that interventions are being implemented as intended. Implementation monitoring occurs at the school level and consists of observing interventions in action, reviewing implementation data, and assessing progress towards meeting benchmark and intervention goals. The third phase of monitoring is analysis and recommendations, in which intervention outcomes are assessed and recommendations are made for improvement as necessary. Monitoring reports detailing promising practices, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for improvement are provided to school systems after each monitoring visit. Local school systems will be required to address recommendations for improvement.

Monitoring is led by MSDE and includes representatives from higher education, business, non-profits, and local school systems. Monitors participate in training, engage in virtual and on-site monitoring visits, and collaborate to develop outcome reports. Monitoring occurs in at least 30% of all schools that are using Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to implement interventions. Monitoring outcomes are shared publicly and used to inform technical assistance provided by MSDE.

MENTAL HEALTH

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the mental health of many Maryland students, educators, staff, and parents. Social, emotional, and educational needs of students have been impacted by the isolation required to manage the spread of the pandemic. Social tension has heightened as the news reflected increases in racial and ethnic assaults. Trauma found a place in the hearts of our children and families. Thus, additional support to schools will be needed to provide some normalcy.

For this reason, Dr. Salmon is establishing a Maryland Mental Health Response that will create six regional crisis response and clinical support teams across Maryland as part of a mental health initiative to serve the needs of students who have experienced trauma and who are stressed beyond their ability to cope. Staffed by mental health clinicians, this vision of support for schools would allow for quick response and clinical support to local schools and school systems as they work to meet the needs of all students. The regional teams will provide efficient direct response services and professional development for schools and school systems about crisis management, clinical support, and other mental health needs. MSDE plans to partner with the Department of Health, institutions of higher education, and other Maryland agencies to support this response to meet the needs of our students, educators, and schools.

STUDENT DIGITAL ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

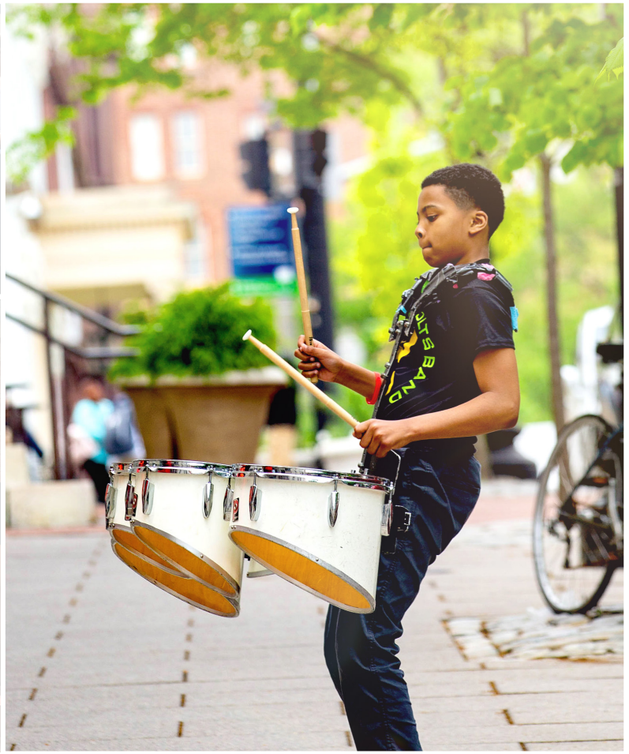
At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Salmon recognized the gap in tools necessary for Maryland's students to engage in the remote learning environment. Under Dr. Salmon's leadership, in April 2020, MSDE surveyed local school systems' Chief Information Officers to gather information on each local school system's capacity to support remote learning.

Due to a variety of funding sources (ESSER, GEER, and CRF-Technology), local school systems reported a 48% (from 510,754 to 758,533) increase from April to October of 2020 in the remote learning devices that are needed for a remote learning environment.

In October 2020, local school systems reported 12-15.5% of students lacked connectivity to fully engage in the remote learning environment. Local school systems developed innovative and collaborative solutions to address the "homework gap." All of Maryland's local school systems purchased and loaned families mobile Wi-Fi hotspots. Twenty-two local school systems provided information to families on low-cost internet providers and programs, and nine local school systems paid for low-cost internet plans for school families. Two Maryland school systems equipped school buses with Wi-Fi hotspots to target specific areas and provide access to student families.

MSDE's Office of Information Technology is supporting the buildout of Maryland's first education broadband network. MSDE has been working with the Governor's Office of Rural Broadband to ensure that the almost $9 million in funding has been used to provide immediate assistance to underserved urban and rural students.

Approximately $2 million has been allocated to support feasibility and design services for the State's first statewide wireless network solely dedicated for educational use. The network is expected to start operations on a limited basis by the end of August 2021 and be complete in December 2021. In addition, MSDE hired its first Security Officer and formed its first Cyber Security Team to support the protection of data and systems against cyber attacks.



Today's Purpose, Tomorrow's Promise

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

KAREN B. SALMON, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

CLARENCE C. CRAWFORD
President, Maryland State Board of Education

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

200 West Baltimore Street | Baltimore, Maryland 21201

MarylandPublicSchools.org

The Maryland State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, or disability in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs. For inquiries related to departmental policy, please contact the Equity Assurance and Compliance Branch: Phone 410-767-0433, TTY 410-767-0426, Fax 410-767-0431

REV 2/22/17