

Maryland State Department of Education

Recent Supports to Local School Systems



STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

December 8, 2020

Purpose

To **highlight the recent supports provided** by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Teaching and Learning, Office of School Effectiveness, and Office of Finance and Administration to local school systems (LSSs) **during the pandemic this school year.**

Office of Teaching and Learning: Division of Early Childhood

Judy Centers, servicing children birth through age five provided:

- ✓ School readiness kits for incoming prekindergarten students
- ✓ Learn-at-home family engagement kits
- ✓ Virtual playgroups and supplies and materials for families in playgroups
- ✓ Books to support home libraries
- ✓ Materials and technology delivered to child care providers to enhance their ability to support prekindergarten and kindergarten children during virtual learning, including school readiness materials focusing on language and literacy, math, and social skills
- ✓ Distribution of technology devices such as tablets, laptops, and hot spots for families that otherwise would not have access

Office of Teaching and Learning: Division of Career and College Readiness

Allocated \$700,000 in federal Perkins Reserve Fund grants to school systems and community colleges to support CTE virtual instruction.

Created an online repository of virtual learning modules and resources for CTE teachers and students for all 60 CTE programs of study.

Allocated \$2 million dollars to school systems and community colleges in Career and Technical Education (CTE) Innovation grant funds to support CTE virtual instruction.

Collaborated with employers to offer virtual work-based learning experiences for CTE students.

Leveraged federal and state funds to offer CTE curriculum online and provide professional learning experiences to teachers on how to facilitate CTE instruction online.

Office of Teaching and Learning: **Leadership Development and School Improvement**



Developed and facilitated training to:

- school systems on virtual instructional leadership
- school leaders and central office staff to support virtual teacher and principal observation and evaluation.

Office of Teaching and Learning: Division of Early Intervention and Special Education

- ✔ Assistant State Superintendent Advisory Council consists of eight Birth through age 21 early intervention and special leaders that **meet directly (one on one) with the assistant state superintendent to provide the local lens of current "in the field/on the ground" issues around the impact of the coronavirus on special education programs.**
- ✔ Resources to respond to Extended School Closure were created, disseminated through statewide **webinars** including: 26 Technical Assistance Bulletins, Guidance Documents (A Guide for Families; Social/Emotional Support Handbook), and TIPs for Implementation (i.e. Mask-wearing for Students with Disabilities), and a biweekly release of a Frequently Asked Questions document to respond to locally driven queries.
- ✔ **All information is posted** on the MSDE website and the Maryland Learning Links website.

Office of Teaching and Learning: Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Information Technology

MSDE meets monthly with Chief Information Officers (CIOs) where best practices around remote learning and cyber security are shared.

MSDE is forming a cyber security team to assist LSSs in a more comprehensive manner.

MSDE is supporting the LSSs by conducting biweekly "Brown Bag" meetings with Local Accountability Coordinators to answer questions, provide updates on testing windows, train on new testing platforms, and offer support.

Office of Teaching and Learning: Division of Curriculum, Instructional Improvement, and Professional Learning

Tasked the Digital Advisory Committee which represents statewide stakeholders to investigate and discuss today's and tomorrow's challenges as well as share best practices.

Conducted data workshops to support low performing schools.

Compiled and posted resources (e.g., teacher and parent resource guides and creation of a Science safety guide) to support hybrid and virtual instruction.

Conducted ongoing and frequent content meetings with LSS Assistant Superintendents, and content supervisors to discuss common problems and generate solutions to issues surrounding virtual and hybrid learning.

Conducted training for mentors/coaches on mentoring/coaching in a virtual environment.

Provided semester professional learning online courses related to blended and online delivery, as well as content.

Office of School Effectiveness: **Juvenile Services Education System (JSES)**

- ✔ Purchased cameras for each teacher's computer to ensure student engagement.
- ✔ Updated technology infrastructure with the Department of Information Technology (DOIT) to add additional wireless access points in schools and unit residences.
- ✔ Held joint meetings with the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) to create a quality assurance team to include staff from MSDE and DJS to ensure effective operations and accountability.
- ✔ Held teacher meetings with DJS to discuss COVID protocols and procedures.
- ✔ Held union meetings with MSDE and DJS to discuss teacher concerns regarding COVID and DJS facilities.

Office of School Effectiveness: **Transportation**

- Acts as the liaison between the MSDE and the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) for all issues relating to the pandemic.
- Participated in weekly calls with local school transportation directors and the Maryland Vehicle Administration (MVA) School Vehicle Safety Division to provide updates and pass on relevant information for the LSSs related to pupil transportation.
- Worked with MEMA and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to develop a formula for the distribution of cloth face masks, hand sanitizer, and face shields. Identified points of contact at the LSS and worked with schools on their logistical planning for this Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Worked with the MSDE Division of Nutrition on data related to meals distributed to students and families. Collaborated with the Department of Human Services to support plans on food related distribution processes.

Office of School Effectiveness:

School Facilities Branch

- **Implemented technology upgrades** to seamlessly support teleworking, virtual meetings, and electronic review of design submissions.
- **Increased participation in design meetings and used the efficiencies of the virtual platforms** to offer immediate feedback and guidance.
- **Participated in discussions and webinars facilitated by professional associations** such as the Association of School Business Officials, Architecture for Learning Environments, National Council on School Facilities, and the American Institute of Architects to collect and share information on practical actions to prepare school buildings for in-person learning.
- **Organized and facilitated the Chesapeake Nature Play and Learning Conference** in October, to continue the encouragement of outdoor learning and environmental education.

Office of School Effectiveness:

Maryland Public School System Athletic Association (MPSSAA)

- ✔ Participate in weekly calls, since April 2020, with the High School Athletic Association Executive Directors of Pennsylvania, Delaware, Washington D.C., Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky. Weekly calls focus on the status of surrounding states, collaboration on the most recent information, and sharing of best health and safety practices to maximize participation.
- ✔ **Participate in national calls** with all 51 High School Athletic Association Executive Directors and the leadership of the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations (NFHS).
- ✔ **Hold weekly calls with Dr. Teri McCambridge, chair of the MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee**, to advise school systems around the medical issues related to return to play.
- ✔ **Administer weekly calls with the MPSSAA Executive Council.** These meetings provide updates from each district of the MPSSAA membership on the latest information and next steps to maximize participation opportunities.

Office of School Effectiveness: **MPSSAA (continued)**

- ✔ **Distributed regular updates via either conference calls or emails to all 24 LSS designees** for interscholastic athletics. These updates are followed up by individual one-on-one check-ins in the LSSs, as necessary.
- ✔ **Host a monthly call with the heads of the Maryland private school associations** regarding the collective status of high school sports. All MPSSAA guidance and sport modifications have been shared with these organizations to use, as necessary.
- ✔ **Provided guidance for LSSs with information links** to make determinations on the extent of interscholastic participation. LSSs shall utilize the COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools MDH metrics and local health department guidance to determine the extent of participation in their respective LSSs. Decisions shall be in full compliance with state and local health orders and regulations.
- ✔ **Supplied LSSs additional extracurricular performing arts resources**, including activities such as music, dance, theater, and debate.

Office of School Effectiveness: Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy

Student Services and Strategic Planning Branch

- **Published a resource guide, *The New Normal: Understanding and Responding to The New Normal***, for school and school system personnel in supporting students as they transition from isolation to renewed interactions. The New Normal addresses issues such as depression, anxiety, loss, bias, and classroom interventions;
- **Provided a grant for technical assistance** (part of a federal grant) by Kennedy Krieger to School Psychological Services Supervisors on virtual assessments;
- **Provided training and technical assistance to LSS social workers and pupil personnel workers**, *Coping with Social Injustice in a COVID-19 Learning Environment: How Understanding Trauma Can Prepare Us to Support Students*;
- **Facilitating weekly meetings with Directors of Student Services** to provide information and updates, problem-solve around topics including professional development, attendance, trauma, COVID guidelines, etc.;
- **Providing ongoing technical support and professional development** through the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Maryland Partnership (MSDE, Johns Hopkins University; Sheppard Pratt Health System, and University of Maryland School of Law Center for Dispute Resolution) on topics such as behavior management in the virtual and school environment, trauma response for students affected by COVID-19, and social injustice, self-care, suicide prevention, mental health first aid, social and emotional learning, and restorative approaches.

Office of School Effectiveness: Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy

Student Services and Strategic Planning Branch (continued)

- **Facilitating bi-weekly meetings with School Psychological Services Supervisors and School Health Services Coordinators** to provide information and updates, problem-solve around student services-related topics and monthly meetings with Alternative Education Leaders to collaborate and share best practices related to effective strategies to improve student attendance in the virtual classroom, creating positive school climate, managing the return of students following CDC guidelines, and effectively engaging families;
- **Leading system teams in expanding the 2019 root cause analysis of disproportionate discipline and equity disparities** focusing upon short and long term action strategies for 2021;
- **Implementing the Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education) initiative** to provide targeted, evidence-based mental health practices statewide and to three local school systems (Baltimore, Caroline, and Talbot Counties). Through this initiative, the MSDE will provide training in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA), Adverse Childhood Experiences/Trauma-informed Care (ACEs), and Question, Persuade, and Respond (QPR) suicide prevention; and
- **Worked with community partners** on issues of foster care and homeless students.

Office of School Effectiveness: Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy

Student Services and Strategic Planning Branch: Nursing and Health Support

- Created an FAQ document for school nurses and other school health services staff to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and assist in re-entry planning.
- Collaborated with the MDH on concerted efforts to address the needs of schools and school systems in the present environment. Also collaborated with MDH to co-publish multiple documents related to guidance on preventing the spread of the Coronavirus in schools including:
 - [COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools](#) (Updated November 13, 2020)
 - [Response to a Laboratory Confirmed Case of COVID-19 and Persons with COVID-19-like Illness in Schools](#) (Updated November 13, 2020)
 - [Guidance for Temperature and Symptom Screening in Schools](#) (Updated November 13, 2020)
- Participating with the MDH on weekly calls with the public and non-public school representatives addressing topics to support school outbreak prevention and response through the assurance that schools fully implement MDH/MSDE COVID-19 mitigation guidance; and support student learning through fostering a healthy school environment for students, teachers, and school staff related to COVID-19 mitigation and outbreak prevention and response.
- Responding to requests for new School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) and requests to provide telehealth; Working through necessary steps to provide telehealth in SBHCs as requested and to provide health services to students when school buildings are closed and during virtual instruction.
- Working collaboratively with MEMA to distribute 1.5 million masks, 120,000 face shields, and approximately 54,000 bottles of hand sanitizer (MSDE purchased pumps for the hand sanitizer) to schools.

Office of School Effectiveness: Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy

Student Services and Strategic Planning Branch: Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant funds

Funds were used to:

- **Purchase more devices and hotspots** to increase digital access for all students
- **Purchase digital platforms and subscriptions to digital resources**, including special resources for English language learners and special education students, to support digital learning and continuity of learning plans
- **Purchase enhancements to student management systems** to support the transition to online learning;
- **Provide professional development for teachers** on how to integrate technology into the classroom and move instruction online
- **Provide stipends to teachers** to produce online content and lessons
- **Procure contracts for outside counseling services** to further support the mental health needs of all students
- **Provide professional development to teachers** on trauma and restorative approaches in order to better support student and family mental health needs.

Office of School Effectiveness: Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy

Youth Development Branch

- **Providing grants to schools and community-based agencies** to provide virtual out-of-school time (OST) programming to students across the state
- **Providing OST programs flexibility to utilize funds** to address distance learning needs
- **Providing technical support** around virtual learning opportunities due to COVID-19
- **Assisting sub-grantees with local and national funding sources** (not only monetary) to advance their reach to the youth and families impacted by economic challenges, poverty and or COVID-19 (this is done pre and during COVID-19)
- **Created and provided a resource and hosted four virtual meetings** thus far for LSSs and special school service-learning contacts so they could explore the challenges the pandemic is presenting for their schools and students in the area of service learning
- **Worked with LSSs and special schools** to develop individualized strategies for engaging students in service learning during the pandemic. Each LSS developed a document entitled COVID-19: LSS Strategies to Implement Service-Learning Projects in the 2020-2021 school year.

Office of School Effectiveness: **Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy**

State Aided Educational Institutions (SAIs)

Supporting SAIs in providing virtual field trip experiences to students attending public, private/parochial, and home-school students with a focus on Title I schools. These include tutoring, GED prep classes, tours of museums, college tours, environmental education programs, and theatrical performances.

Office of School Effectiveness: Division of Certification and Program Approval

Educator Information System

- **MSDE has partnered with inLumon**, a Nevada-based information technology company specializing in developing licensing systems throughout the United States
- **Automated, web-based platform will modernize and streamline the application and certification process by:**
 - Eliminating the need for paper
 - Allowing online payments
 - Providing educators with access to real-time updates
 - Promoting communication with the MSDE through an educator application dashboard
 - Ordering transcripts and test scores and verify experience within the application
- **Public educator certification search website** will allow interested parties to verify the certification status of Maryland educators
- Incorporation of Maryland's disqualified bus drivers, bus attendants, and substitutes for instant LSS access

Office of Finance and Administration

CARES ACT FUNDING	TOTAL AWARDED	ALLOCATION	PURPOSE
Coronavirus Relief Fund – Tutoring	\$100,000,000	Based on FY 2019 Title I allocations.	To support tutoring and other supplemental services to compensate for the learning loss associated with time away from direct instruction as a result of the COVID-19 school closures.
Coronavirus Relief Fund – Technology	\$100,000,000	Share of Statewide enrollment	To support technology needs associated with virtual learning necessary as a result of the COVID-19 school closures.
Coronavirus Relief Fund - Connectivity	\$10,000,000	Competitive	Managed by Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Office of Rural Broadband Broadband connectivity for unserved students.
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund – Formula	\$187,050,652	Based on FY 2019 Title I allocations.	To address the impact of COVID-19 on elementary and secondary schools. Local School Systems may use funds for any purposes listed in section 18003(d) of the CARES Act.
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund – State Set-aside – Reopening	\$10,000,000	Base Amount, plus per pupil	To support costs associated with bringing students back for in-person learning by the start of the second quarter of the 2020-21 school year. Eligible grantees receive a base amount of \$200,000 as well as a per-student allocation.
Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund – Innovative Grant	\$10,000,000	Competitive	To support the costs associated with a unique or innovative approach to engage students, teachers and school communities that address academic accessibility as a result of the COVID-19. Priority provided to projects that address at-risk students.
Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund – Technology	\$10,000,000	Share of Statewide enrollment weighted for at risk population	To support investments in technology infrastructure and professional development to improve capacity to provide high quality, accessible distance education or remote learning. Any of the purposes listed in section 18003(d) of the CARES Act are allowable.
THESE FUNDS SUPPORT STATEWIDE EDUCATION.			
Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund – Broadband	\$15,000,000		Managed by DHCD Office of Rural Broadband Development of a statewide wireless long term evolution network for educational purposes.

Office of Finance and Administration: Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs

- Continual reimbursement for meals served
- Maximized reimbursement following U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy
- Provided daily participation data on website
- Accepted 70 national waivers and put into practice
- Weekly online conferences calls
- Provided updates on waivers and addressed concerns
- Updated guidance, resources and other important information
- Conducted bi-monthly online meetings to support reopening issues

Total number of meals served from March 1 to October 30, 2020, is 50,728,098.
Reimbursement has been \$144,654,295.