

MEETING OF THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Minutes of the April 29, 2025 Meeting
200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

The Maryland State Board of Education met on April 29, 2025, at 9:00 am in the State Board room located within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

The following Board members were present in the Boardroom:

Dr. Joshua Michael (Board President), Dr. Monica Goldson (Board Vice President), Ms. Rachel McCusker, Mr. Nick Greer, Mr. Kenny Clash, Dr. Kim Lewis, Ms. Xiomara Medina, Mr. Chet Chesterfield, Mr. Abhiram Gaddam, Ms. Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, Dr. Irma Johnson, and Mr. Samir Paul were in attendance. Mr. Clarence Crawford was not present. Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy arrived at 11am.

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

MEETING OPENING

Dr. Michael called the meeting to order at 9:06am and led the pledge of allegiance. Mr. Schoen declared that a quorum was present.

Dr. Michael offered opening remarks that celebrated the importance of the Month of the Young Child and ensuring the state's investments target Maryland's youngest learners. He further emphasized the Board's grounding in three key principles—transparency, accountability, and partnership - that support and drive the core work of schools: improving instruction and advancing student achievement in reading and mathematics. Lastly, Dr. Michael highlighted the state's new initiative to bring laid off federal employees to the classroom, Feds to Eds, as well as reiterating Dr. Wright's and all 24 LEA superintendents' commitment to ensuring that all Maryland students have equitable access to a high-quality education.

PUBLIC COMMENT

In-Person participation:

- Trish Brennan-Gac - 2025 State of Reading Report

Virtual participation:

- Dr. Tyler Love - College and Career Readiness Teacher Preparation
- Sharon Saroff - Special Education
- Dr. Jeanne Paynter - MCGATE Student Essay Contest

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- Approval of March 25, 2025 Meeting Minutes
- Personnel Actions
- Budget Adjustments, March 2025

- Harford County Public Schools Waiver Request

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

UPDATE FROM THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Wright highlighted her work this past month, including attending Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) math summit, where Maryland was recognized for being one of three states that has a comprehensive math policy. She also shared more about the state's School Leadership meetings and the first meeting of Maryland Family Advisory Council. Dr. Wright then shared about the upcoming work in the Department, which includes rolling out the new state assessment, developing an adolescent literacy policy, and launching the new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION: MONTH OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Ms. Neville-Morgan of MSDE provided an overview of the work the Division of Early Childhood is leading. Dr. Washington and Dr. Savage of MSDE then shared more information on the growth of pre-K slots for families as well as MSDE's Push to Pre-K initiative, which supports child care providers interested in participating in the Pre-K Expansion Grant. MSDE's Vanessa Jones then provided an update on the progress of Judy and Patty Centers. Lastly, MSDE's Jena Smith and Tara Phillips shared more about Maryland's quality rating system, EXCELS, and the Child Care Scholarship.

Ms. Neville-Morgan introduced a parent who receives Child Care Scholarship for her child to share about her experience. Hilary Roberts-King of Downtown Baltimore Child Care shared her perspective as a provider. Aamil Saboor of Union Baptist Harvey Johnson Head Start also shared his experience as a leader of a local Head Start and emphasized family engagement and supporting our youngest children's social emotional development.

Panel #1:

- Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (Stephanie Schaefer, Program Coordinator)
 - MDAEYC has 1,700 members in the state with a focus on children from birth through age 8.
- Maryland State Child Care Association (Chris Peusch, President)
 - MSCCA supports child care providers to strengthen Maryland's child care ecosystem. MSCCA also celebrated the reinstatement of the Child Care Credentialing Program in the FY26 state budget as well as other successful legislative priorities this session.
- Latino Child Care Association of Maryland (Anebela Rojas, President)

- LCAM grew from 60 Latino child care providers to now over 400 across the state. LCAM supports its providers through coaching and mentoring, professional development, and attaining their Child Development Associate.
- Ready at Five (Keri Hyde, Executive Director)
 - Ms. Hyde shared about Ready at Five's event celebrating the Month of the Young Child that focused on supporting early literacy alongside Maryland Initiative for Literacy & Equity (MILE). Ready at Five has also created a Science of Reading learning series for child care providers and other community-based organizations.

Panel #2:

- Maryland State Family Child Care Association (Ruby Daniels, President - joining virtually)
 - MSFCCA discussed the importance of family child care programs in a mixed delivery system to meet families' needs. She advocated for more support for providers around business practices.
- Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Rachel London, Executive Director)
 - The DDC is an independent state agency that is 100% federally funded and advises state leaders. DDC's advocacy, policy, and grantmaking are guided by the active participation of people with developmental disabilities.
- Maryland Family Network (Laura Weeldryer, Executive Director)
 - MFN runs the state's child care resource centers, family support centers, LOCATE Child Care, Patty Centers, Community Based Child Abuse Prevention, and Early Head Start programs. She shared the latest data on the successful Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care (GOFCC) program.

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA) UPDATE - ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (SMCPS)

Dr. Scott Smith of St. Mary's County discussed the county's Grow Your Own program for high schoolers, which is connected to the Teacher Academy of Maryland. He also shared more about the county's partnership with Towson University (TU) and the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) to offer a 2 + 2 program for teacher certification in grades 1-6. Students complete the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) at CSM and then apply to TU for the final two years of the program where they work in SMCPS classrooms.

FEDERAL ESSER FUNDING UPDATES (INFORMATION ONLY)

Krishna Tallur and Donna Gunning of MSDE provided an update on the latest federal actions from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). ED's letter to states rescinding ESSER II and ESSER III late liquidation funds jeopardizes approximately \$232 million in state and local funds. MSDE submitted drawdown requests to ED in April 2025 and have yet to hear back. Dr. Wright emphasized the incredible amount of work this required of MSDE and LEA staff on such a tight turnaround.

Dr. Johnson asked what happens if ED denies our requests. Ms. Gunning said they are working with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and state Budget Committees, but ultimately Maryland would be responsible for whatever is not reimbursed by the federal government. Ms. McCusker asked if any states' applications have been denied. Ms. Gunning said no states have yet been denied. Dr. Goldson emphasized that the impact at the local level will be extremely difficult. Dr. Michael put these dollars in context by sharing the amount that has been spent by the state and locals but not yet reimbursed by ED could fund the foundation formula for 18,000 students or fund 2,000 teachers.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM TASK FORCE ATTENDANCE TOOLKIT (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Gable of MSDE introduced Ryan Voegtlin of Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS), Lori Phelps, Principal of Woodbridge Elementary, and Hedy Chang of Attendance Works. Ms. Gable then shared an overview of statewide chronic absence trends, which have declined since 2022 but not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. To address chronic absence, MSDE has established a statewide task force that will develop guidance and provide research and resources to schools and LEAs. Ms. Gable also said that MSDE is looking to collect chronic absence data more frequently to help inform more real-time interventions. MSDE has partnered with Attendance Works to develop toolkits and host workshops for LEA staff. The Spring 2025 toolkit for LEAs includes information on creating attendance teams, addressing the spring attendance slide, and reaching out to students on the cusp of chronic absence.

Ms. Phelps shared how her elementary school has approached chronic absence, identified and problem solved patterns in students' absences. Mr. Voegtlin shared how AACPS and district leaders can drive system-wide improvements in student attendance.

Dr. Mele-McCarthy asked that nonpublic special education schools be included in these workshops. Mr. Clash asked about staff capacity in supporting early intervention before students become chronically absent. Mr. Voegtlin and Ms. Phelps said that they often utilize community school funds to fund staff positions and other strategies. Ms. Chang said that it's not always about adding more strategies, it can be about including a focus on chronic absence in things schools are already doing, such as including it in parent teacher conferences. Mr. Paul asked what the research says about the impact of addressing chronic absence in elementary schools as a predictor of attendance in middle and high schools. Ms. Chang said that the causes are often different as children age, but the reasons can be connected and it's important to continue to track. Ms. Medina asked about the role qualitative data collection plays in addressing chronic absence, such as focus groups and town halls with students and parents. Ms. Gable said that that is an important piece of school-level strategies to address and calibrate responses to chronic absence. Mr. Greer asked about the impact of student and family belonging on attendance rates. Mr. Voegtlin said that is part of the equation, and it's also connected to high-quality instruction. Mr. Chesterfield asked about the impact of a family's socioeconomic situation on chronic absence. Ms. Phelps said that her school has a high percentage of homeless students, which have higher rates of absences, which ultimately just requires more creative problem solving. Ms.

Chang of the State Board asked what the State Board can do to support this work at the systems-level. Ms. Gable said we should dig into the data to continue to track bright spots and trends.

STATE BOARD ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 12:55 pm, Dr. Michael called for a motion to adjourn to an Executive Session. Dr. Lewis motioned, Dr. Mele-McCarthy seconded. (In Favor: 13, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 1)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to § 3-305(b)(7) and (13) of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon motion of Dr. Lewis and seconded by Dr. Mele-McCarthy and with unanimous approval, the State Board of Education met in closed session on Tuesday, April 29, 2025 in Conference Room #1, 8th Floor, at the Nancy S. Grasmick Building. All board members were present except Clarence Crawford. Also in attendance were State Superintendent Carey Wright, Executive Director Zachary Hands, Deputy Executive Director Hannah Oakley, and Assistant Attorneys General Elliott Schoen and Jackie LaFiandra. The Executive Session commenced at 12:55 p.m. and ended at 2:45 p.m.

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

- *Stacey Hartwell v. Calvert County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-16. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Gary McGraw v. Baltimore County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-17. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *M.R. and J. R. v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-18. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *In the Matter of Request for Removal of Local Board Member Renee Dixon* – Order No. OR25-06. The Board dismissed the request as moot.
- *Henrietta M. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Order No. OR25-07. The Board dismissed the appeal for untimeliness.
- *Stephen Price v. Howard County Board of Education* – Order No. 25-08. The Board recommended a continued stay of the appeal.
- *U.D. v. Charles County Board of Education* – Order No. 25-09. The Board dismissed the appeal for failure to exhaust administrative remedies.
- *C.S. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Order No. 25-10. The Board deferred deciding the case and has sought clarification from the local board of some information regarding the change of school assignment appeal.

President Michael gave updates on Board operations. The Board discussed a personnel matter.

PURPLE STAR SCHOOLS

Ms. Gable introduced Maryland's 2025-2027 Purple Star Schools, which recognizes schools that go above and beyond to support military-connected students and their families. The full list can be found [here](#).

FEDERAL WORKFORCE UPDATE - "FEDS TO EDS" (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Meadows provided an overview of the state's Feds to Eds initiative, which aims to bring in laid-off federal employees to the classroom. Ms. Chang asked if we could track retention of these career changers. Dr. Michael asked if we could continue to see updates on the number and percent of vacancies and conditionally licensed teachers by LEA. He also expressed that he hopes the Board and PSTEB can work together to get this program in place by the 2025-26 school year.

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION DEBRIEF (INFORMATION ONLY)

Dr. Alleyne, Ms. Houck, and Mr. Reese of MSDE shared an overview of the 2025 legislative session, including HB0504, the Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act. Namely, Mr. Reese highlighted provisions of HB504 that strengthen community school implementation and expand the teacher workforce.

COMAR 13A.12.06 DISCIPLINARY ACTION (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

Ms. Meadows of MSDE requested permission to publish changes made to this section of COMAR, which remove the term "charge" and replacing it with the term "grounds" to describe a cause that may lead to disciplinary action or denial of a Maryland educator license, as well as establish a definition for "petition," which refers to the recommendation to take disciplinary action made to the State Superintendent by a local educational agency, nonpublic school, or Division of Educator Effectiveness. The PSTEB approved permission to publish COMAR 13A.12.06 during their April 3, 2025, meeting. Ms. McCusker said the Education Policy Committee unanimously supported these regulations.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to grant permission to publish the regulations. Ms. McCusker motioned, Mr. Paul seconded. (In Favor: 13, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 1)

COMAR 13A.05.07 PROGRAMS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

MSDE's Dr. Timmons-Parrott requested permission to publish the amendments to COMAR which incorporate new asset-based terminology. In the Final Report of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools, Recommendation 1 states that "MSDE should formally shift from the English learner label to a more asset-based terminology such as multilingual or emerging bilingual, focusing on student's strengths, and affirming their home languages. Ms. McCusker said the Policy Committee unanimously supported these regulations.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to grant permission to publish the regulations. Ms. McCusker motioned, Ms. Medina seconded. (In Favor: 13, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 1)

COMAR 13A.03.07 SEAL OF BILITERACY (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

MSDE's Dr. Timmons-Parrott requested permission to publish the amendments to COMAR to ensure that the Seal of Biliteracy Program is more inclusive and align the assessment requirements to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Additionally, a data collection requirement is added to provide transparency and facilitate statewide reporting of this credential. The adoption of this regulation will require participating local education agencies to include multilingual learners in the Maryland Seal of Biliteracy Program. Ms. McCusker said the Policy Committee unanimously supported these regulations.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to grant permission to publish the regulations. Dr. Lewis motioned, Ms. McCusker seconded. (In Favor: 13, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 1)

COMAR 13A.01.10 LANGUAGE ACCESS (PERMISSION TO PUBLISH)

MSDE's Dr. Timmons-Parrott requested permission to publish new regulations to establish requirements that local education agencies develop a language access plan that describes how translation and interpretation services will be provided to individuals whose dominant language is not English. Ms. McCusker said the Policy Committee unanimously supported these regulations.

ACTION: Dr. Michael called for a motion to grant permission to publish the regulations. Ms. McCusker motioned, Ms. Medina seconded. (In Favor: 13, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0, Absent: 1)

TASK FORCE ON CELL PHONE USE IN SCHOOLS FINAL REPORT (INFORMATION ONLY)

Ms. Cratsley of MSDE and Ms. Oakley of the State Board shared an overview of the Task Force on Cell Phone Use in Schools and its final report. The Task Force - which consisted of teachers, administrators, parents, students, superintendents and other educational experts across all grade bands and 11 counties - launched in January 2025 and met four times throughout the winter and early spring. Over the course of three months, the Task Force analyzed the current cell phone policies of counties across the state as well the statewide policies and guidance many states have enacted.

Through this process, the Task Force has developed research-informed, actionable guidance that will support school districts in strengthening the implementation of existing cell phone policies, increasing opportunities for stakeholder engagement to drive enduring support, and creating a cohesive policy that considers the needs of all student groups. Throughout the guidance document, promising practices in Maryland's districts are highlighted.

AFTERNOON PUBLIC COMMENT

Virtual participation:

- Daniel Katz - Maryland Seal of Biliteracy
- Melissa Schober - DEIA

STATE BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Ms. McCusker announced the next Education Policy Committee will be held on May 15th at 4 pm, and Ms. Oakley announced that the Education Transformation and Finance Committee will be held on May 13th at 4 pm.

LEGAL OPINIONS AND ORDERS

Mr. Schoen announced the following opinions and orders:

- *Stacey Hartwell v. Calvert County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-16. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
- *Gary McGraw v. Baltimore County Board of Education* – Opinion No. 25-17. The Board affirmed the local board's decision.
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- *C.S. v. Montgomery County Board of Education* – Order No. 25-10. The Board deferred deciding the case and has sought clarification from the local board of some information regarding the change of school assignment appeal.

Mr. Chesterfield motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Clash. With no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



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

Date: May 29, 2025

The information included here provides a summary of the agenda items presented. The video recordings of the meetings are the official record and can be located at:

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Pages/Meetings-2024.aspx>

Meeting materials, Opinions, and Orders can be found at:

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Pages/default.aspx>

The next Maryland State Board of Education meeting will be held on **Thursday, May 29, 2025**.

Appropriate accommodations for individuals with disabilities will be provided upon request. Eight business days' notice prior to the event is required. Please contact Charlene Necessary at (410) 767-0467 or TTY at (410) 333-6442 so arrangements can be made.