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NEED FOR PROJECT

Historically, schools in Maryland have scored higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), but with the increase of underserved student groups and equity gaps widening, the state has experienced a downward trend in student outcomes. At the beginning of fiscal year (FY) '24, Maryland served about 860,000 students in grades K-12 and 32,972 in state funded public and private prekindergarten programs. Recent demographic data shows that, of Maryland public school students, 67% are students of color. 32% identify as Black, 23% identify as Hispanic, and 12% identify as Asian or two or more races. In addition, 39% of students in Maryland are considered economically disadvantaged. Maryland defines economically disadvantaged as students directly certified by the federal government, i.e. students from families who are deemed eligible to participate in federal assistance programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Programs (SNAP), or Medicaid.

The landscape of the local education agencies (LEAs) in Maryland has undergone significant shifts. LEAs report that 13% of students are identified as multilingual learners, and 13% are students with disabilities. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2023, Maryland ranked fourth on the Diversity Index, marking Maryland as the fourth most diverse state in America, only behind Hawaii, California, and Nevada and above Texas and Florida.

Maryland's Literacy Needs

According to data from the 2022 administration of NAEP, 31% of 4th-grade students in Maryland were proficient in reading. In 2023, data from Maryland's state assessment, the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP), revealed that 49% of fourth-grade students scored proficient in reading. Data from the 2022 NAEP administration showed that 33%

of Maryland 8th graders scored at or above proficient in reading. However, in 2023, MCAP found that 49% of 8th graders scored proficient or above in reading.

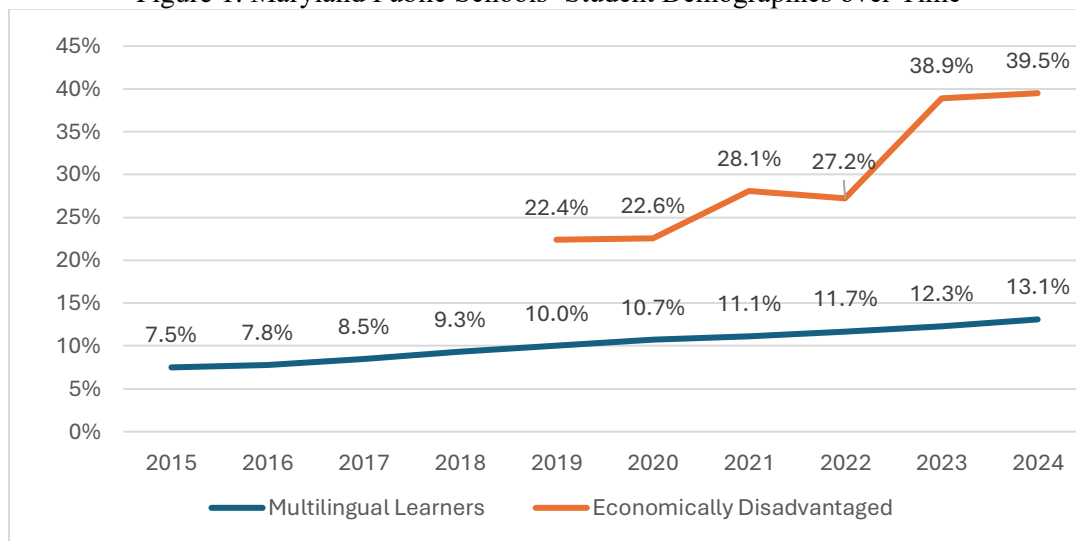
This discrepancy highlights a potential "honesty gap" between assessments, underscoring the need for an analysis of the validity and rigor of MCAP. To address this honesty gap, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has convened a technical advisory committee. These scores (Table 1) are especially alarming when considering the trends in student outcomes across the state. Furthermore, Maryland was ranked last in the nation, 51st, in the rate of change in students' proficiency from 2011-2022.

Table 1: NAEP Percentage At or Above Proficient: Maryland vs. National (4th grade and 8th grade 2013-2022)

| Year | NAEP Percentage At or Above Proficient: Maryland | | NAEP Percentage At or Above Proficient: National Public | |
|------|--|---------|---|---------|
| | Grade 4 | Grade 8 | Grade 4 | Grade 8 |
| 2022 | 31% | 33% | 32% | 30% |
| 2019 | 35% | 36% | 35% | 33% |
| 2017 | 40% | 38% | 36% | 35% |
| 2015 | 37% | 37% | 35% | 32% |
| 2013 | 44% | 43% | 35% | 36% |

During this time Maryland has also experienced a significant increase in enrollment of underserved student populations as defined by 86 FR 70612. Specifically, as shown in Figure 1 below, over the last ten years the percentage of Multilingual Learners has steadily increased from 7.5% of all students to 13.1%, while over the last six years the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged has increased from 22.4% to 39.5%.

Figure 1: Maryland Public Schools' Student Demographics over Time

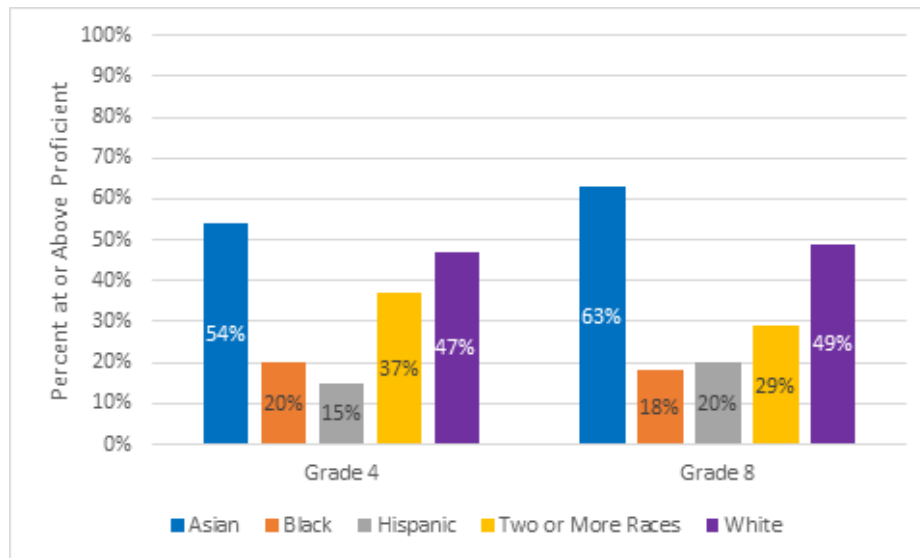


Note: Maryland started using the Economically Disadvantaged, as measured by Direct Certification, in 2019. In 2023, the measure was expanded to include Medicaid.

The underserved groups of students that are most evident in Maryland include students of color, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and Multilingual Learners. Analyzing the trends in the growth of these underserved groups, MSDE identified which LEAs have the highest populations of these student groups. As of 2023, data indicated that five of Maryland's 24 LEAs have the highest percentages of students falling into all four subgroups.

Not only is the number of underserved students in Maryland growing, but the gaps in achievement for underserved students are also evident as are shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Maryland Percent Proficient or Above on NAEP Reading by Grade and Race/Ethnicity, 2022



Continuing with this trend, only 13% of economically disadvantaged 4th-grade students in Maryland, 12% of Multilingual Learners, and 6% of students with disabilities were identified as proficient on the 2022 NAEP reading assessment. Additionally, 16% of economically disadvantaged 8th-grade students, 3% of Multilingual Learners, and 13% of students with disabilities were identified as at or above proficient on the 2022 NAEP assessment.

It is also evident in Figure 3 below that there is a significant disparity in proficiency on MCAP. In 2023, there was a 35% gap between the percentage of all Maryland students and the percentage of Maryland's Multilingual Learners who score as proficient. There was also a 35% gap between the percentage of all students and the percentage of students with disabilities who scored as proficient (Figure 4). Additionally, Figure 4 shows that there is an 18% gap in proficiency on MCAP between all students and students eligible for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS).

Figure 4: Disparity in Proficiency of All Students vs. English Learners on MCAP, 2023

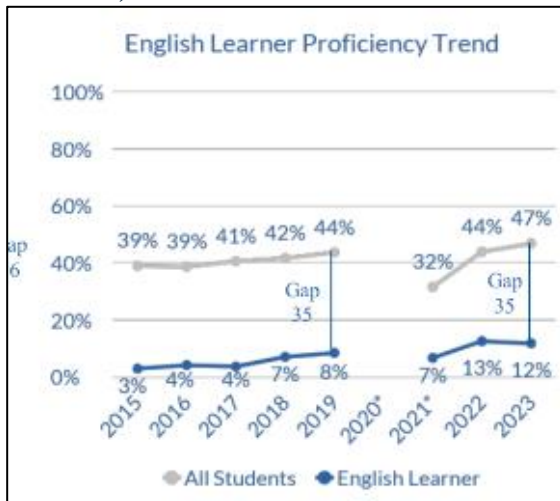


Figure 5: Disparity in Proficiency of All Students vs. Students with Disabilities on MCAP, 2023

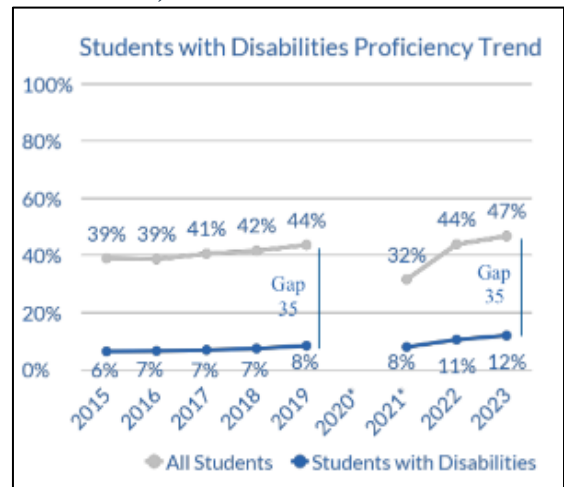
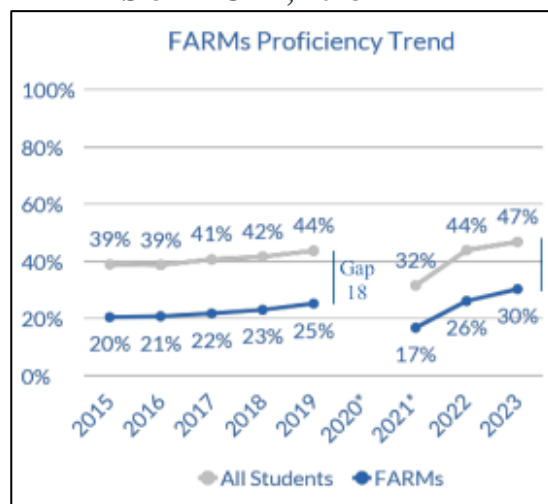


Figure 6: Disparity in Proficiency of All Students vs. Students eligible for FARMS on MCAP, 2023



Another notable trend is an increase in Maryland’s student population who are identified as having disabilities. The percentage of students receiving special education services has increased from 12% in 2011 to 13.3% in 2023. Data also reveals that a significant percentage of these students are identified for services at an early age, with 60.4% identified in Pre-K and 31.2% in kindergarten. Recognizing the implications of this data, Maryland acknowledges the need for

enhanced screening measures and diagnostic surveys in the early years. However, alongside the emphasis on early prevention, there is a critical need for robust professional development for educators. It is imperative that educators are proficient in administering, scoring, and interpreting assessments, as well as delivering intervention programs effectively to identified students.

When considering where underserved students are in the realm of giftedness, the below table gives some insight. Table 2 shows the percentage of students scoring at the highest performance level (“Exceeding Expectations”) for each subject by service group. Sample includes students with full demographic and service group information, which are drawn from the end of the year attendance summary.

Table 2: Students in Highest Performance Level of MCAP by Service Group, Grade 3, SY 2023

| Service Group | Overall Enrollment | English/ Language Arts | Mathematics | Any MCAP |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Economically Disadvantaged | 39.8% | 1.8% | 3.0% | 2.5% |
| Multilingual Learners | 12.4% | 0.6% | 1.6% | 1.3% |
| Students with Disabilities | 12.8% | 11.3% | 9.1% | 11.0% |
| N | 922,157 | 2,970 | 3,114 | 4,812 |

Equitable representation and achievement in gifted/talented and advanced programs continue to be an issue within the field. The excellence gap, which highlights the difference in percent of low-income versus high-income students who reach advanced levels of academic performance, is a continuously growing issue in America and is no exception in Maryland. It is necessary for Maryland schools to provide targeted enrichment and learning opportunities to mitigate excellence gaps because every student deserves to be appropriately challenged. Additionally, the security and long-term competitiveness relies on efforts in challenging students, and greater accessibility to evidence-based enrichment better prepares students for college and career plans which will strengthen our state, nation, and society.

Current MSDE Policies and Regulation

In response to significant declines in student literacy outcomes over the past decade, MSDE has undertaken critical measures to enhance literacy achievement. A pivotal initiative in 2021 was the passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future by the Maryland General Assembly, marking the beginning of a comprehensive overhaul of public education in the state. This legislation prioritizes educational equity statewide through five pillars, each featuring key initiatives aimed at transforming Maryland's educational quality and closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

The pillars encompass early childhood education, the recruitment and retention of high-quality and diverse educators and leaders, K-12 preparation for college and career readiness, bolstering wraparound services, and ensuring effective implementation of the Blueprint at the local educational agency (LEA) level. Integral to governance and accountability under this framework is the establishment of the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), tasked with planning and overseeing Blueprint implementation. Furthermore, LEAs are now mandated to develop annual Blueprint Implementation Plans, in addition to revising their previous comprehensive literacy plans.

Also established in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act was the Workgroup on Multilingual Learners in Public Schools. This workgroup was tasked with collecting data on Multilingual Learners (MLs) in the state, reviewing national research and current practices, and making recommendations to enhance the education of MLs in Maryland. The state is home to over 112,081 MLs in K-12, who collectively speak 189 different languages.

In January of 2024, the Maryland State Board of Education(SBOE) adopted Resolution 24-01. This resolution, named the “Statewide Adoption and Implementation of the Science of Reading,” called for the statewide adoption and implementation of literacy instruction based on the science of reading starting with the 2024-2025 academic year. Under the resolution, the SBOE set an aspirational statewide target for Maryland to rank among the top 10 states in reading on the fourth- and eighth-grade NAEP by 2027. The SBOE called for the State Superintendent of Schools and MSDE to

- draft a comprehensive literacy policy aligned to the science of reading that includes curriculum adoption, assessment, data analysis, early warning systems, intervention, and accountability;
- review all current state literacy guidance, standards, policies, and regulations for alignment with the science of reading and make recommendations for revisions as needed, including a prioritized review of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards for Reading/English Language Arts to ensure alignment to scientifically based reading instruction;
- partner with institutes of higher education (IHEs) to ensure alignment of teacher preparation programs and professional learning (PL) to the science of reading;
- incorporate a specific evaluation of reading instruction in the licensure program renewal process and take action if programs are not aligned with the state’s standards for scientifically based reading instruction; and
- continue to partner with the AIB to ensure that the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future advances the science of reading and improves literacy outcomes.

To accomplish the goals outlined in the Blueprint and Resolution 24-01, MSDE and AIB contracted with the Maryland Initiative for Literacy & Equity (MILE) at the University of Maryland and Morgan State University to evaluate literacy instruction across all 24 Maryland LEAs. This evaluation was designed to focus on collaboration and capacity-building among all stakeholder groups, ultimately leading to statewide recommendations for technical assistance (TA) to support reading development for all students in Maryland.

Maryland State Literacy Needs Assessment

The review of all 24 LEAs was conducted between February 2024 and May 2024. This data collection included evaluations of the LEAs' Comprehensive Literacy Plans, focus groups with teachers and principals, and K-5 classroom observations across 10% of the schools within each LEA. LEAs were evaluated according to the EPIS Framework (Aarons, Hurlburt, & Horwitz, 2010), which assesses system-wide implementation of evidence-based practices through stages of Exploration, Adoption/Preparation, Implementation, and Sustainment. The reviewers examined the Comprehensive Literacy Plans for detailed strategies and approaches, and then assessed the strength of implementation through classroom observations, interviews with administrators, and focus groups with teachers and support staff.

MSDE reviewed literacy implementation across all LEAs in the state, convening two teacher focus groups, several individual interviews, and one principal focus group. In total, 211 LEA teachers, 96 principals, and 36 administrators participated in interviews and focus groups. Additionally, over 580 K-5 classroom observations were conducted in 83 elementary schools between March and May 2024 to provide evidence on literacy implementation in a sample of schools with highly diverse populations.

A voluntary survey was conducted among district-level personnel regarding their knowledge and PL experiences around literacy practices, including the impact on students, and needs for support. Approximately 1,500 educators completed the survey. The majority of respondents were general education teachers (44% elementary, 16% secondary, 7% early childhood) while some were ELD educators (3%) and special education teachers (9%), with instructional support staff (15% reading specialists, 4% instructional coaches, and) and administrators (3% school-based, 2% district-level) making up the remaining responses.

When asked to identify the relative strengths and areas for growth in their students, respondents noted that foundational skills of decoding (48%), spelling and writing mechanics (69%), comprehension (59%), and vocabulary (53%) were areas for improvement, while only 22% identified “love of reading” as an area for growth. Conversely, when asked which of these areas they felt they knew and taught well, respondents indicated that most foundational skills were areas of strength: decoding (66%), comprehension (52%), fluency (50%), and vocabulary (46%). However, spelling and writing were noted as areas of weakness (39%). Additionally, less than 5% indicated that working with multilingual learners was an area of strength, while a substantial number (60%) said it was an area for improvement.

Regarding their PL needs, teachers overwhelmingly responded that they need more time for planning to implement new practices (59%), implement specific strategies (55%), and modeling of those strategies (42%). When asked about the frequency of their engagement in literacy-focused PL, 31% responded quarterly, 27% monthly, and 19% yearly. Only 11% said they participate in literacy-focused PL weekly or bi-weekly, and 9% said very rarely. The most preferred PL delivery options were in-person workshops (54%), co-planning and peer observations (53%), and coaching with modeling and reflection (49%). Finally, when asked about

the benefits of literacy PL for their students over the last three years, the most common responses were that it helped students achieve individual literacy goals (63%), become more independent, self-directed readers and learners (58%), and develop growth mindsets as readers and writers (56%).

Based on classroom observations, the reviewers noted that for 22 of 24 LEAs teachers in kindergarten through grade 2 have adopted structured literacy instructional practices using high quality instructional materials (HQIM) with explicit instruction. The majority of these teachers have gone through some level of training on the Science of Reading (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling- LETRS) and have had some level of curriculum training from the vendors of the HQIM. One of the noted challenges was a strong reliance on the scripts in the daily instruction with teachers holding and often reading from the manuals in their hands particularly novice teachers. More experienced teachers were able to adapt instruction for their classrooms and show less reliance on the manuals but this was variable in terms of their comfort with explicit instruction in structured literacy. Small group instruction was also seen in classrooms; however, many LEAs struggled with differentiation of core (Tier 1) instruction and often used Tier 1 instructional time for Tier 2 supplemental instruction. Most districts have recently begun to implement explicit Tier 2 instructional blocks for intervention and extensions in skill instruction. However, guidance on tying Tier 2 instruction to diagnostic assessments has been variable between schools and districts with some having data management systems and strong reading interventionists guiding these practices while others have fewer resources to enable these practices or need additional guidance on developing these systems.

The largest challenge was observed in the transition to intermediate grades (3-5) in which many of the districts had optional trainings in structured literacy practices and the science of

reading creating a disjunction with the primary level instruction. Instruction at the intermediate level was less effective as many students struggled with balanced literacy approaches that were prominent particularly since many of the students, all of whom went through the primary grades during the COVID19 pandemic, still struggled with basic reading skills making more independent activities difficult leading to challenges in classroom management and learning.

Focus groups with teachers and administrators further supported the findings that teachers in K-2 have been provided with strong background knowledge in structured literacy practices and the science of reading, but they need more explicit exposure to modeling of practices, experiences co-teaching with interventionists or special education teachers, and planning time with teams to adapt practices for the populations of students that they are teaching. This is especially true for the rising population of multilingual learners in the classrooms. While the high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) often provide scaffolding and scripts for these children, educators have had little opportunity or training to adapt instruction appropriately to meet the needs of these learners. Educators expressed the desire for professional learning experiences that would provide modeling in the classroom including coaching and co-teaching. District leaders expressed a desire for sustainable train-the-trainer models to allow them to have the coaching expertise in their buildings.

Acknowledging the effectiveness of job-embedded PL, Maryland conducted a survey across all 24 LEAs to determine the presence and utilization of literacy coaches. According to the survey, there are currently about 680 literacy coaches supporting grades K-12 in Maryland. Some LEAs in Maryland are significantly larger than others, which allows for the creation of a cadre of coaches. 87% of all literacy coaches support K-5 schools, while 50% of Maryland LEAs

have no coaching support in secondary (6-12) grades. The survey also revealed that literacy coaches in Maryland have a wide range of responsibilities.

As Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds dwindle, LEAs across Maryland are increasingly forced to cut coaching positions. As a result, 21% of Maryland's LEAs indicated that they would have no literacy coaches in the 2024-2025 school year due to budget cuts and the expiration of ESSER.

As part of MSDE's continuous improvement plans, Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) were targeted for support. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a research and policy nonprofit, evaluated nearly 700 programs nationwide, including 15 in Maryland, on their effectiveness in preparing aspiring elementary teachers to teach reading. This assessment focused on how well these programs address the five essential components of scientifically based reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. It analyzed each program across four key areas: instructional hours, background materials, objective measures of knowledge, and opportunities to practice.

Furthermore, the review deducted points from programs that diverged from research-based practices in their content delivery. It also assessed whether programs adequately instruct aspiring teachers on supporting diverse learners, including struggling readers, MLs, and students speaking non-mainstream English varieties.

The 2023 NCTQ review ranks Maryland among the worst in the nation for the average number of components of reading its programs adequately address. Currently, Maryland only has one of the 15 programs evaluated earn an "A" for preparation in reading, meaning it adequately teaches all five components of reading and provides little or no instruction on content contrary to

research-based practices. Additionally, the findings of the review of these 15 programs showed that, in Maryland:

- Programs are most likely to cover comprehension and least likely to cover fluency.
- None of the 15 programs provide at least one practice opportunity in each of the five components.
- Seven programs that multiple techniques or approaches contrary to research-based practices, which can inhibit the reading progress of many students.
- Nine programs devote some instructional time to supporting struggling readers.
- Nine programs devote some instructional time to supporting multilingual learners, the fastest growing population of students in the state.

NCTQ recommended that Maryland state leaders use the bully pulpit to draw attention to the importance of teacher preparation in Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to sustain implementation of improved reading instruction and to require a reading licensure test aligned with scientifically based reading instruction for any PK-5 teachers.

In response to an outcry for a needed improvement in Maryland EPPs, the MSDE Office for Educator Excellence put forth new qualifications for teaching certificates for graduates of EPPs. These qualifications were put into COMAR 13A.12.01.07 in 2024 repealing and replacing many old licensure requirements. A revised requirement states that beginning on July 1, 2025, an individual seeking to qualify for an initial certificate in early childhood education, elementary education, special education, and TESOL must demonstrate proficiency in the five pillars of reading by:

- passing a nationally recognized, portfolio-based assessment of teaching ability;

- completing coursework, PL, or training approved by MSDE;
- submitting an attestation of proficiency through observation completed by a department-recognized assessor.

Additionally, COMAR 13A.07.06 regulates teacher preparation programs that seek state program approval. These programs must meet a list of requirements such as providing instruction in teaching in high poverty, culturally diverse, and linguistically diverse schools; providing instruction in research-based literacy strategies and activities aligned to the science of reading for the grade level the individual will be teaching. There is also a requirement of a rigorous, year-long practicum for pre-service teachers. However, it is important to note that, to date, MSDE does not currently have the funding in place to review literacy programs in educator preparation programs.

PROJECT DESIGN

Literature Review:

The needs assessment highlights several significant gaps in literacy instruction in Maryland. MSDE believes that developing and implementing a high-quality PL model can address many of these gaps. This model would include:

- Job-embedded PL for teachers of students from birth through grade 12, including teachers of English language development (ELD) and special education.
- Opportunities for district literacy coaches to receive standardized PL that is collaborative in nature and includes the basics of Transformational Coaching, as well as the fundamentals of the science of reading for coaches who have not yet received such training.

- Opportunities for LEA literacy leaders (English Language Arts supervisors, coordinators, etc.) to collaborate with other LEA leaders in the state and to learn about designing and implementing multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) and the tenets of implementation science.
- Opportunities for MSDE to collaborate with institutions of higher education to align educator preparation programs (EPPs) with research-based literacy instructional practices.

As MSDE develops a model for PL around the state, it is important to understand what has worked and what has not in past initiatives. Studies have shown that there are a few criteria that need to be included in PL for them to be effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Joyce & Showers, 1983; 2002; Fuller, 2001; Guskey, 2002; Brownell et al., 2017; 2019). These criteria involve:

1. Opportunities for collaboration;
2. Opportunities for self-assessment;
3. Must last at least one semester (or 20-100 hours);
4. Must include the study of theory;
5. Must include the opportunity to observe demonstration of the teaching skill;
6. Must involve teacher application with support and feedback; and
7. Must involve peer coaching that is non-evaluative in nature and focuses on planning and development

Additionally, only when PL is followed by implementation (Fuller, 2001) and evidence of student success (Guskey, 2002) do teachers change their practice. While popular PL approaches in literacy often focus on how learning occurs and why certain methods are effective, sustainable

change in teachers' practice requires explicit modeling of target practices (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

Research identifies several features of effective PL that instructional leaders can use to convey content while ensuring teachers have ample opportunities to engage meaningfully and achieve proficiency with their new knowledge. First, PL structured collaboratively can directly influence teachers' practices through the development of their own knowledge and exposure to colleagues' knowledge (Wexler et al., 2023). Collaboration helps teachers support each other and fosters a sense of collective responsibility for student success as they implement and sustain evidence-based practices (Brownell et al., 2017). Another feature of effective PL is the inclusion of authentic activities that incorporate modeling, performance feedback, and reflection (Brownell et al., 2019). These activities can be collaborative or involve instructional leaders and self-assessment activities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). PL should also be sustained to encourage the implementation of evidence-based practices. Although the exact dosage for effective PL is uncertain, consensus holds that traditional one-day workshops lack the time and intensity needed to improve teacher knowledge and skills (Knapp, 2003). Some argue that PL should last at least one semester and range between 20 and 100 hours to be effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

One widely used form of ongoing PL featuring authentic activities, extending support for teachers, and leveraging colleagues' collective knowledge is instructional coaching. When considering the effectiveness of PL, in order to ensure the transfer to the teacher's repertoire of instructional practices, on-site coaching is necessary, as the act of transferring involves consistent new learning beyond the acquisition of the skills themselves (Joyce & Showers, 1983). Additionally, coaching not only contributes to the transfer of training; it also facilitates

the development of new school norms of collegiality and experimentation (Joyce & Showers, 2002)

When considering effective coaching models, MSDE turns to Mississippi. Mississippi gained national attention for embracing the science of reading, closely monitoring its implementation, and developing a statewide approach to reading education, significantly impacting student performance. This approach included literacy coaches, described by the New York Times as "hired by the state to improve teacher performance levels, particularly in struggling classrooms" (Kaufman, 2022). In Mississippi, literacy coaches received extensive state training and worked in classrooms, helping with everything from day-to-day lesson planning to long-term literacy strategies. This comprehensive approach, coupled with extensive PL aligned to the science of reading for all K-3 teachers, helped Mississippi move from 49th in the nation in 2013 to 22nd in 2022 in 4th-grade reading proficiency.

Maryland is currently at an advantage because Dr. Carey Wright, who served as Mississippi's State Superintendent of Education during its period of steady improvement, was named Maryland's Interim State Superintendent of Education in October 2023 and officially appointed in April 2024. She brings a wealth of experience in improving student achievement in literacy. Her methods are well-documented; a 2017 study by the Institute of Education Sciences, the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, and the Regional Education Laboratory at Florida State University focused on Mississippi's "logic model" for providing PL and literacy coaching. Mississippi's literacy coaches spent an average of two to three days per week in each school and participated in monthly professional development meetings. Topics included the "research-based role of literacy coaching to making data-based decisions for literacy instruction" (Folsom et al., 2017). The study found that in schools

supported by state literacy coaches, the average quality of instruction rating increased from the 31st to the 58th percentile, student engagement from the 37th to the 53rd percentile, and teaching competencies from the 30th to the 44th percentile. Teachers who had not participated in the professional development program had lower measures of instruction quality, student engagement, and teacher competencies (Folsom et al., 2017).

In conclusion, as MSDE moves forward in developing and implementing a new model for PL, it is crucial to incorporate the lessons learned and successful examples such as Mississippi's literacy initiative. By focusing on collaborative, sustained, and evidence-based PL, Maryland has the opportunity to significantly enhance educator effectiveness and, consequently, improve student outcomes. Leveraging the expertise of leaders like Dr. Carey Wright and adopting proven strategies like instructional coaching will be instrumental in achieving these goals. Through a comprehensive and well-structured approach to PL, MSDE can ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster literacy and academic success across the state.

Goals and Objectives:

At the heart of these PL initiatives is MSDE's desire to create and communicate a comprehensive state-level system of support aimed at increasing administrator literacy leadership and teacher efficacy in literacy instruction, thereby improving student literacy outcomes.

(Competitive Preference Priority - CPP 2, 4) To see this to fruition, MSDE has set two overarching goals each with a subset of objectives:

Goal 1: Increase educator capacity to deliver research-based literacy instruction.

Goal 2: Increase access to effective literacy programming for all students with priority consideration given to LEAs with a high population of underserved students as defined by 86 FR 70612 (**CPP 2, 3, 4**).

Objectives for Goal 1

Objective 1.1: Signaling and Guidance from MSDE

The vision of the Maryland Department of Education Office of Literacy is to create and communicate a comprehensive state-level system of support to increase administrator literacy leadership and teacher efficacy in literacy instruction thereby increasing student literacy outcomes. Therefore, to accomplish this vision, Objective 1.1 focuses on the tasks that MSDE must undertake to signal the importance of this work and provide overarching guidance to the 24 LEAs in Maryland. The first action that MSDE must take to accomplish this objective is to develop the MSDE Literacy Advisory Panel. This panel will include 8 literacy experts representing the 8 congressional districts of Maryland. The purpose of the Maryland Literacy Advisory Panel is to serve as a committee to represent Maryland educators and advocate for the literacy needs of Maryland. The team will consist of literacy experts who meet the following criteria:

- completion of at least 30 hours of science of reading-aligned PL;
- experience in developing and implementing coaching models;
- collaborations with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to support providing pre-service teacher experiences within an LEA;
- experience with reading screeners and their intended foci;
- understanding of the purpose of high-quality instructional materials (HQIMs);

- desire to advocate for Maryland's Literacy Legacy

One of the initial tasks of the panel will be to support MSDE in reviewing and updating the Maryland State Comprehensive Literacy Plan, titled "Maryland's Keys to Comprehensive Literacy," published in 2020. (A copy of the old plan is included in the appendices of this application.) The revised plan will align with the goals set by State Superintendent Dr. Carey Wright and will showcase Maryland's dedication to providing effective literacy instruction to all students.

Objective 1.2: Supporting LEA-based Literacy Coaches (CPP 2, 4)

As stated above, MSDE aims to bolster educators' capacity to deliver research-based literacy instruction as its primary goal. This effort focuses on providing comprehensive PL opportunities statewide. Within this goal, Objective 1.2 underscores the significance of quality PL, specifically through a research-based model known as literacy coaching. MSDE plans to leverage state and CLSD funds to develop, deliver, and evaluate high-quality PL experiences tailored for educators across Maryland. (CPP 2, 4)

Objective 1.2 emphasizes the critical role literacy coaches play in supporting PL initiatives. Drawing on research findings, the MSDE has outlined specific responsibilities for these coaches:

- **Facilitating PL:** Literacy coaches will design and conduct workshops, seminars, and training sessions to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in evidence-based literacy instruction.

- **Providing Classroom Support:** Literacy coaches will offer in-class support, modeling instructional strategies, co-teaching, and observing teachers to provide constructive feedback.
- **Data Analysis and Utilization:** Literacy coaches will assist in analyzing student data to inform instruction, identify areas for improvement, and track the impact of literacy interventions.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Literacy coaches will participate in ongoing PL to stay current with literacy research and effective coaching practices, ensuring they can provide the most up-to-date support to educators.
- **Resource Development and Sharing:** Literacy coaches will develop and distribute resources, such as lesson plans, instructional materials, and assessment tools, to support effective literacy instruction.

It is important to note that the LEA literacy coaches funded by CLSD (which will be discussed further in Objective 2.1) will not evaluate teachers; rather, they will work collaboratively to refine instructional practices and support professional growth. Central to their effectiveness is the establishment of trusting relationships with teachers, fostering an environment where educators feel supported in their PL.

Acknowledging variations in literacy coaching responsibilities reported by LEAs, MSDE plans to establish monthly state-led Literacy Coaching Regional Cohorts. These cohorts will provide coaches with opportunities to participate in Networked Improvement Communities (NIC) focused on achieving specific outcomes, such as:

- Cultivating effective coaching partnerships through relationship-building and mutual trust.
- Supporting schools and districts in developing and delivering impactful PL opportunities aligned with state standards and educational goals.
- Guiding teachers to integrate research-based decision-making into their instructional practices, ensuring alignment with best practices in literacy instruction.
- Assisting teachers in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of instructional planning, delivery, and assessment, promoting continuous improvement in teaching practices.
- Empowering teachers to interpret literacy data effectively for informed instructional decision-making, utilizing data to tailor interventions and support student success.

These efforts aim to standardize coaching practices across Maryland, ensuring consistent and effective support for educators in advancing literacy instruction statewide. By fostering collaborative PL communities and emphasizing evidence-based strategies, MSDE seeks to elevate literacy outcomes for all students.

Finally, MSDE will leverage CLSD funds to hire two State Literacy Coaches. As mentioned previously, MSDE seeks to replicate much of the Mississippi model for improving literacy outcomes, which relies heavily on state literacy coaches. The role of the Maryland State Literacy Coach is to support the LEA literacy coaches funded by CLSD. Using the Mississippi model as inspiration, Maryland State Literacy Coaches will:

1. **Identify Needs:** Identify the greatest needs of assigned schools to prioritize, schedule, organize, and provide technical assistance so that students in assigned schools achieve grade-level reading by the end of 3rd grade.

2. **Provide Technical Support:** Offer daily technical support (at least 85% of the school week) to school-based coaches.
3. **Model Coaching Techniques:** Model effective coaching and conferencing techniques, including establishing specific goals and plans for improving practice.
4. **Design Professional Learning:** Design and conduct PL to meet the varied needs of school-based literacy coaches such as the Literacy Coaching Regional Cohort meetings.
5. **Document and Monitor:** Maintain a system for documenting coaching services and act as non-evaluative on-site monitors for the implementation of CLSD funds.

By implementing these strategies, the State Literacy Coaches will play a crucial role in enhancing literacy instruction and improving student outcomes across Maryland.

Objective 1.3: Creating a Cadre of Informed Literacy Administrators

As indicated in the needs assessment above, one component of PL that has been missing thus far is PL for LEA supervisors and coordinators of ELA/Literacy. These staff members are often the ones delivering PL to literacy coaches or directly to classroom teachers. Therefore, it is vitally important that they continue with their commitment to lifelong learning. One of the outcomes of Objective 1.3 is that these LEA supervisors and coordinators receive PL in the realms of the design, training and implementation of MTSS, and in implementation science. MSDE plans to meet with these supervisors monthly to deliver this PL and to make the time for LEA supervisors to discuss practices that are successful as well as challenges they are facing.

Under Objective 1.3, MSDE will also use CLSD funds to develop and implement the Maryland Initiative for State Leaders in Literacy (MISLL). This initiative is designed to emphasize the critical importance of literacy initiatives among the higher echelons of decision-making in each LEA. By targeting state leaders, the MISLL aims to ensure that literacy becomes

a prioritized and central focus within educational policies and practices. This group will consist of key stakeholders, including superintendents, curriculum directors, and other senior administrators from each LEA. These leaders will participate in specialized training and PL sessions focused on the latest research and best practices in literacy education. The MISLL will also facilitate regular meetings and workshops to foster collaboration, share successful strategies, and address common challenges in literacy instruction. This initiative will ensure that literacy remains a key focus in educational decision-making, ultimately leading to higher student achievement and success.

Objective 1.4: Supporting ECE Centers in the Development of a PL plan (CPP 2, 4).

MSDE recently released New Early Learning Standards. The old Early Learning Guideline had not been updated in more than a decade and was out of date in terms of alignment with the latest research. The new standards are aimed at updating and aligning our standards with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The standards also prioritize addressing the varied needs of all children, such as those with disabilities, multilingual language learners, and those who have experienced trauma. They provide clear guidance for educators, empowering them to create developmentally appropriate environments and learning experiences that foster crucial skills, concepts, and behaviors in children. By adhering to these standards, educators will enhance the quality of early learning experiences, laying a strong foundation for lifelong success. Additionally, the standards empower families by providing clarity on developmental milestones and benchmarks, fostering meaningful partnerships between educators and families.

In collaboration with MSDE's Division of Early Childhood, Objective 1.4 focuses on leveraging CLSD funds to support Early Childhood Education Centers in developing a PL plan

with a heavy emphasis on a plan for providing PL on the new Early Learning Standards to early childhood classroom teachers.

Objective 1.5: Strengthening Educator Preparation Programs (CPP 1)

Finally, Objective 1.5 focuses on incorporating IHEs into PL initiatives to strengthen literacy instruction in Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs). As per COMAR 13A.12.01.07, individuals seeking initial certification in early childhood education, elementary education, special education, and TESOL must demonstrate proficiency in the five pillars of the science of reading. This proficiency can be demonstrated through various pathways, including an attestation of proficiency via an observation conducted by a department-recognized assessor.

It is important to note that many EPPs in Maryland require their candidates to obtain teacher licensure to graduate. To incentivize EPP faculty and administrators to participate in PL aligned with the science of reading and to influence EPP instructional practices, MSDE will encourage EPPs to identify a cadre of faculty members to serve as MSDE Literacy Instruction Observers. This initiative will enable EPPs to attest to the proficiency of teacher candidates enrolled in licensure programs, ensuring that they are using research-based instructional methods for teaching reading. This observation process can serve as an alternative to formal licensure assessments for teacher candidates.

For EPP faculty to become official MSDE Literacy Instruction Observers, they must:

1. **Undergo Specialized Training:** Participate in training sessions provided by MSDE focused on the science of reading and the observation protocol.
2. **Demonstrate Competence:** Show proficiency in the five pillars of the science of reading and the ability to accurately assess teacher candidates.

3. **Commit to Ongoing Professional Learning:** Engage in continuous PL to stay updated on the latest research and best practices in literacy instruction.

In addition to these requirements, Literacy Instruction Observers will:

- **Implement an MSDE-Created Observation Protocol:** This protocol ensures the accuracy and consistency of assessments, maintaining high standards of quality in evaluating teacher candidates.
- **Participate in Collaborative Networks:** Join networks of Literacy Instruction Observers to share best practices, discuss challenges, and receive support from peers and MSDE.
- **Engage in Data-Driven Decision Making:** Use data collected from observations to inform instructional practices and professional development needs, ensuring continuous improvement in literacy instruction.
- **Promote a Culture of Excellence:** Encourage a commitment to high standards and evidence-based practices within their institutions, fostering an environment that prioritizes literacy and effective teaching strategies.

Moreover, MSDE will facilitate the integration of these PL initiatives into EPP curricula through:

- **Curriculum Alignment Workshops:** Sessions to help EPPs align their curricula with the latest research and best practices in the science of reading.
- **Resource Provision:** Providing access to high-quality instructional materials, assessment tools, and other resources that support effective literacy instruction.
- **Institutional Support Grants:** Offering grants to EPPs to support the implementation of these PL initiatives and to incentivize participation among faculty and administrators.

- **Performance Feedback Mechanisms:** Establishing systems for ongoing feedback and assessment to ensure that the PL initiatives are effective and meet the desired outcomes.

This collaborative effort will ultimately improve literacy outcomes for students across Maryland, ensuring that future educators are well-prepared to teach reading using research-based, effective instructional methods.

Objectives for Goal 2

MSDE's second goal is to increase access to effective literacy programming for all students, with a priority focus on LEAs with high populations of underserved students. MSDE will ensure that 95% of the awarded CLSD funds are invested in high-need LEAs in Maryland. These funds will target initiatives addressing significant gaps in literacy proficiency and inequities in access to effective literacy instruction.

In the past, Maryland's CLSD (formerly SRCL) funds did not prioritize LEAs with larger percentages of underserved student groups. To address this, MSDE will take measures to ensure that CLSD funds will now prioritize LEAs with larger underserved student populations. To ensure the effective use of CLSD funds, sub-grant applicants will develop detailed proposals for initiatives based on their LEA's specific needs.

The below objectives were selected by MSDE based on the comprehensive needs assessment and literature review. LEAs are given the flexibility to choose as many or as few of these objectives as they see fit, provided each project plan meets specific criteria. Each objective under this goal provides more information on these options.

Objective 2.1: Developing or Expanding Literacy Coaching Models (CPP 2 and 3).

LEAs can develop or expand a literacy coaching model that supports elementary (K-5) or secondary (6-12) schools. The coaching model should:

- **Require job-embedded professional learning:** Coaches will work within classrooms to provide immediate, relevant support to teachers.
- **Emphasize support for struggling students:** The model will prioritize interventions and supports for students who are not meeting proficiency benchmarks by grade 3.
- **Support literacy practices across content areas:** Coaches will help integrate literacy instruction into all subject areas, enhancing students' reading and writing skills throughout their education.
- **Aid in effective MTSS implementation:** Coaches will support teachers in analyzing data, identifying effective tiered instruction strategies, and implementing those strategies in their classrooms.
- **Include job-embedded professional learning for literacy coaches:** Coaches will also receive ongoing training and support from State Literacy Coaches and participate in MSDE Monthly Literacy Coaching Regional Cohorts to ensure they are effective in their roles.

Objective 2.2: Supporting Students with Identified Learning Needs (CPP 3).

In Objective 2.2, LEAs have the option to use CLSD funds to refine or develop a district MTSS model. This MTSS model should:

- **Identify and support struggling students early:** The system should ensure that students with gaps in foundational literacy skills are identified as early as possible, preventing the overidentification of students for special education services.
- **Include evidence-based reading interventions:** The MTSS should incorporate Tier 1, 2, and 3 reading interventions, emphasizing that Tier 3 instruction is not a pathway to special education but a means of providing intensive support, preventing the overidentification of students for special education services.
- **Address student attendance:** The MTSS should include strategies to mitigate chronic absenteeism, such as de-escalation techniques for behavior-related absences, ensuring students attend and benefit from daily instruction.
- **Train educators on its use:** The system should include educator training in the model. In order for students to properly be identified for tiered instruction, educators must first know what to look for and what programs would be beneficial.

By implementing these comprehensive initiatives, MSDE aims to increase the use of evidence-based literacy instructional practices aligned to the science of reading used by educators, improve literacy outcomes for all students, and ensure equitable access to high-quality literacy materials across Maryland. Through targeted use of CLSD funds and a focus on evidence-based practices, MSDE will support LEAs in addressing the most significant gaps in literacy proficiency and promoting educational equity.

Objective 2.3: Supporting Multilingual Learners (CPP 2 and 3)

In Objective 2.3, LEAs have the option to use CLSD funds to specifically support the needs of multilingual learners. By choosing this initiative, LEAs can procure and deliver PL

opportunities for Maryland general educators to learn how to adapt structured literacy instruction to meet the needs of multilingual learners. This PL will help educators understand how to modify their teaching strategies to better support students who are learning English as an additional language. In addition to training general educators, LEAs can also offer specialized training to ELD instructors. This training will focus on the science of reading and its direct relationship to language acquisition, equipping ELD instructors with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively teach reading to multilingual learners.

LEAs will select these PL offerings from a curated list provided by MSDE. They will have the flexibility to determine the most appropriate target audience for each training and choose the delivery model that best fits their needs. This initiative not only aims to improve literacy outcomes for multilingual learners but also aligns with Recommendation 3b of the Blueprint Workgroup on English Learners (ELs) in Public Schools.

By addressing the specific needs of multilingual learners and implementing a comprehensive PL model, MSDE aims to ensure that all students, regardless of their background or language proficiency, have access to high-quality literacy education and the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Objective 2.4: Implementing a Comprehensive Professional Learning Model (CPP 2 and 3)

MSDE has recently adopted the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, which provide a comprehensive framework to ensure that PL for educators is high-quality, impactful, and aligned with the goal of improving student outcomes. These standards emphasize continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and alignment with performance and curriculum standards. In Objective 2.4, LEAs have the option to use CLSD funds to implement

an overarching PL model for teachers and literacy leaders from birth through grade 12. To align with Maryland’s vision for high-quality PL, the LEA models must include the following elements:

| LEA Professional Learning Model Requirements | Description |
|--|---|
| 1. Needs Assessment and Data Analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Specific Needs: Conduct a thorough needs assessment to identify gaps in knowledge, skills, and instructional practices among educators using data from student assessments, teacher evaluations, and other relevant sources. • Data-Driven Decision Making: Utilize data analysis to plan, implement, and evaluate PL activities to ensure they address the actual needs of educators and students. |
| 2. Job-Embedded Professional Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-the-Job Support: Provide opportunities for educators to engage in PL within their work environment, such as coaching, mentoring, collaborative planning, and classroom-based observations. • Practice and Application: Ensure PL includes opportunities for educators to practice new skills and strategies in their classrooms, with ongoing support and feedback. |
| 3. Collaborative Learning Communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Establish and support PLCs where educators can regularly collaborate to share best practices, analyze student data, and plan instruction. • Peer Collaboration: Encourage peer observations, co-teaching, and collaborative inquiry projects to foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement. |
| 4. Leadership Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Training: Provide PL opportunities for school and district leaders to enhance their capacity to support and sustain effective instructional practices. • Distributed Leadership: Promote the development of teacher leaders who can take on instructional leadership roles within their schools. |
| 5. Alignment with Curriculum and Standards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Integration: Ensure PL is aligned with the state’s curriculum standards and instructional goals, including training on the use of high-quality instructional materials and resources. • Standards-Based Instruction: Focus PL on strategies that support standards-based instruction to help educators guide students to meet or exceed state standards. |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 6. Evaluation and Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact Evaluation: Implement mechanisms to evaluate the impact of PL on educator practice and student outcomes, using this information to refine and improve PL programs. • Ongoing Feedback: Provide educators with regular, constructive feedback on their instructional practices to guide further professional development. |
| 7. Equity and Cultural Competence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally Responsive Practices: Incorporate training on culturally responsive teaching practices to ensure all students receive equitable and effective instruction. • Addressing Disparities: Focus on reducing disparities in educational outcomes by providing PL that equips educators to meet the diverse needs of all students. |
| 8. Sustainability and Scalability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Practices: Design PL programs that are sustainable over the long term, with ongoing support and resources to maintain their effectiveness. • Scalable Models: Develop scalable PL models that can be adapted and implemented across multiple schools and districts. |

This initiative will provide a cohesive framework for PL that supports educators at every stage of their careers, from new teachers to experienced literacy leaders. By aligning with Learning Forward’s Standards for PL, LEAs will ensure that their PL efforts are effective, sustainable, and aligned with best practices in the field.

Finally, In September of 2024, the MSDE will initiate a research project in partnership with Johns Hopkins University and the State University of New York (SUNY), aimed at increasing teacher knowledge by providing access to PL opportunities aligned with the science of reading. These PL opportunities include fully asynchronous online courses for practicing P-12 grade teachers. The course covers the five pillars of the science of reading. Upon completion, participating teachers can receive 35 Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) hours or Continuing Education Units (CEUs). As LEAs are building their PL models, they will be able to leverage these opportunities and be able to ensure that the PL they offer can go further than just focusing on the fundamentals of research-based instruction.

Objective 2.5: Adopting and Implementing High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)
(CPP 2 and 3)

According to a survey sent to all 24 LEAs in January 2023, 54% of Maryland LEAs use instructional materials that score as green, or “Meets Expectations,” according to EdReports, a national organization that was established to rate instructional materials and indicate their quality. This system centers on standards alignment, grade-level rigor and complexity, and the usability of resources. MSDE has developed an HQIM initiative to address the evolving rating system landscape by creating a state-specific HQIM rating rubric. This rubric focuses on Maryland-specific priorities, such as usability, knowledge building, supporting multilingual learners, culturally affirming, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) concepts. This initiative is scheduled to roll out between the summer and fall of 2024.

The Maryland HQIM review process has revealed that many of the HQIMs currently implemented by Maryland LEAs may not meet the standards required by local boards of education. This has raised concerns among LEA literacy leaders about how to fund this essential but costly initiative. To address this, Objective 2.5 offers LEAs the option to use CLSD funds to adopt and implement an HQIM for Reading/English-Language Arts.

This initiative should include comprehensive training for all educators, including teachers, literacy coaches, and administration. This training should extend beyond simply "unpacking" the materials and should delve deeply into the content and research-based instructional practices included in the HQIM. To ensure effective implementation, this training should also incorporate job-embedded components delivered by vendors or district literacy coaches.

Furthermore, by choosing to use CLSD funds for this initiative, the LEA must commit to developing a transparent method of communicating the adopted HQIM used in each grade band for Reading/English-Language Arts instruction. This transparency ensures that all stakeholders are aware of and understand the instructional materials being used, promoting consistency and alignment across the LEA.

Objective 2.6: Developing LEA Partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education (CPP 1)

In Objective 2.6, LEAs can use CLSD funds to develop a partnership to collaborate with local institutions of higher education (IHEs). This partnership should allow both the LEA and the IHE to benefit. Therefore, funds used for this initiative should be used by the LEA to ensure that syllabi utilized in their local IHE's EPP are aligned with the science of reading and structured literacy instructional practices. This will ensure that the LEA is receiving candidates who do not require immense amounts of training upon hiring and will be effective teachers of literacy instruction. In return, the EPP will offer practicum opportunities developed with the LEA for preservice teachers to ensure that the practicum is aligned to the best evidence-based literacy instruction. Additionally, these funds can help support a career pathway for graduates directly from the EPP to the LEA.

Objective 2.7: Increasing Equity in Gifted/Talented and Advanced Programs (CPP 2 and 3)

Objective 2.7 will allow for LEAs to use CLSD funds to increase equity in gifted/talented and advanced programs offered in their LEA. As noted in the needs assessment above, the excellence gap, the difference in the percentage of low-income versus high-income students who reach advanced levels of academic performance, is a continuously growing issue in Maryland. Therefore, if LEAs choose this initiative, they can use CLSD funding to identify underserved students who are proficient and provide targeted enrichment support to students through a

summer and school-year enrichment initiative. These funds can be used for PL for teachers, summer program development, and teacher salaries/stipends. If implemented successfully, data should reveal a closing of excellence gaps and increased participation of underserved student groups in secondary advanced programming opportunities.

Objective 2.8: MSDE CLSD Sub-grant Management

Objective 2.8 details the management aspects of sub-granting CLSD funds to LEAs. This includes hiring a grants manager to lead the development of the sub-granting process and associated projects. These projects include developing a sub-grantee application and Request for Application (RFA) process, establishing a plan for necessary technical assistance (TA) and PL to support LEAs in the RFA process and fund implementation, determining the methodology for reviewing applications and selecting sub-grant awardees, as well as creating a plan for fund distribution/reimbursement, monitoring, and financial oversight.

While the grants manager hired in Phase 1 of the project will officially design the sub-granting process, the competitive sub-grant application for LEAs will require a proposal including a needs assessment, a priority focus, goals, objectives, and milestones aligned with the initiative focus, a plan of implementation detailing activities aligned with research, a monitoring plan, an evaluation plan, a management plan with a project timeline, and a budget narrative. Additionally, a preference priority will be given to LEAs with high populations of underserved student groups Maryland must focus on Multilingual Learners, students with disabilities, students of color, and economically disadvantaged students. Within those LEAs' proposals, priority will only be awarded if their project plan includes an explicit emphasis on the schools that instruct these high populations of students.

MSDE will distribute the reimbursement of grant funds after verifying that the funds were used following the grant requirements. The grants manager will be responsible for verifying reimbursements of CLSD funds to LEAs, ensuring compliance and appropriate use of funds. The MSDE will provide TA to support LEAs in the RFA process. The TA will include information on the topics below:

- Sub-grant expectations, parts of the application, the methodology for project plan review, and overall grant timeline
- Developing and conducting a needs assessment
- The options in project initiatives that can be funded by sub-granted CLSD funds, utilizing the needs assessment data to choose project initiatives, and the federal and state requirements within the use of the grant funds
- PL on effective literacy coaching models, MTSS, PL models, partnerships with IHEs, and utilizing Maryland HQIM reviews to select an HQIM
- Developing a plan for grant management that includes monitoring both fiscal and programmatic aspects of the grant and the internal LEA process of reimbursement

The methodology for reviewing LEA sub-grant applications will be developed by the MSDE grants manager with input from the MSDE Literacy Advisory Panel. Once the plan is developed, the grants manager will initiate the recruitment and training of reviewers and oversee the application review process. After the sub-grant awardees are notified, MSDE will conduct a needs analysis of the initiatives chosen by the sub-grantees. This analysis will guide the provision of further technical assistance (TA) for the implementation and monitoring of the grant.

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT PLAN

MSDE's Division of Curriculum, Instructional Improvement, and Office of Professional Learning and High-Quality Instructional Materials, in collaboration with the Division of Early Childhood, has crafted a management plan with detailed project activities designed to meet the grant's objectives. Table 3 and 4 below outlines this plan, specifying responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for each activity. This clear assignment of tasks and staff responsibilities, coupled with the logical progression of activities, will help ensure that project goals are met promptly and within budget.

MSDE will invest thirteen key staff members (resumes included in the Appendices) in the proposed project. Three of these staff members are included in the proposed budget, while the other ten are funded through other MSDE funding streams to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness. These ten staff members were key contributors to the development of this proposal. The three staff members included in the proposed budget will be hired once CLSD funds are awarded to MSDE. Below is a list of the 10 existing MSDE staff members collaborating on this project:

1. Dr. Tenette Smith, Executive Director of Literacy Programs and Initiatives, will oversee the project. Her experience leading literacy initiatives under Dr. Carey Wright in Mississippi from 2013-2024 will be invaluable in implementing the listed initiatives.
2. Cristina Rodriguez, Manager of Literacy Programs and Initiatives, will serve as the CLSD project director.
3. Nancy Perkins, Part-time Literacy Specialist and former grant coordinator for the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant Program awarded to Maryland in 2017, will co-lead the work involving EPPs.

4. Alaina Mackell, Literacy Coordinator, will lead the work focused on literacy coaches.
5. Stephanie Dale, Literacy Coordinator, will lead the work focused on PL for LEA literacy leaders.
6. Dr. Nykia Washington – Pre-Kindergarten and Mixed Delivery Programs Manager who will support all work involving early childhood programs.
7. Dr. Elise Brown, Executive Director of Professional Development and High-Quality Instructional Materials, will lead the work in supporting LEAs in selecting and implementing HQIM.
8. Dr. Teresa Timmons-Parrott, Manager of Multilingual Education, will support the development of approved training programs focused on the needs of MLs and assist LEAs in procuring and implementing said programs.
9. Anthony Vargas, Director of Advanced Academic and Gifted and Talented Programs, will support LEAs choosing to use CLSD funds to address the excellence gap by offering summer and school-year enrichment initiatives.

The MSDE CLSD Team will convene monthly to plan and strategize project initiatives and activities, analyze data, discuss project milestones, monitor progress towards goals, plan for upcoming monitoring, organize TA and PL opportunities, and ensure coherence and alignment with grant priorities. During these meetings, the Project Director, Cristina Rodriguez, will provide updates from monthly finance meetings with the grants managers, ensuring adherence to the budget and identifying opportunities for efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The CLSD grant will unfold in seven phases, outlined below. These phases are structured to simplify the work, milestones, and objectives, ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the project.

Table 3: Management Plan

| Phase/Dates | Major Tasks/Milestones |
|---|---|
| Phase 1: October – December 2024 (MSDE Start-Up) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin monthly MSDE CLSD Project Team Meetings • Hire grant manager • Development of Literacy Advisory Group <p>MILESTONE: Development/Revision of School Literacy Plans</p> <p>MILESTONE: Subgrantee Application Process/review methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recruiting reviewers <p>MILESTONE: Request for Quote (RFQ) for multilingual training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for fund distribution/reimbursement, monitoring, and methodology for financial oversight • Planning for PL sessions (ECE, TA, ELA Literacy Leaders, etc.) |
| Phase 2: January 1- March 2025 (Year 1 of the sub-grant) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly MSDE CLSD Project Team Meetings • TA to complete the RFA (fiscal managers, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deploying RFA • Application review <p>MILESTONE: Awarding funds (by March 2025)</p> |

| Phase/Dates | Major Tasks/Milestones |
|--|---|
| | <p>MILESTONE: Begin delivering PL on new Early Learning Standards</p> <p>MILESTONE: Begin developing MISLL and delivering monthly PL for LEA ELA Supervisors</p> |
| <p>Phase 3:</p> <p>April-September 30, 2025</p> <p>(Year 1 of the sub-grant continued)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly MSDE CLSD Project Team Meetings • MSDE to begin communicating with EPPs regarding the MSDE Literacy Instruction Observers initiative <p>MILESTONE: Begin quarterly meetings with IHEs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA planning for implementation and support • Monthly TA/PL for implementation <p>MILESTONE: Monitoring of initiatives and use of funds/earmarked funds</p> |
| <p>Phase 4:</p> <p>October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026</p> <p>(Year 2 of the sub-grant)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly MSDE CLSD Project Team Meetings • TA to create LEA sustainability plan • Quarterly meetings with IHEs • Monthly TA/PL for implementation <p>MILESTONE: Data collection and review of Year 1 initiatives and use of funds, planning for funds/initiatives for Year 2, feedback is requested from LEAs and provided to LEAs on information shared</p> |

| Phase/Dates | Major Tasks/Milestones |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Desktop and onsite monitoring <p>MILESTONE: Regional Literacy Coach Cohort Monthly Meetings Kickoff</p> <p>MILESTONE: End of Year 2 Monitoring Collection</p> |
| <p>Phase 5:</p> <p>October 1, 2026 –</p> <p>September 30, 2027</p> <p>(Year 3 of the sub-grant)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monthly MSDE CLSD Project Team Meetings ● Quarterly meetings with IHEs ● Monthly TA/PL for implementation <p>MILESTONE: Data collection and review of Year 2 initiatives and use of funds, planning for funds/initiatives for Year 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Desktop and onsite monitoring ○ feedback is requested from LEAs and provided to LEAs on information shared <p>MILESTONE: End of Year 3 Monitoring Collection</p> |
| <p>Phase 6:</p> <p>October 1, 2027 –</p> <p>September 30, 2028</p> <p>(Year 4 of the sub-grant)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monthly MSDE CLSD Project Team Meetings ● Quarterly meetings with IHEs ● Monthly TA/PL for implementation |

| Phase/Dates | Major Tasks/Milestones |
|--|--|
| | <p>MILESTONE: Data collection and review of Year 3 initiatives and use of funds, planning for funds/initiatives for Year 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Desktop and onsite monitoring ○ feedback is requested from LEAs and provided to LEAs on information shared <p>MILESTONE: End of Year 4 Monitoring Collection</p> |
| <p>Phase 7:</p> <p>October 1, 2028 –</p> <p>September 30, 2029</p> <p>(Year 5 of the sub-grant)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monthly MSDE CLSD Project Team Meetings ● Quarterly meetings with IHEs ● Monthly TA/PL for implementation <p>MILESTONE: Data collection and review of Year 4 initiatives and use of funds, planning for funds/initiatives for Year 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Desktop and onsite monitoring ○ feedback is requested from LEAs and provided to LEAs on information shared <p>MILESTONE: Closing of sub-grant – Final monitoring collection</p> <p>MILESTONE: Closing of CLSD Grant</p> |

Table 4: Management Plan Aligned to CLSD Goals/Objectives

| <u>Goal</u> | <u>Objective</u> | <u>MSDE Activities and Technical Assistance</u> | <u>Outcomes</u> | <u>Responsible</u> |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| 1. Increase educator capacity to deliver research-based literacy instruction. | Objective 1.1 Signaling and guidance from MSDE | Develop the MSDE Literacy Advisory Panel | Develop a comprehensive plan for literacy instruction in the state by leveraging the input from LEA stakeholders. | Dr. Tenette Smith/ Cristina Rodriguez |
| | | Review and revise the Maryland State Comprehensive Literacy Plan, “Maryland’s Keys to Comprehensive Literacy” | | |
| | Objective 1.2 Supporting LEA-based literacy coaches | Provide guidance on the development of an evidenced-based literacy coaching model for use in the LEA and provide regional State Literacy Coaches to support LEA literacy coaches. | By August 2029, increase the percentage of educator knowledge by 25% as identified by the Johns Hopkins University study that will be conducted as a part of MSDE’s research study. | Alaina Mackell |
| | | Provide PL for LEA based Literacy Coaches to ensure consistency of implementation of the coaching mode | | Alaina Mackell |
| | Objective 1.3 Creating a Cadre of Informed Literacy Administrators | Provide monthly PL for LEA ELA Supervisors | By January 2025, LEA literacy leaders will convene for PL and to establish a network of advocates | Stephanie Dale/ Dr. Tenette Smith |
| | | Establish the Maryland Initiative for State Leaders in Literacy (MISLL) and meet quarterly | | |
| | Objective 1.4 Supporting ECE centers with the development of a PL plan | Provide PL for ECE centers and LEAs in the development of a PL plan that includes the new early learning standards | By August of 2029, 100% of participating LEAs will submit PL plans. | Dr. Nykia Washington |
| | Objective 1.5 Strengthening Educator Preparation Programs | Develop the MSDE Literacy Instruction Observer program to train EPP faculty in supporting pre-service educators attaining licensure and meet with IHEs quarterly | By August 2029, 50% of IHEs in Maryland will have faculty that serve as MSDE Literacy Instruction Observers, all of whom will have received baseline PL. | Cristina Rodriguez and Nancy Perkins |

| <u>Goal</u> | | <u>Objective</u> | <u>MSDE Activities and Technical Assistance</u> | <u>Outcomes</u> | <u>Responsible</u> |
|--------------------|--|---|--|---|--|
| | | | Provide baseline PL for EPP faculty serving as MSDE Literacy Instruction Observers | | |
| 2 | Increase access to effective literacy programming for all students with priority consideration given to LEAs with a high population of underserved students (as defined by 86 FR 70612) | Objective 2.1 Developing or expanding LEA Literacy Coaching Model | Support LEAs in developing a Literacy Coaching Model in grade K-5 and/or 6-12 that includes clearly defined job responsibilities and PL | By August 2029, increase the percentage of educator knowledge of Literacy by 25% as identified by the Johns Hopkins University conducted as a part of MSDE's research study | Alaina Mackell |
| | | Objective 2.2 Supporting students with identified learning needs | Support LEAs in refining/developing a district MTSS model | By August 2029, decrease the number of students identified as a student with a disability by 10%. | Additional Literacy Coordinator TBD |
| | | Objective 2.3 Supporting Multilingual Learners | Support LEAs in identifying and delivering PL opportunities to support multilingual learners | By 2029, 30% of multilingual learners in 3 rd - 8 th grade will score as proficient as measured by MCAP (an 18% increase from 2023) | Dr. Teresa Parrott |
| | | | Support LEAs in strengthening and improving early childhood language immersion classrooms in support of multilingual learners | | Dr. Nykia Washington |
| | | Objective 2.4 Implement an effective overarching PL model | Support LEAs in developing a model for PL in early childhood classrooms, elementary, and secondary grades that supports educators at every stage of their careers and is aligned to Learning Forward Standards | By August 2029, increase the percentage of educator knowledge of Literacy by 25% as identified by the Johns Hopkins University conducted as a part of MSDE's research study | Stephanie Dale |
| | | Objective 2.5 Select and implement High-Quality Instructional Material | Support LEAs in developing implementation plans for HQIM and sustained, job-embedded PL | By October 2027, 75% of CLSD LEA subgrantees will have acquired and implemented HQIM for Literacy instruction | Dr. Elise Brown/ Dr. Tenette Smith/CLSD |

| <u>Goal</u> | | <u>Objective</u> | <u>MSDE Activities and Technical Assistance</u> | <u>Outcomes</u> | <u>Responsible</u> |
|-------------|--|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| | | (HQIM) for Reading/English Language Arts | | | Literacy Coaches |
| | | Objective 2.6 Developing LEA Partnerships with IHEs | Support LEAs in leveraging partnerships with IHEs to the ensure the alignment between coursework and LEA literacy instruction, develop pathways for increasing teacher recruitment | By August 2029, 70% of new teachers in LEAs awarded CLSD funds will be rated as “effective” at the end of their first year of teaching, according to district evaluations. | Cristina Rodriguez Nancy Perkins |
| | | Objective 2.7 Increase equity in gifted/talented and advanced programs | Support LEAs in closing the excellence gap by providing summer and school year enrichment programs to underserved students | By August 2029, data will show a 20% decrease in the excellence gaps and a 10% increase in the participation of underserved student groups in secondary advanced programming opportunities. | Anthony Vargas |
| | | Objective 2.8 MSDE CLSD Subgrant Management | Identify and select a grants manager | By March of 2025, 95% of CLSD funds will be awarded to subgrantees with priority consideration given to LEAs with a high percentage of underserved students. | Grants Manager/ Cristina Rodriguez |
| | | | Develop the application process and methodology for awarding funds | | |
| | | | Develop a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to develop a list of vetted PL offerings to meet the needs of Multilingual Learners | | |
| | Plan for fund distribution /reimbursement, monitoring, and methodology for financial oversight | By October of 2026 (and every year thereafter) 100% of CLSD subgrantees will have received feedback on the implementation of their CLSD program. | | | |

QUALITY OF PROJECT SERVICES

As mentioned above, Maryland's public schools serve a high percentage of students who would be considered as underserved. More than half of Maryland students are students of color and almost 40% of all Maryland students need or receive federal assistance programs. Additionally, 12% of Maryland students are considered MLs and 13% receive special education services. These are the groups of students that MSDE intends to service through CLSD funds. MSDE will ensure that the project services rendered will impact these specific groups primarily through the sub-granting process. Considering that 95% of these funds will be utilized within LEAs, MSDE intends on using the sub-grantee application as a means to provide priority to LEAs that serve a high percentage of these student groups. Through collaboration with the MSDE Research Office, MSDE has been able to identify the LEAs that have the high percentages of these specific student subgroups, and while all 24 LEAs are invited to apply for the CLSD sub-grant, these LEAs will be prioritized. As mentioned above, however, this priority will only be awarded if the included project plan includes an emphasis on the specific schools that instruct these high populations of students.

Additionally, as MSDE awards CLSD funds to LEAs, the CLSD Project Team will ensure that 15% of the funds will go to programs that support children from birth through Kindergarten. These funds can be used by LEAs to achieve Objectives 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and/or 2.6. The MSDE CLSD Project Team will also ensure that no less than 40% of the awarded CLSD funds will be used to support students in elementary schools (grades K-5). LEAs may use these funds to achieve Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and/or 2.7. Finally the CLSD Project Team will also ensure that no less than 40% of awarded subgrant CLSD funds will be used to

support State and local programs and activities that support students in grades 6 through 12. LEAs may use these funds to achieve Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and/or 2.7.

Several of the options LEAs may choose to implement using CLSD funds involve developing or procuring and providing PL opportunities. MSDE will also be developing and providing PL for a variety of educators. To ensure that the PL are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice, MSDE will require that all PL is aligned to the Learning Forward Standards as listed in Objective 2.4 above.

QUALITY OF PROJECT EVALUATION

Monitoring the implementation of the sub-grant will involve data collection and review at the end of each phase and the beginning of the next. This process will include a feedback mechanism. The grants managers will use information collected from the LEAs to provide immediate feedback on the use of funds and the implementation of their project activities. This feedback will guide monthly technical assistance (TA) and PL opportunities for LEAs.

The data collection and grant monitoring tools developed by MSDE grant managers, in collaboration with the MSDE Office of Research, will also enable LEAs to provide feedback on their experience in implementing the program. This feedback will be shared with the MSDE team at their monthly meetings, beginning with phase 3 and continuing through phase 7.

In addition to desktop monitoring, the two MSDE grant managers will conduct on-site monitoring from phases 4 through 7. This will ensure successful project implementation and provide an alternative method for gathering information on the support LEAs may need from MSDE.

Through the partnership with Johns Hopkins mentioned previously, MSDE will also evaluate the variety of PL opportunities and their impact on teacher knowledge, teacher effectiveness, and teacher satisfaction. An additional goal within the study is the ability to determine the effectiveness of literacy coaching (LEA coaches and/or state coaches) on teacher efficacy.

To ensure the quality of evaluation, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will incorporate the Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) into its approach. The CIP (see Appendices) is a systematic method for analyzing and improving processes, programs, or products. In the context of the CLSD program, the CIP will help MSDE assess the effectiveness of the program and make informed decisions for improvement. This cycle is iterative, with each round building on the insights gained from the previous ones to drive ongoing progress and innovation. By employing the Continuous Improvement Process, MSDE will ensure that the CLSD program remains effective and responsive to the needs of students, educators, and stakeholders.

Finally, because LEAs must submit a request for reimbursement to MSDE to receive their CLSD funds, MSDE will be able to ensure that performance feedback and assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes occur continuously throughout each fiscal year. This rolling process will enable MSDE to adopt a hands-on approach, monitoring and collaborating directly with LEAs at each step of their implementation.