



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

TO: Accountability and Implementation Board
FROM: Mohammed Choudhury, State Superintendent of Schools
DATE: March 15, 2023
SUBJECT: Submission of Maryland State Department of Education's Blueprint Implementation Plan

The Maryland State Board of Education's and the Maryland State Department of Education's mission is to ensure a rigorous and world-class educational experience for every Maryland student, in every neighborhood, that prepares each to be college and career ready, through strategic direction and leadership; policymaking and resource allocation; and engagement and advocacy. The State Board and MSDE envisions Maryland as a system of world-class schools where students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, career, and life. The Department is charged with eliminating barriers to success and providing necessary resources and support to ensure that every Maryland student achieves at the highest level, especially those who have been historically underserved.

Grounded in this mission and vision, MSDE's Blueprint Implementation Plan details the Department's current, completed, and future initiatives that ensure that every Maryland student receives a world-class education, regardless of family income, race, ethnicity, gender, address, socioeconomic status, or the language spoken in the student's home, and/or ability.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future presents a historic opportunity to transform education and accelerate student achievement for students across Maryland. The Blueprint prescribes new programs and innovative approaches to catalyze a world-renowned education system that aims to eradicate achievement gaps and ensures opportunity for every student, regardless of any other factor. Success for all students in Maryland, and not just success for certain students in certain districts, requires the coordinated and uniform implementation of the Blueprint across Maryland, as guided by the Initial Comprehensive Implementation Plan adopted by the Accountability and Implementation Board.

MSDE's Blueprint Implementation Plan focuses on utilizing equitable decision making to deliver greater opportunities for all students and the promise of a better future to every Maryland child. Equity is not an add-on, but instead must be a running thread in the Department and everything it does. MSDE values the incredible direction that the Blueprint offers and is laser-focused on leading the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Overview of MSDE's Blueprint Implementation Plan

Maryland State Department of Education's Blueprint Implementation Plan provides a detailed accounting of all of MSDE's activities to date, as well as future plans, to support the implementation of the Blueprint.

MSDE is responsible for tasks in each one of the Pillars and Objectives outlined in the Initial Comprehensive Implementation Plan. To provide the most focused and concise understanding of the wide breadth of tasks and the related implementation actions, the MSDE plan is divided up by each Objective. MSDE's Blueprint Implementation Plan includes a Plan Document for each Objective, which consists of a list of each of the tasks that MSDE is

responsible to complete, a description of MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint to date, descriptions about a set of Implementation Artifacts, and MSDE's Future Implementation Steps. MSDE has been proud to support the implementation of the Blueprint since its enactment in 2021 and now provides a comprehensive guide to all the implementation activities that have occurred so far.

In addition to the Plan Document for each Objective, MSDE has collected a wide breadth of Implementation Artifacts, available in the online folder system. These artifacts include materials such as legislative reports, presentations, guidance documents, technical assistance materials, and success stories from across the state.

The MSDE Blueprint Implementation Plan is best viewed on a computer where the reader can view the narrative within the Plan Document, but also dig further into the various topics through the various Implementation Artifacts present within each folder.

The MSDE Blueprint Implementation Plan is available at bit.ly/BlueprintPlanMSDE. Within the overarching MSDE Plan folder, you will find a folder for each of the five Pillars of the Blueprint. Inside each of those is another set of folders for each Objective within that Pillar. These Objective folders contain the plan document for that objective, as well as all of the relevant Implementation Artifacts.

For convenience, the collection of Plan Documents for each Objective is also attached to this letter.

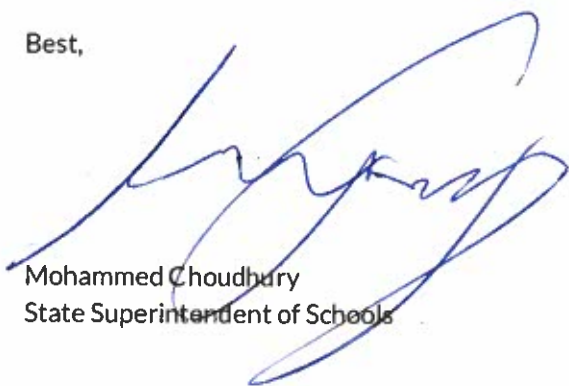
Continuing the Blueprint Implementation

As your State Superintendent of Schools, I am honored to lead Maryland towards the successful implementation of the Blueprint and do not take that responsibility lightly. The entire Department is fully devoted to reaching the Blueprint's vision for every single Maryland student.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit MSDE's Blueprint Implementation Plan and your continued collaboration to ensure that every student in Maryland is able to fully benefit from a thoughtful and robust implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Please view the MSDE Blueprint Implementation Plan at bit.ly/BlueprintPlanMSDE.

We must achieve more than previously thought possible. We will get this right, whatever it takes.

Best,



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

Objective 1.1: Expand Publicly Funded Full-Day Pre-K

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MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
1.1.1(d)	MSDE shall administer pre-K expansion grants to expand full-day pre-K slots and convert half-day slots to full-day slots until the program phases out after FY 25
1.1.2(a)	MSDE shall establish a sliding scale to calculate the family share of full-day pre-K for families of 4-year-old children with incomes greater than 300% but less than 600% of the federal poverty level (Tier II) on or before 7/1/22
1.1.2(b)	MSDE and LEAs shall implement the sliding scale for families of 4-year-old children with incomes greater than 300% but less than 600% of the federal poverty level beginning as early as 7/1/25
1.1.2(c)	MSDE and LEAs shall disseminate information about available pre-K options to eligible families
1.1.3(b)	MSDE shall communicate the financial benefits to private providers and their staff of participating in the mixed-delivery system
1.1.3(c)	MSDE, LEAs, and eligible pre-K providers shall collaborate to address the transportation needs of children enrolled in eligible pre-K providers
1.1.4	LEAs shall enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with MSDE, each eligible private provider participating in publicly funded pre-K in the county, and other applicable government agencies
1.1.5	MSDE shall require public and private providers to meet high-quality standards to receive public funding
1.1.6(d)	MSDE shall award eligible individuals funds through the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund
1.1.6(f)	MSDE shall identify a primary contact employee for early childcare in the Office of Child Care
1.1.6(g)	MSDE and LEAs shall disseminate information to private providers and their staff about salary increases associated with the Blueprint and available funding to support educators in meeting certification requirements
1.1.6(h)	MSDE shall ensure that supports/stipends that are currently being offered for public and private provider teaching assistant credentials through the Blueprint are being utilized
1.1.7	MSDE and LEAs submit reports to the AIB and the General Assembly on pre-K expansion
1.1.7(a)	MSDE shall submit a report on pre-K expansion to AIB and the General Assembly by 11/1/21



Objective 1.1: Expand Publicly Funded Full-Day Pre-K

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

The MSDE Division of Early Childhood administers two competitive grant programs, the Pre-K Grant and the Pre-K Expansion Grant, in collaboration with the Office of Grants Administration and Compliance. In the last full fiscal year, FY 2022, MSDE funded \$42,201,258 in 51 Pre-K Expansion Grant programs (17 in local education agencies, 34 in community-based settings) serving 3,188 children. These grant programs broaden the availability of and expand access to high-quality pre-K and school readiness services for three- and four-year-old income-eligible students through a mixed-delivery system. Grant funds must be used to administer full-day pre-K programming that meets the definition of high-quality, as defined in the Blueprint. Maryland Pre-K Programs must have developmentally appropriate classrooms that are well-equipped to address the needs of all children including those with disabilities, English learners, and students experiencing homelessness.

MSDE also recently offered the Maryland Rebuilds grant opportunity, utilizing federal funds, to help establish and expand alternative early childhood teacher preparation programs and increase access to Child Development Associate (CDA) training programs. Additionally, MSDE continues to offer the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund to provide tuition assistance for child care providers to obtain college education at participating colleges and universities in Maryland. Currently, MSDE covers some of the cost of the CDA credential for both private providers and LEA assistant teachers or paraprofessionals through the CDA Fund.

The Blueprint directs MSDE to establish a sliding scale to calculate the family share of full-day pre-K for families of 4-year-old children with incomes greater than 300% but less than 600% of the federal poverty level. MSDE modified its local education agency enrollment data collection system fields to include federal poverty levels (FPL) that correspond to the Blueprint pre-K tiers. Families of students enrolling in pre-K starting in Fall 2022 benefit from the use of the sliding scale calculation for the family share of full-day pre-K costs. MSDE began collecting income data for up to and including 750% FPL to ensure there are sufficient data for Tier II State aid Blueprint pre-K calculation once that portion of the formula is in effect in FY 2025. MSDE anticipates engaging stakeholders around the sliding scale proposal methodology, beginning in the spring of 2023.

In addition to financial supports, MSDE provides technical assistance to LEAs and private providers to support the implementation of high-quality pre-K, including offering guidance on addressing transportation needs for pre-K students. To support the implementation of a mixed-delivery system, MSDE provides a robust series of technical assistance to LEAs. In one of these technical assistance sessions offered to LEAs as part of their Blueprint Implementation Plan development process, MSDE shared national and local examples of best practices for the implementation of a mixed-delivery system and encouraged LEAs to implement these strategies to scale up pre-K in a way that strengthens both family choice and ensures that both private providers and public schools are working together to support kindergarten readiness.

To support private providers working to meet the credential, degree, or certification requirements for pre-K lead teachers and teacher assistants or paraprofessionals by SY 2025-2026, MSDE is engaging institutions of higher education (IHEs) to communicate the unique needs of both the private provider community and



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assistant teachers/paraprofessionals in LEA settings. Through partnerships with IHEs, MSDE is strategically investing in the availability of multiple teacher education pathways, including traditional teacher preparation programs, alternative teacher certification programs, registered early childhood education apprenticeship programs, credit for prior learning evaluation, and Child Development Associate (CDA) training programs.

MSDE continues to support both private providers and LEAs to build capacity, improve quality, and increase their quality ratings in Maryland EXCELS, the state's quality rating and improvement system for licensed child care and early education programs that meet nationally recognized quality standards. MSDE provides one-on-one support, vendor discounts, incentive bonuses, access to guidance from Quality Assurance Specialists, and training and incentives to improve practices leading to attaining higher levels in MD EXCELS. Additionally, MSDE recently increased bonuses to high-quality EXCELS programs, encouraging even more programs to participate. MSDE also covers the cost of accreditation for private provider- and school-based programs.

MSDE also facilitates the data collection from each LEA on the number of quality public and private pre-K seats available in each local jurisdiction, the number of eligible pre-K providers in the county, EXCELS ratings, and provider participation rate. Each LEA also reports on how pre-K program expansion in their jurisdiction prioritized children in areas with limited or no access to quality childcare, children experiencing homelessness, children whose primary language spoken at home is not English, Tier 1 children, and children with disabilities. MSDE then aggregates this data and submits the statewide report to AIB on December 1 each year.

MSDE's Division of Early Childhood is reorganizing to ensure Blueprint success through cross-functional collaboration and provider support. As part of this reorganization, there is a dedicated team that will serve as a point of contact for providers to receive support. A key facet to accomplish these goals is an elevated role and team within MSDE made up of full-time permanent positions. In its FY 2024 budget request, MSDE requested that these roles be converted into permanent positions, instead of contractual positions. The FY 2024 Governor's Allowance approved this request and now includes permanent positions.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 1.1: Expand Publicly Funded Full-Day Pre-K, the following documents are present:

- 1. Blueprint Deep Dive: Early Childhood Education: Part 1 and Part 2**
 - The Maryland State Department of Education provided a two part briefing to the State Board of Education on the early childhood programs and initiatives in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The presentations included details on laying the foundation, strategies for successful early childhood implementation of the Blueprint requirements, mixed-delivery pre-K, program quality, program quality, workforce, and the R4K assessment system.

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2. **Maryland Expands Child Care Scholarship Program: Press Release**
 - The press release from June 13, 2022, announced Maryland’s plan to expand the Child Care Scholarship Program’s eligibility requirements by raising income requirement for families from 65% to 75% of the State median income to provide affordable child care to more families.
3. **Child Care Provider and Child Care Employee Bonus Program: Press Release**
 - On October 28, 2022, MSDE announced the Child Care Provider and Employee Bonus Program designed to help uplift and sustain the childcare community. The program distributes \$16 million in bonuses to child care providers and staff to recognize the contributions of existing child care workers and to incentivize new staff to join the profession.
4. **EXCELS Bonuses for Child Care Providers: Press Release**
 - On October 20, 2022, MSDE announced the distribution of bonuses to child care programs participating in Maryland EXCELS that demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement in their early education programs. As part of the transformative Blueprint for Maryland’s Future landmark legislation which expands access to high-quality child care and early childhood education in Maryland, \$5 million will be distributed to Maryland EXCELS child care providers. The bonuses for this current fiscal year are triple the minimal amount established in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR).
5. **Pre-K Program MOU Template between LEA, MSDE, and Private Pre-K Providers**
 - MSDE developed a template for LEAs to use to sign a memorandum of understanding with MSDE and private pre-K providers. MSDE provided multiple customer services sessions and office hours to provide support and answer questions about the MOUs and how best to implement them.
6. **LEA Pre-K Memoranda of Understanding with Private Providers (Folder)**
 - The signed and completed Memoranda of Understanding between each LEA and the relevant private providers, which address the required components outlined in the Blueprint, are each included in this folder.
7. **Data Report on Private and Public Prekindergarten Providers (December 2021 and 2022)**
 - This data report on private and public prekindergarten providers, submitted on December 1 each year, satisfies the requirements detailed in Ed. §7-1A-08. This data collection from each LEA was facilitated by MSDE, aggregated, and submitted to the AIB as a statewide report, providing the insight needed to understand the availability of pre-K seats in the jurisdiction, and how the pre-K program expansion prioritized children who would benefit the most from the expanded offerings.
8. **Prekindergarten Implementation Planning: MSDE Report**
 - MSDE submitted this Prekindergarten Implementation Planning report to the AIB and to the Maryland General Assembly on November 1, 2021. In this report, MSDE provided an update on the planning associated with operationalizing specific early childhood components of the Blueprint, including efforts related to income verification, providing for

Objective 1.1: Expand Publicly Funded Full-Day Pre-K

family preference, calculating state, local, and family, share, and recommendations for pre-K supplemental grants.

9. Prekindergarten Implementation Planning: MSDE Report [Spanish]

- MSDE translated the report into Spanish to ensure equity and access to this resource for our Spanish speaking constituents.

10. Pre-K Program Availability Flyers

- To share information about the available public and private pre-K options in each county, MSDE developed these informational flyers for families. These pre-K flyers are distributed to eligible families by the local Departments of Social Services and Departments of Health.

11. Pre-K Technical Assistance and Customer Support Sessions (Folder)

- The Pre-K Grants Technical Assistance Webinars and Customer support sessions are held multiple times before, during and after the grant application period to provide information on high quality pre-K and the available grant opportunities. The sessions also help to inform the questions for the FAQ document available to support applicants.

12. Early Learning Collaborative Meetings (Folder)

- The Early Learning Collaborative meetings are held for LEA Early Learning Coordinators three times per year (fall, winter, and spring). The Collaboratives provide an opportunity for MSDE to provide important updates and training and for Coordinators to network and share information and best practices, in addition to discussing pre-K expansion and other grant opportunities.

13. Maryland Rebuilds Grant Information Guide

- The Maryland Rebuilds program is centered around six high-leverage strategies that have been proven to be effective and transformative for early childhood systems and reflect the input of partners across the State, including “Growing a Highly-Effective Child Care Workforce.” This strategy prioritized and called out career pathways in early education, noting: “MSDE is especially interested in proposals that address alternative teacher preparation, apprenticeships, and career pathways.”

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 1.1: Expand Publicly Funded Full-Day Pre-K, MSDE will:

- Continue to provide technical assistance to LEAs on converting half-day pre-K seats to high-quality full-day seats by encouraging LEAs to explore innovative solutions, such as exploring new uses of space and recruiting new early childhood teachers.
- Continue to provide grant application technical assistance and grant information sessions, in both English and Spanish, to private providers and LEAs.
- Publish a report in Spring 2023, which will include modeling of four options for a sliding scale to estimate the relative family share of full-day pre-K for families of four-year-old children with incomes greater than 300% but less than 600% of the FPL (Tier II). There will be sufficient time for public review. MSDE will address any actionable items from stakeholder engagement and the methodology will be adopted for use in Fall 2023.



Objective 1.1: Expand Publicly Funded Full-Day Pre-K

- Continue to partner with private providers and incentivize participation in pre-K programs while ensuring that there are also incentives to continue to provide infant and toddler early care and education programs. For example, MSDE is meeting regularly with early childhood practitioner-led associations to identify barriers, develop strategies, and create pathways for programs to become eligible for pre-K funds in family child care, child care, and Head Start settings.
- Continue to provide LEAs with technical assistance, including topics such as how to build strong partnerships with private providers to scale high-quality, full-day pre-K.
- Develop resources to ensure early childhood educators have comparable salaries and benefits aligned with roles, qualifications, and experience levels based on an analysis of educator workforce data. MSDE will also complete cost modeling of birth through age five programs in all settings, with a breakdown of the cost models for pre-K.
- Continue to support and create on-ramps for pre-K lead teachers and assistant teachers or paraprofessionals to achieve the required degrees, credentials, and teacher certification by SY 2025-2026.
 - For example, as part of its Maryland Rebuilds grant investments, MSDE is developing a prior learning assessment process in collaboration with Montgomery College.
 - MSDE will explore if remaining CDA fund resources are available in Fiscal Year 2024 to cover the full cost of this credential for participating individuals.
- Share a draft of the new Early Learning Standards for stakeholder feedback, and then release these new and improved early learning standards that are aligned with rigorous developmentally appropriate standards.
- Partner with key stakeholders to improve and revise both Maryland EXCELS and Maryland Accreditation to support continuous quality improvement and high-quality program implementation, through SY 2023-2024.

Objective 1.2: Assess Student Readiness For Kindergarten

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
1.2.1(d)	MSBE shall adopt regulations to implement the assessment requirements
1.2.1(e)	MSDE shall ensure that educators are provided with necessary supports to effectively administer the KRA
1.2.1(f)	MSDE shall contract with an external entity to periodically evaluate the assessment for racial, cultural, or linguistic bias, as well as any potential bias in its administration, and submit a report to AIB on its findings and any resulting recommendations

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) implements the Ready for Kindergarten (R4K) Comprehensive Early Childhood Assessment System, which includes the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and is based on the essential domains of school readiness for children. Administered in Maryland since 2014, the KRA measures school readiness in the domains of social development, language/literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and physical well-being and motor development. MSDE works with local education agencies (LEAs) to ensure that educators and administrators are trained and supported to administer, analyze, interpret, and utilize the results to support instruction and inform further professional learning. For example, Early Learning Collaborative meetings are held three times a year to provide LEA early learning coordinators with important updates, training tools, and best practices. MSDE also provided technical assistance sessions where KRA was addressed along with other Blueprint topics.

The R4K system helps to identify the supports children need to be successful in school. R4K data is used to inform teachers, families, schools, programs, and the state to meet every child's needs. Maryland's KRA provides data that educators can use to differentiate instruction and ensure quality learning opportunities for children including:

- informing prior child care stakeholders of early learning standards and experiences that promote kindergarten readiness;
- identifying individual student's needs, gaps in foundational learning, and providing necessary supports to students and educators;
- assisting teachers in instructional decision making at the student and classroom level; and
- providing families with information about their children's learning and development.



Objective 1.2: Assess Student Readiness For Kindergarten

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 1.2: Assess Student Readiness for Kindergarten, the following documents are present:

- 1. Early Learning Collaborative Presentations, Agendas, and Related Documents**
 - The Early Learning Collaborative meetings are held for LEA Early Learning Coordinators three times per year (fall, winter, and spring). The Collaboratives provide an opportunity for MSDE to provide important updates and training as well as an opportunity for coordinators to network and share information and best practices. The R4K system, the KRA specifically, is addressed at all meetings as evidenced in the attached agendas. The presentations and handouts which are shared and distributed at the meetings address the following: KRA training, interpreting scale scores, KRA key activities and testing windows, and updates.
- 2. Kindergarten Readiness Assessment 2023 Results: Presentation**
 - On December 6, 2022, MSDE delivered this presentation to the Maryland State Board of Education that included results of the Fall 2022 KRA administration, including data disaggregated by student group, comparisons to the prior year, and local education agency (LEA) data. The presentation also highlighted the importance of conducting a bias and sensitivity study by an independent research partner.
- 3. Blueprint Deep Dive: Early Childhood Education: Part 1 and Part 2**
 - The Maryland State Department of Education provided a two-part briefing to the State Board of Education on the early childhood programs and initiatives in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The presentation included details on laying the foundation and strategies for successful early childhood implementation of the Blueprint requirements, including the KRA.
- 4. KRA Technical Report**
 - The technical report from 2018-2019 provides detailed information on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment in Maryland including information on development, administration, interpreting results and professional development.

Future Implementation Steps

MSDE currently partners with Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education (JHU CTE) for the administration of the R4K comprehensive assessment program. Recognizing that enhancing the cultural considerations and support for all children and reducing implicit bias will increase the learning assessment experience and will increase learning opportunities for all children taking the KRA, MSDE will engage with JHU CTE for a bias and sensitivity study of the KRA and implementation of a Spanish version of the KRA. JHU CTE will partner with WestEd, the lead assessment developers for the KRA to pilot and implement a Spanish version of the KRA. The experts at the Center for Measurement Justice will support JHU CTE and WestEd to conduct a bias and sensitivity review on the KRA items and supplementary materials to support the development of a socially just assessment and measurement system. The result of this work will also include updated professional development and technology to support effective implementation of the KRA



Objective 1.2: Assess Student Readiness For Kindergarten

for all students. Additionally, as MSDE continues to implement the tasks in Objective 1.2 Assess Student Readiness For Kindergarten, MSDE will:

- Conduct an analysis of the KRA 2.0 through a literature review, data analysis, focus groups, interviews, and surveys to determine the effectiveness of the KRA with English Learners in Maryland.
- Increase cultural considerations to ensure a culturally unbiased KRA through an expert bias and sensitivity review conducted by an independent research partner, teacher workgroup panel, and cultural review panel and submit a report based on the results of the evaluation and make appropriate recommendations to the AIB by December 1, 2023.
- Develop a Spanish version of the KRA to support students identified as English learners with low English proficiency to determine readiness for kindergarten, with full implementation of the assessment by 2024-2025.
- Revise the KRA to integrate new Language and Literacy domain items with new score tables and materials that reflect feedback from the field and state requirements.

Objective 1.3: Expand Family Supports

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
1.3.1(b)	MSDE shall select the location of new Patty Centers
1.3.1(c)	The State shall provide funding for three additional Patty Centers per year between FY 22-29
1.3.1(d)	MSDE shall conduct an evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of Patty Centers, including how staff are trained to provide services to families
1.3.2(a)	The State shall create 9 additional Judy Centers per year between FY 21-25 and 18 additional Centers per year between FY 26-30
1.3.2(c)	MSDE shall submit an annual report on the Judith P. Hoyer Early Childhood Education Enhancement Program to the Governor and the General Assembly by 11/1
1.3.2(d)	MSDE shall establish application procedures for obtaining Judy Center grants, supervise and monitor the use of Grant funds, and evaluate whether Grant recipients are meeting annual benchmarks established by MSDE
1.3.2(e)	MSDE shall conduct an evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of Judy Centers
1.3.3(b)	MSDE shall use additional funding to expand the early intervention services available to eligible children through the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

1.3.1 – Patty Center Expansion

Patty Centers provide families with supportive networks. Their services are designed to promote the optimal development of young children, help adults develop more effective parenting skills, and fulfill their aims related to school, employment, and family life. Patty Centers also connect families and children to programs and services that can help them. Maryland has a network of 24 Patty Centers (formerly named Family Support Centers) in 14 counties, offering free educational and health-related services to parents and their children ages birth through three in communities across Maryland.

Maryland Family Network (MFN), which serves as an intermediary for MSDE, determines Patty Center selection using an application and scoring rubric process. The list of potential sponsoring agencies is submitted to MSDE for review. MSDE reviewed the application and scoring rubric before usage by the MFN. Patty Centers are monitored annually for fiscal and programmatic purposes. MFN also implements an annual evaluation process for child development and family support services. Three sites opened between 2021 and 2022: Family Support Center of Southern Maryland, Poppleton Family Support Center, and Kingdom Kare Family Support Center.



Objective 1.3: Expand Family Supports

1.3.2 – Judy Center Expansion

Judy Center Early Learning Hubs prepare children for success in school and life. Through community partnerships, Judy Centers enhance and increase school readiness for children ages birth through five by connecting families to comprehensive full-day, full-year early care and education services. Judy Centers use a multigenerational approach for families and children, especially those that come from the most historically underserved communities. MSDE had several high-quality applications for FY 2023 Judy Center expansion – beyond what the Department could fund with State dollars. Given additional available federal revenue through the American Rescue Plan, MSDE awarded \$1.9 million in funds to open six additional Judy Center sites that demonstrated high-quality applications to jump start meeting Blueprint goals related to Judy Center expansion. In FY 2023, 15 Judy Center sites opened, bringing the total number to 85 Judy Centers in Maryland. Nine additional Judy Center Early Learning Hub sites will be added in FY 2024.

The Judy Center Early Learning Hubs operate on a set of 12 component standards deemed essential to impact children's school readiness positively. Each year, a MSDE Judy Center Specialist visits each Judy Center. Before the site visit, the Judy Center staff completes a self-evaluation tool related to the components and then the Judy Center Specialist reviews the tool and the components with the staff and a school administrator. If the specialist finds that the Judy Center is not meeting the component standards, the site may be placed on an action plan and more one-on-one support will be given to the site by their assigned specialist.

Additionally, the Judy Center Early Learning Hubs use results-based accountability (RBA) when writing their grants. Four out of six of the goals are consistent for all Judy Centers, and two of the goals are self-selected based on a given menu. MSDE also provides professional development to staff at the Judy Centers on RBA and data collection. This support helps the Judy Center report on the data related to their grant goals mid-year and end-of-year. MSDE reviews these reports and meets with any sites that may not be meeting their goals to discuss possible next steps and/or an action plan.

1.3.3 – Expanding Maryland Infants and Toddlers

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future increases funding for the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (MITP) by \$5 million to increase services to eligible children across State. The intent of the additional funding is to help to support all children who are referred for services annually. Currently, local MITPs are already required to serve eligible children and services are individualized, so children in the program should already be receiving appropriate services. Until the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, State funds for the MITP had not increased since before 2010. Meanwhile, prior to the pandemic, the count of participating children in MITP increased from, on average, four to five percent per year. The State did not stop providing services when State funds could not cover the same share of program funding; the burden of funding for additional children instead fell on local jurisdictions. The law, as enacted, does not mandate the additional Blueprint MITP funding as supplemental to (rather than in supplant of) existing funding. However, MSDE recognizes the intent of the law as described in this objective and is working to identify future funding allocations that attend to 1) reducing local jurisdiction burden; while 2) supplementing existing funding by supporting new cases from rising referral and service numbers that increase, annually.

Objective 1.3: Expand Family Supports

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 1.3: Expand Family Supports, the following documents are present:

1. Patty Center Grant Orientation Materials

- MSDE and Maryland Family Network (MFN), which acts as an intermediary to connect with Patty Centers, facilitated an information session for Patty Center grantees and potential grantees to understand requirements for opening and operating a Patty Center, supporting the expansion of Patty Center services in communities that could benefit the most from the provided services.

2. Judy Center Grants Application: Press Release

- On March 30, 2022, MSDE announced a new grant opportunity to expand Judy Center Early Learning Hubs that serve and support Maryland's youngest children and their families by providing comprehensive early care and education services. This grant provided the funding to open nine new Judy Centers.

3. Judy Center Early Learning Administrators Fall Briefing Agenda

- In October 2022, MSDE hosted an Early Learning Fall Collaborative meeting, which helped programs understand the current state of programs, discussed the impact of the Blueprint, and provided training on the steps necessary to expand the service offerings.

4. Judy Center Early Learning Administrators Fall Briefing: Presentation

- During the October 2022, Early Learning Fall Collaborative meeting, MSDE facilitated a session that provided in-depth technical assistance about the impact of the Blueprint on Judy Centers and how Judy Center staff across Maryland can support the expansion of services.

5. The Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework

- MSDE funds, staffs, and is an active member of the Maryland Family Engagement Coalition, which is a group of cross-sectoral stakeholders who meet monthly. The Coalition developed a Family Engagement Framework that outlines goals and strategies to support family engagement initiatives implemented by early care and education providers. The purpose of the Framework is to: recognize the importance of family engagement as a core component of early care and education; put forth a set of common goals for family engagement across the early childhood system and for individual early care and education providers; and offer family engagement strategies for early care and education providers and identify resources that support the implementation of those strategies.

6. Blueprint Deep Dive: Early Childhood Education: Part 1 and Part 2

- The Maryland State Department of Education provided a two part briefing to the State Board of Education on the early childhood programs and initiatives in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The presentation included details on laying the foundation and strategies for successful early childhood implementation of the Blueprint requirements, including the expansion of the Judy and Patty Centers, and the increase in funding for the Maryland Infants and Toddlers program.



Objective 1.3: Expand Family Supports

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 1.3: Expand Family Supports, MSDE will:

- Continue to work directly with LEAs and potential partners who can work to open both Patty Centers and Judy Centers across the state of Maryland as well as the intermediaries that help connect with each center. The Blueprint adds three new Patty Centers per year in FY 2022 and FY 2029, and the Blueprint funds more Judy Centers with 126 new centers between FY 2022 and FY 2030. MSDE will ensure that these Judy Centers and Patty Centers are opened and operating in the neighborhoods where they support communities that have historically been underserved. Until 2022, the criteria for placing a Judy Center required that the Judy Centers are located in a Title I school. In 2022, MSDE amended these criteria to also allow for a Judy Center to be placed in a community with a .6 or higher [social vulnerability index \(SVI\) score](#), according to the CDC. This year, the CDC is no longer reporting SVI to the same geographic specificity, which is why MSDE will be developing guidance on how to use the SVI to identify sites going forward. MSDE is working with the AIB and other stakeholders to quantify criteria that can be used to identify communities to prioritize for Judy Center locations.
- Utilize existing data and establish new data sources, such as surveys of families, to conduct a regular evaluation of the effectiveness of Judy Centers in increasing school readiness for children.
- Advocate for statutory adoption of appropriation from which MSDE can issue planning grants that address the need to build a pipeline of applicants, particularly people of color-led organizations that have close proximity to the communities served.
- MSDE will track the distribution of State and local contributions associated with MITP and, if possible, with newly allocated MITP funds in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, MSDE will identify if current finding levels allow MSDE to revise MITP eligibility criteria in COMAR to expand the number of eligible children to make full use of the increased funding established in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
- MSDE will also track funding to ensure that MITP resources are used to provide resources to new and expanded services rather than in supplant of existing funding allocations. For example, revising the eligible birth weight criterion from 1,200 grams to 1,500 grams would lead to the expansion of the number of children served.

Objective 2.1: Recruit and Support High-Quality and Diverse Teachers

Objective 2.1: Recruit and Support High-Quality and Diverse Teachers

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
2.1.1(b)	MSDE shall establish a diverse steering committee by FY19
2.1.1(c)	MSDE shall build a digital recruitment platform and outreach program focused on candidates from historically underrepresented populations and fields experiencing teacher shortages
2.1.1(d)	MSDE shall work with MLDS, MHEC, MDL, and LEAs to develop a robust data infrastructure to gather information on workforce needs and employment outcomes
2.1.1(e)	MSDE shall engage prospective teachers with messaging that cultivates their interest in the profession
2.1.1(f)	MSDE shall implement the "Talk to a Teacher" program to create opportunities for prospective teachers to communicate with role model teachers
2.1.1(g)	MSDE shall provide information to increase awareness of available state incentives for individuals pursuing a teaching certificate (e.g., Maryland Teaching Fellows Scholarship and LARP)
2.1.1(h)	MSDE shall provide information to prospective teacher candidates to increase awareness of persistent opportunity gaps and racial disparities between students and teachers in Maryland schools
2.1.5(a)	MLDS, in consultation with MSDE and MHEC, shall submit annual progress reports by 7/1 on improving the quality of the preparation and diversity of Maryland teacher candidates and new teachers

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

MSDE, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), Maryland colleges and universities, local education agencies (LEAs), and the Office of Tourism formed a Digital Recruitment Steering Committee in 2018 to guide the digital recruitment efforts required in Md. Code, Education Article §2-306. Utilizing input from the committee, MSDE led the effort for recruitment of a diverse teacher pipeline, including targeted recruitment of Maryland high school students, candidates of color, and National Board Certified teachers. The [Teach Maryland website](#) was developed in 2019 and was recently revamped as a “one-stop shop” for individuals interested in pursuing the teaching profession in Maryland. This website is updated on a continual basis and currently includes critical information regarding teacher preparation, certification, available incentives for teachers, and a description of each LEA, including student and teacher demographics, top vacancy areas, and a direct link to apply for employment. The Teach Maryland website also provides a link to MHEC’s financial aid website, as well as information about the Teacher Fellows Scholarship program.



Objective 2.1: Recruit and Support High-Quality and Diverse Teachers

The Teach Maryland campaign utilizes a combination of digital and print advertising, social media posts, radio spots, posters, flyers, bus wraps, bus shelter advertisements, digital billboards, and streaming services as a platform for the recruitment of a diverse pool of potential teachers. Initiatives have included a partnership with the Maryland Vehicle Administration to advertise the Teach Maryland campaign on transportation vehicles and enclosures, renting strategically placed digital and print billboards across the State, and partnering with Radio One to promote the campaign through urban radio stations on-air and through the social media accounts of popular influencers. MSDE continuously recruits on social media outlets such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

In May 2023, MSDE will host the second Teach Maryland conference for our high school students interested in pursuing a career in teaching. The first conference, held prior to the COVID pandemic, hosted 257 Maryland high school students from 17 LEAs, as well as 30 representatives from Maryland educator preparation programs for a full-day conference that included a keynote speaker, panel discussions, 27 breakout sessions, and opportunities to talk 1:1 with a Maryland teacher of the year. Of the 135 participants who completed an evaluation survey at the end of the event, 105 indicated that the conference increased their interest in pursuing a career in teaching, 77 of whom invited MSDE to contact them in the future to determine if they pursued a career in teaching.

On April 28, 2022, MSDE released [The Educator Application and Certification Hub \(TEACH\)](#). TEACH is a fully automated online system that includes a variety of application services, as well as acts as an educator dashboard for certificate holders allowing users to track and submit continuing professional development experiences, download certificates, and update employment history. Through TEACH, any individual interested in pursuing a teaching career may request a free evaluation of their transcripts from the MSDE Office of Certification. Since the release of TEACH, MSDE has provided over 500 certification evaluations to a diverse pool of potential teacher candidates at no cost.

In July 2022, the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center (MLDS), in consultation with MSDE and MHEC, published the Progress in Increasing the Preparation and Diversity of Teacher Candidates and New Teachers in Maryland annual report. The three agencies continue to collaborate to identify data trends related to increasing the diversity of our educator workforce, including how The Teacher Application and Certification Hub (TEACH) and annual staffing report may be used to provide a more comprehensive picture of Maryland's supply and demand.

On July 26, 2022, MSDE provided the State Board of Education with an extensive review of the teacher supply and demand in Maryland, including an analysis of the demographics of our teacher workforce compared to our student population. High teacher turnover consumes economic resources, costing between \$9,000 and \$21,000 per teacher. In 2022, Maryland local education agencies started the school year with over 1900 teacher vacancies. Black and Hispanic teachers are most likely to leave our schools widening the gap between the percentage of students of color and the percentage of teachers of color, the state average of which has been greater than 30% since 2012. Research has shown that increased diversity among teachers benefits test-score performance and can lead to improved school behaviors.¹ Compounding

¹Blazer and Lagos, 2021

Objective 2.1: Recruit and Support High-Quality and Diverse Teachers

the issue is the steady decline in enrollment in educator preparation programs across the country. Enrollment in Maryland educator preparation programs has decreased by 33% since 2012 and the issuance of Conditional Certificates has increased 136% over the past five years. In response to the presentation, the State Board approved waivers of two Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) identified as barriers to assist LEAs in recruiting and retaining a diverse teacher workforce.

In 2022, MSDE launched a new strategic digital marketing campaign utilizing modern graphics and bold messaging to inspire individuals to consider teaching in Maryland. Digital art and messaging focused on targeting three demographics: high school and college students, career changers, and certified teachers outside of Maryland. Marketing campaigns, both paid and organic, run on four major social platforms, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter, utilizing sophisticated targeting tools to reach the identified key demographics nationwide. MSDE continues to pursue additional digital marketing opportunities to recruit future Maryland teachers.

In addition to the online marketing campaign, MSDE developed posters, flyers, and additional marketing materials, creating a cohesive branded marketing campaign. Posters and flyers are disseminated at important engagement events in our schools and communities.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 2.1: Recruit And Support High-Quality And Diverse Teachers, the following documents are present:

- 1. Blueprint and Data Deep Dive: Teacher Pipeline and Diversity**
 - MSDE provided this presentation to the State Board of Education on July 26, 2022, to share the current state of teacher supply and demand in Maryland, including the diversity of the teacher workforce and initiatives to expand and diversify the teacher pipeline.
- 2. Progress in Increasing the Preparation and Diversity of Teacher Candidates and New Teachers in Maryland – July 2022**
 - The Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center, in consultation with MSDE and MHEC, submitted the first annual progress report on improving the quality of the preparation and diversity of Maryland teacher candidates and new teachers on July 1, 2022.
- 3. Teacher Outreach and Digital Recruitment in Maryland Presentation**
 - In January 2020, MSDE provided an overview of the work of the Digital Recruitment Steering Committee to the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland. This presentation included a summary of teacher outreach and digital recruitment initiatives that took place between 2018 and 2020.
- 4. Teach Maryland Newsletter: Issue 1**
 - A quarterly newsletter was established in 2021 for prospective teachers to provide information about teaching in Maryland. Individuals were able to sign up to receive the newsletter via the Teach Maryland website.

Objective 2.1: Recruit and Support High-Quality and Diverse Teachers

5. **Teacher Digital Recruitment Survey Results Presentation**
 - MSDE, in consultation with Maryland educator preparation programs, developed a survey in 2021 to gauge the perception of teaching in Maryland. MSDE partnered with LEAs to distribute the survey electronically to Maryland high school students. 3,329 individuals, 78% of whom were in high school, completed the survey. 44% of respondents indicated interest in pursuing a teaching career.
6. **[Teach Maryland Website](#)**
 - The Teach Maryland website includes information for prospective and current teachers, including: Pathways to teaching, Certification information, High needs subject areas, Overview of Maryland teacher preparation programs, Geographic information for each LEA, Incentives and scholarship opportunities, and National Board Certification.
7. **[Teach Maryland Website LEA Map](#)**
 - The Teach Maryland website includes an interactive map that provides county geographic information, demographic data of students and teachers, and top vacancy areas.
8. **Staff Employment Report – 2022**
 - MSDE collects staff data each year from LEAs that is used to develop several public facing reports. The Staff Employment Report is one of five reports published annually on the MSDE website. The 2022 report accounts for all full-time permanent personnel as of October 15, 2021.
9. **Teach Maryland Social Media Graphics**
 - As part of its digital marketing campaign, MSDE developed a series of bold graphics that advertise the Teach Maryland website, supporting the recruitment of new high-quality educators.
10. **Maryland Leads – High Leverage Strategy Area One: Grow Your Own Staff**
 - Maryland Leads invests more than \$47 million into new Grow Your Own programs and activities in 23 local education agencies, which have the potential to: generate more than 300 new teachers, 100 new paraprofessionals; provide support for more than 400 conditionally certified teachers to pass licensure exams; and build sustainable talent pipelines for years to come in Maryland. Many approved programs focus on hard-to-staff fields and/or developing pipelines with underrepresented demographic subgroups.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 2.1: Recruit And Support High-Quality And Diverse Teachers, MSDE will expand existing recruitment efforts by:

- Host the second annual Teach Maryland conference for 300 Maryland high school students on May 8, 2023. The conference will include a keynote speaker, panel discussions, break-out sessions, and opportunities to engage with Maryland educator preparation programs, teachers, and LEA offices of human resources.



Objective 2.1: Recruit and Support High-Quality and Diverse Teachers

- Continue to utilize additional digital platforms, including social media outlets such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, radio spots, and streaming services to reach a wider audience of potential teacher candidates.
- Continue to collaborate with the MLDSC, MHEC, and LEAs to enhance the collection of accurate, timely, and actionable data on educators across the career trajectory, including the development of educator workforce data dashboards.
- Continue partnering with the MLDSC to submit an annual report in July 2023 on improving the quality of the preparation and diversity of Maryland teacher candidates and new teachers.
- Develop a public-facing reporting system of data on educator supply, demand, retention, diversity, and their equitable distribution to help guide decision-making of schools, LEAs, prospective teachers, and educator preparation programs.
- Advocate policy solutions that widen, strengthen, and diversify the teacher pipeline by continuing to work with the Department of Labor and educator preparation programs to support LEAs pursuing Grow Your Own (GYO) educator preparation initiatives, including teacher apprenticeship programs. For example, continuing to fund and support Maryland Leads grant recipients, many of which are investing in GYO programs for paraprofessionals and high school students.
- Through MSDE's Maryland Leads initiative, MSDE has also implemented strategy-specific communities of practice, including a community of practice focusing on Grow Your Own Staff initiatives. The community will meet six times throughout fiscal years 2023 and 2024 and conclude in Fall 2024 (of Fiscal Year 2025).

**Objective 2.2: Increase Rigor of Teacher Preparation Programs
and Licensure Requirements**

**Objective 2.2: Increase Rigor of Teacher Preparation Programs
and Licensure Requirements**

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
2.2.1(a)	State shall allocate at least \$2,500,000 to MSDE each year for the Teacher Collaborative Grant Program
2.2.1(b)	MSDE shall award and administer Teacher Collaborative Grants
2.2.1(c)	MSDE shall annually report by 12/1 through 2024 on the number of grant applications received, the number of grants awarded, and the current status of each grantee and their activities funded through the program
2.2.1(d)	MSDE shall identify and share effective models developed by Teacher Collaborative Grant awardees and support scaling up these models throughout the State
2.2.2	Revise teacher prep programs to meet new requirements
2.2.2(a)(1)	The minimum length of teacher training practicums for alternative certification programs shall be 100 days beginning 7/1/22
2.2.2(a)(2)	The minimum length of teacher training practicums for undergraduate and alternative certification programs shall be equivalent to one full school year beginning 7/1/25
2.2.2(a)(3)	The minimum length of teacher training practicums for graduate teacher preparation programs shall be 100 days (may go up to the equivalent of one full school year) beginning 7/1/25
2.2.2(a)(4)	Teacher training practicums shall be established through a written partnership agreement between a partner school and an IHE or an alternative teacher preparation program that meets the new requirements
2.2.2(a)(5)	Partner schools shall identify clinical mentor teachers based on the career ladder when it is fully implemented to support students in teacher preparation programs
2.2.2(b)(1)	Teacher preparation programs shall require participants to demonstrate competency in specific instructional components, including basic research skills, differentiation of instruction, assessment of student learning deficits, cultural competency, restorative practices, and effective classroom management
2.2.2(b)(2)	Teacher preparation programs shall provide training in knowledge and skills to understand and teach the Maryland curriculum frameworks
2.2.2(b)(3)	Teacher preparation programs shall incorporate classroom observations of program participants in different school settings to determine if participants have the aptitude and temperament for teaching
2.2.2(b)(4)	Teacher preparation programs, MSDE, and LEAs shall develop a method for communicating and collaborating regularly to strengthen teacher preparation, induction, and professional development systems

**Objective 2.2: Increase Rigor of Teacher Preparation Programs
and Licensure Requirements**

Task ID	Requirement
2.2.2(b)(5)	An IHE offering graduate level courses in school administration shall develop a method for evaluating the potential of program participants to be effective school leaders and a curriculum to enable school leaders to organize and manage schools to achieve the effectiveness of top-performing schools/school systems
2.2.2(b)(6)	MSDE shall assist teacher preparation programs in seeking and retaining highly qualified candidates, particularly individuals from historically underrepresented populations
2.2.2(b)(7)	MSDE and MHEC shall authorize traditional or alternative teacher preparation programs to establish an apprenticeship program
2.2.2(b)(8)	A teacher preparation workgroup shall review current State requirements for teacher preparation programs
2.2.2(b)(9)	Teacher preparation programs shall increase the diversity of their staff
2.2.2(b)(10)	MSDE and MHEC, in collaboration with teacher preparation programs, shall review offerings at all IHEs to assess the quantity of programs/access to programs throughout the State for all certification areas, especially those in critical need areas
2.2.3(a)	MSBE and PSTEB, in consultation with AIB, shall adopt regulations that require teacher candidates to pass a portfolio-based assessment of teaching ability for graduation from a state program and for initial licensure beginning no later than 7/1/25
2.2.3(b)	After a reasonable period of review following implementation of the requirement, MSDE shall determine whether one of the particular assessments of teaching ability required for initial certification more adequately measures the skills and knowledge required of a highly qualified teacher than the other(s)
2.2.3(c)	MSDE shall actively monitor and assess the impact of new teacher standards and assessments for any negative impact on the diversity of teacher candidates passing initial certification assessments
2.2.4(a)	MSDE shall determine whether the basic literacy skills test required for initial teacher certification is at least as rigorous as the similar examination administered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
2.2.4(b)	MSDE shall develop and administer challenging, subject-specific examinations tailored to the subjects and grade level at which teachers will teach after the implementation of the literacy examination
2.2.4(c)	MSBE and PSTEB, in consultation with AIB, shall adopt regulations to require teachers to pass a state-specific examination of reading instruction and grade-level content for initial licensure beginning 7/1/25
2.2.5(a)	MSBE and PSTEB, in consultation with AIB, shall adopt regulations to require teachers who graduated from an out-of-state institution to pass an exam of teaching ability within 18 months of being hired or hold NBC starting in FY26
2.2.6(a)	MSDE shall collaborate with MHEC, IHEs and LEAs to create and implement pathways for paraprofessionals to become certified teachers



Objective 2.2: Increase Rigor of Teacher Preparation Programs and Licensure Requirements

MSDE and MHEC Joint Plan on Teacher Preparation and Training Requirements

MSDE, in collaboration with the teacher preparation programs in Maryland, MHEC, and other stakeholders, began work in 2016 to identify ways to recruit, prepare, retain, and advance educators in Maryland. The recommendations made in the 2017 Teacher Induction, Retention, and Advancement Final Report, in conjunction with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, resulted in the revision of regulations governing educator preparation and certification. The regulations, developed in partnership with the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) and the State Board of Education, were published for public comment in January 2022. Maryland educator preparation programs and local education agencies (LEAs) provided comprehensive feedback during this process. MSDE reviewed the public comments with PSTEB during their monthly meetings in March, April, and May 2022. Additionally, MSDE requested that the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) provide consultation on the published regulations and feedback regarding the public comments received. The AIB provided feedback to MSDE in May 2022, which PSTEB reviewed in June 2022. During the months of June through November 2022, PSTEB made several substantive changes to the proposed regulations based on public comments, AIB feedback, Maryland educator data, and relevant research. PSTEB and the State Board of Education granted permission to publish the regulations in December 2022 and January 2023, respectively.

MSDE will continue to work closely with MHEC to implement and support robust teacher preparation programs and teacher training requirements in Maryland, as specified by the Blueprint.

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

To strengthen the development, approval, and review of educator preparation, including traditional degree programs, resident teacher programs, district-led grow-your-own initiatives, and teacher apprenticeships, MSDE is investing in the expansion of the Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval. As part of this process, new roles have been created, including a new Director of Educator Preparation, that will focus on strengthening implementation efforts for expanding the capacity and accountability of educator preparation programs, especially for diversifying Maryland's educator workforce.

MSDE requested documentation from the Educational Testing Service, Inc. (ETS) demonstrating that the Praxis subject assessments, currently used in Maryland, are as rigorous as the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) subject assessments used in Massachusetts. ETS provided documentation to MSDE, which is currently being analyzed. MSDE confirmed with ETS and the Massachusetts Department of Education that Massachusetts currently accepts the ETS Praxis Core basic skills assessment to measure basic literacy skills. The basic literacy skills assessment being used in Massachusetts and Maryland are the same and therefore comparable.

The Teacher Collaborative Grant program was established to provide seed grant funds to Collaboratives to develop evidence-based professional education for prospective and current teachers that reflects international and national best practices that can subsequently be replicated in local education agencies (LEAs) and increase the quality and diversity of the teacher candidate pipeline. MSDE has awarded five



Objective 2.2: Increase Rigor of Teacher Preparation Programs and Licensure Requirements

Teacher Collaborative Grants since 2019. The following Collaboratives are currently established under the grant:

- Morgan State University, Baltimore City Public School System, Baltimore Teachers Union (\$531,558 awarded in 2019)
- Bowie State University, Howard County Public Schools, Howard County Education Association (\$750,000 awarded in 2019)
- University of Maryland College Park, Montgomery County Public Schools, Prince George's County Public Schools, Montgomery County Education Association, and Prince George's County Education Association (\$2,333,726 awarded in 2019)
- Towson University, Howard County Public Schools, Howard County Education Association (\$856,046 awarded in 2021)
- McDaniel College, Carroll County Public Schools, Carroll County Education Association (\$1,813,126 awarded in 2022)

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 2.2: Increase Rigor of Teacher Preparation Programs and Licensure Requirements, the following documents are present:

- 1. Regulations Deep Dive: Educator Preparation and Licensure (January 2023)**
 - On January 24, 2023, MSDE presented information to the State Board of Education that provided an in-depth review of the repealed and replaced regulations for educator preparation and licensure, including how the drafted regulations align to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, support Maryland educators and students, and how the proposed licensure flexibility pathways will encourage high-quality and diverse teacher candidates who have historically participated at lower rates, to join the teacher workforce.
- 2. COMAR 13A.12 Educator Licensure and 13A.07.06 Programs for Professionally Licensed Personnel**
 - MSDE drafted these regulations that govern educator preparation and licensure to replace the currently enacted regulations. The new educator preparation regulations cover national content and professional standards, the full-year high-quality internship, instruction in the science of reading, a demonstration of teacher competencies, and annual reporting. The new educator licensure regulations cover multiple license types and flexible licensure pathways, alternative methods to determine a candidate's readiness, collaborative development of an Individualized Professional Development Plan, multiple options to earn Professional Development Points, an emphasis on demonstrating proficiency in teaching reading, and a transparent process of taking disciplinary action. These regulations were granted permission to publish by the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board in December 2022 and the State Board of Education in January 2023 and are scheduled to be published for public comment.

Objective 2.2: Increase Rigor of Teacher Preparation Programs and Licensure Requirements

3. AIB Memo: MSDE Educator Prep and Licensure Regs

- As part of the regulation drafting process, MSDE consulted with the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) regarding the draft educator preparation and licensure regulations. MSDE provided AIB with the public comments that were received as well as how these comments affect the proposed regulations. The AIB provided their feedback through this letter on May 25, 2022. MSDE then shared this feedback with the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board and modifications to the regulations were made in response to the public feedback and consultation with AIB.

4. Regulations Updates - PSTEB

- During the May 2022 meeting, PSTEB reviewed each Blueprint requirement for teacher preparation programs to ensure alignment with the drafted regulations. This document includes the Blueprint statutory language in the comment boxes next to the aligned text in the regulations.

5. Portfolio Based Certification Assessment Requirements

- The MSDE Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval publishes on its website the certification performance assessment requirements established in the Blueprint. This information, first shared with the public on our website in 2019, provides information for the edTPA and PPAT to include frequently asked questions and links to resources for both assessments.

6. TCG Annual Reports (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)

- MSDE submitted an annual report beginning in 2019 to the General Assembly and Governor, including the number of grant applications received, the number of grants awarded, and the current status of each grantee and their activities funded through the program. Each of these reports are included as artifacts.

7. TCG Final Evaluation Tool

- The MSDE Office of Research, Planning, and Program Evaluation and the Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval developed this evaluation tool to gather specific information as it relates to the Teacher Collaborative Grant program. This template includes a logic model based on the grantee's original program proposal.

8. TCG Grant Information Guide and Application

- The FY 2023 Teacher Collaborative Grant Information Guide was released on January 17, 2023, and included detailed information about the grant program, eligibility, use of funds, program requirements, directions for completing the application, and the review process. MSDE provided technical assistance sessions for interested applicants on January 30, 2023, February 8, 2023, and March 3, 2023. The applications for the grant period of May 1, 2023, through April 30, 2026, were due on March 15, 2023.

9. TCG Scoring Rubric

- The scoring rubric that will be used to evaluate Teacher Collaborative Grant applications addresses the following key areas: Extent of Need, Goals, Outcomes, and Milestones; Measuring Success; Plan of Operation; Evidence of Impact; Management Plan/Key Personnel; Future Plans/Sustainability; Budget and Budget Narrative. The scoring rubric



Objective 2.2: Increase Rigor of Teacher Preparation Programs and Licensure Requirements

ensures that all applications are aligned to the Blueprint and all of the requirements. Preference will be given to programs that strengthen the teacher pipeline by recruiting from within communities to bring diversity into schools, as well as to programs that include professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy, content knowledge, and best practices in teaching diverse students and communicating with diverse student families, including individuals of all races, religions, sexual orientations, and gender identities.

10. Blueprint and Data Deep Dive: Teacher Pipeline and Diversity

- MSDE provided this presentation to the State Board of Education on July 26, 2022, to share the current state of teacher supply and demand in Maryland, including the diversity of the teacher workforce and initiatives to expand and diversify the teacher pipeline. Also included in this presentation is information on the Maryland Leads grants strategies, including Grow Your Own. New programs and activities have the potential to generate more than 300 new teachers, 100 new paraprofessionals, support for more than 400 conditionally certified teachers to pass licensure exams and build sustainable talent pipelines for years to come in Maryland. Many approved programs focus on hard-to-staff fields and/or developing pipelines with underrepresented demographic subgroups.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 2.2: Increase Rigor of Teacher Preparation Programs and Licensure Requirements, MSDE will:

- Continue to award and monitor the Teacher Collaborative Grant through Fiscal Year 2024.
- Continue to support grantees in the Teacher Collaborative Grant program. The first cohort of grantees is scheduled to complete their programs in July 2023 and are required to submit a final evaluation using the MSDE Teacher Collaborative Grant Final Evaluation Tool in August 2023. MSDE will identify and share effective models that can be replicated across the State based on the final evaluations, as well as the annual reports and data submitted over the term of the grant.
- Adopt and implement COMAR 13A.12 and 13A.07.06, which are the proposed regulations governing educator preparation and licensure.
- Provide extensive technical assistance to Maryland educator preparation programs and local education agencies regarding the regulations governing educator preparation and licensure.
- Work with local education agencies and the Maryland Department of Labor to sponsor teacher apprenticeship programs in Maryland.
- Partner with the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research in the American Institutes of Research to study the impact of emergency certification waivers issued during the COVID-19 pandemic on the diversity and effectiveness of new teachers.
- Continue to work closely with MHEC and other stakeholders to implement and support robust teacher preparation programs and teacher training requirements in Maryland, as specified by the Blueprint.

Objective 2.3: Implement Comprehensive In-Service Educator Training

Objective 2.3: Implement Comprehensive In-Service Educator Training

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
2.3.1	MSDE, in collaboration with AIB, shall provide separate school leadership training programs on the Blueprint
2.3.1(a)	MSDE and AIB shall provide targeted training on the Blueprint to the State Superintendent of Maryland Public Schools, local superintendents, and senior instructional staff beginning in FY23
2.3.1(b)	MSDE and AIB shall provide targeted training on the Blueprint to members of the Maryland State Board of Education, county boards of education, and school principals beginning in FY23
2.3.2	MSDE, in consultation with LEAs and Education Deans and Directors, shall develop guidelines for comprehensive induction programs for all new teachers
2.3.2(a)	MSDE shall develop guidelines that include provisions concerning mentoring, professional development training and support, eligibility criteria for teachers to participate in the program, and the standards that shall be used to determine if schools shall be considered hard-to-staff schools

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

During the 2016 legislative session, Md. Code, Education Article § 6-117.1 established the Teacher Induction, Retention, and Advancement (TIRA) Pilot Program. The TIRA Pilot program afforded first-year teachers participating in the program at least 20% more time than non-participating first year teachers to engage in mentoring, peer observation, assistance with planning, or other preparation activities. TIRA provided 80% of the costs in fiscal years 2018-2021 to local education agencies (LEAs) that agreed to fund the remaining 20% of the costs associated with a program requiring the following components:

- Providing a subset of first-year teachers with 20% more time for mentoring, peer observation, assistance with planning, or other classroom preparation activities during the academic week compared to non-first year teachers;
- Providing supportive activities that constitute the additional 20% of time do not include administrative responsibilities or student supervision;
- Providing the participating first-year teachers with resources such as mentoring, peer observation, and assistance with planning during the additional allotted time;
- Developing a sustainability plan to ensure the goals of the program continue following the termination of the pilot; and
- Reporting data to MSDE demonstrating success of the retention of the participating teachers compared to those first-year teachers who did not participate in the pilot.



Objective 2.3: Implement Comprehensive In-Service Educator Training

During the time that the TIRA pilot program was active, MSDE provided technical assistance and support to the participating LEAs and conducted annual site visits to observe the programs. During the first year of the program, three LEAs applied to participate, and one LEA continued to participate during the subsequent years that the program was funded. MSDE collected data from each of the participating LEAs each year to determine if the pilot was successful in retaining teachers. Data for two of the three participating LEAs, including the LEA that participated in all four years of the program, showed a lower retention rate for those first-year teachers participating in the pilot program, compared to teachers who did not participate in the program. The third LEA had a higher retention rate for the teachers who did participate in the TIRA pilot program.

Learning from the challenges reported by the LEAs during the TIRA pilot program, MSDE is in the process of revising Code of Maryland Regulation (COMAR) 13A.07.01 Comprehensive Teacher Induction Program to align the requirements for induction and mentorship to incorporate evidence-based best practices, which will align with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The MSDE Office of Research, Planning, and Program Evaluation, in collaboration with the Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval, developed a survey on current teacher induction practices in Maryland LEAs. Data from this survey, distributed in March 2023, will assist a workgroup of stakeholders to understand current induction practices across the State and will guide the revisions to the regulations that the workgroup will recommend. The regulations will ultimately address best practices related to mentor training, mentor matching, compensation of mentors, observations, evaluation, professional learning, and training for school-based administrators. MSDE hopes to present the revised regulations to the State Board of Education in late Fall of 2023.

While MSDE works to develop the targeted training on the Blueprint to support the leadership of the State Superintendent of Schools, local superintendents, senior instructional staff, members of the Maryland State Board of Education, county boards of education, and school principals, it continues to engage in a series of training sessions through its Blueprint Deep Dive presentations to the State Board of Education. For example, in January 2022, MSDE presented a deep dive into College and Career Readiness, including the legislative requirements, implementation timeline, methods to meet the college and career readiness standard, post-CCR Pathways and Support Pathways, and MSDE's engagement on this topic.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 2.3: Implement Comprehensive In-Service Educator Training, the following documents are present:

- 1. RFP for Teacher Induction Retention Advancement Pilot (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)**
 - MSDE released a Request for Proposals each year that the TIRA Pilot Program was active, from 2018 to 2022. Each RFP describes the purpose of the program, application requirements, review process, and acceptable uses of the funds.
- 2. MSAR #10990 TIRA Recommendation 2021**
 - MSDE submitted this legislative report to the General Assembly and Governor regarding the results of the TIRA Pilot Program. The report includes information on the program,



Objective 2.3: Implement Comprehensive In-Service Educator Training

retention data for participants of the TIRA Pilot Program, lessons learned, and MSDE's plan to evolve the current induction programs to be better aligned with the Blueprint and to be rooted in evidence-based best practices and be comprehensive in nature.

3. Blueprint CCR Presentation January 2022

- On January 25, 2022, MSDE presented to the State Board about the CCR standard, the research studies, the implementation timeline, post-CCR Pathways, implications for student schedules, financial implications, and engagement efforts. This presentation is also part of MSDE's communication strategy to support the public's knowledge and understanding of the Blueprint, the CCR standard, and how students will meet it.

4. Comprehensive Teacher Induction and Mentoring Survey

- The MSDE Office of Research, Planning, and Program Evaluation developed a survey on current teacher induction practices for Maryland LEAs. Data from this survey, distributed in March 2023, will assist a workgroup of stakeholders in understanding current induction practices across the State and will guide the revisions to the regulations that the workgroup will recommend.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 2.3: Implement Comprehensive In-Service Educator Training, MSDE will:

- Facilitate an induction workgroup during Spring 2023 to review existing regulations and determine the existing alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future as well as identify evidence-based best practices related to mentorship and professional development. The workgroup will include membership from LEAs (administrators, human resources, professional learning specialists, new teachers, mentor teachers, etc.), teacher associations, and educator preparation programs, among others. MSDE anticipates providing the modified regulations to the State Board of Education for publication in late fall of 2023.
- Continue to work closely with the AIB to develop targeted training on the Blueprint to support the leadership of the State Superintendent of Schools, local superintendents, senior instructional staff, members of the Maryland State Board of Education, county boards of education, and school principals. In addition to the developing this training for education leaders, MSDE will continue to present its series of Blueprint and Data Deep Dive presentations to the State Board of Education, the AIB, and other stakeholders around the state.



Objective 2.4: Establish New Statewide Educator Career Ladder and Professional Development System

Objective 2.4: Establish New Statewide Educator Career Ladder and Professional Development System

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
2.4.1	LEAs and MSDE shall implement a new program to support and encourage teachers to obtain and maintain National Board Certification (NBC), particularly teachers from historically underrepresented populations
2.4.1(a)	MSDE shall hire a National Board Coordinator to direct the NBC Support Program beginning in FY23
2.4.1(d)	MSDE shall implement mechanisms to ensure racial equity among NBC candidates and teachers beginning in FY23
2.4.3	MSDE shall design and LEAs shall implement a new system of professional development tied to the career ladder by 7/1/24
2.4.3(a)	MSDE shall design a new system of professional development tied to the career ladder
2.4.5(a)	MSBE and PSTEB shall establish a process through which an individual who is not an NBC teacher may receive a waiver to serve as a licensed principal

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

The National Board Certification State and Local Incentive Program provides funding for eligible public-school teachers to pursue National Board Certification (NBC) and covers the cost of all application fees. This program was expanded by the Blueprint to require involvement by all Maryland local education agencies (LEAs), as well as provide funding for candidates who need additional funds to retake components when unsuccessful in the first attempt. In 2022, there was a 65% increase in candidate participation in this program, and in 2023, more than three times the number of participants applied for candidacy than the previous year. In 2022, MSDE worked with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to deliver four virtual sessions giving an overview of the NBC candidacy process for initial candidates and those renewing their National Board Certificates. Additionally, MSDE provided technical assistance for LEAs on August 11, 2022, and September 8, 2022, to review the incentive program requirements. Prior to the adoption of the Blueprint, approximately 16 LEAs participated in the incentive program. During the 2022-2023 school year, all 24 LEAs identified candidates to begin their National Board candidacy.

The Blueprint requires MSDE to establish a National Board coordinator position to direct the efforts to encourage, support, and incentivize eligible teachers to pursue National Board Certification. In its FY 2024 budget request, MSDE requested that the National Board coordinator position be converted into a permanent position, instead of a contractual position. The FY 2024 Governor’s Allowance approved this request and includes a permanent position for the National Board coordinator role. Since then, MSDE recruitment efforts have identified many qualified candidates and expects to hire in spring 2023.



Objective 2.4: Establish New Statewide Educator Career Ladder and Professional Development System

As part of MSDE's efforts to develop a new technical assistance series tied to the career ladder, MSDE is conducting a program evaluation of the Teacher Collaborative Grant program, described more in Objective 2.2. Using the lessons learned from this program evaluation, and the information learned about the baseline status of career ladder development, bargaining, and implementation from the initial LEA Blueprint Implementation Plan submissions, MSDE will develop in-depth technical assistance sessions and materials.

MSDE is also supporting LEAs to build cohort programming to ensure candidates successfully complete the NBC process and LEAs have a diverse candidate pool representative of the student body. For example, Baltimore City Schools included expanding its National Board Certification cohort program in its Maryland Leads grant goals.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 2.4: Establish New Statewide Educator Career Ladder And Professional Development System, the following documents are present:

- 1. NBC Program Overview Flyer**
 - MSDE has engaged in robust recruitment efforts and information campaign to raise awareness of NBC availability and support pathways among the existing teacher workforce. The included flyer provides an overview of the salary incentives offered in Maryland to eligible teachers with National Board Certification and encourages teachers and teacher candidates to teach at the schools that historically have been underserved and have struggled to retain high-quality teachers.
- 2. Nationally Board Certified Teachers and Low Performing Schools PPT**
 - On January 25, 2022, MSDE presented to the State Board of Education on the current state of NBC Teachers in Maryland schools as well as the methodology for identifying schools to be designated as Nationally Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) low performing schools. This methodology was developed after active stakeholder engagement with the Public Schools Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), Assistant Superintendents, Blueprint Coordinators, and Local Accountability Coordinators in a series of webinars and face to face meetings. Based on this engagement, MSDE included an optional local flexibility to identify additional schools as low performing, which allows for variation based on local circumstances and alignment with local priorities. The presentation also included a national perspective on strategic staffing initiatives.
- 3. NCBT List of Participating Low Performing Schools**
 - Based on the MSDE Framework for National Board Certified Teachers and Low Performing Schools (Framework 1.0), this document includes the school year 2022-2023 list of which schools are identified as Low Performing schools for the National Board Certified Teacher Incentive Program. As state accountability has restarted after the pause due to the pandemic, the recently released Maryland Report Card results will support the development of an updated list of Low Performing Schools to be released in spring 2023.



Objective 2.4: Establish New Statewide Educator Career Ladder and Professional Development System

4. Maryland NBPTS Overview

- In December 2021 and January 2022, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), in conjunction with MSDE, provided an overview of the National Board candidacy for potential candidates, as well as the Five Core Propositions, National Board standards, the Architecture of Accomplished Teaching, the certification process, and encouraging teachers to participate in the program.

5. NBC Incentive Program Information Guide

- The FY 2023 National Board Certification State and Local Incentive Program Information Guide was released on July 28, 2022, and includes detailed information about the grant program, eligibility, use of funds, program requirements, directions for completing the application, and the review process. MSDE provided technical assistance sessions for interested applicants on August 11, 2022, and September 8, 2022. Applications for the FY 2023 grant period were due on October 5, 2022.

6. NBC State and Local Incentive Program Overview

- MSDE annually provides technical assistance for local education agencies about the National Board Certification incentive programs. This presentation, shared on August 11, 2022, included information on the Blueprint and the changes that it makes to the NBC programs, the career ladder, salary increases, and other support programs for NBC teachers and teacher candidates.

7. 2022-2023 LEA National Board Candidate Selection Report

- This template is used to collect information on NBC candidates, including race and ethnicity, which can be used as a data source to understand the landscape of NBC teachers and teacher candidates in Maryland. With this information, MSDE and LEAs can assess teacher workforce pipeline data to identify opportunities and adapt strategies to ensure racial equity among candidates and at schools from across the state and strategies to better ensure that the pipeline of candidates represents the demographics of the student body.

8. Position Description: National Board Coordinator

- After MSDE, with the support of the Department of Budget and Management, converted the National Board coordinator position from a contractual position to a permanent position, MSDE developed the position description and job responsibilities. This opening was advertised during the month of February 2023, which immediately garnered many qualified applications.

9. Maryland Leads: Grant Opportunity

- Maryland Leads is a unique grant opportunity that will seed the transformational change our children need and deserve. Maryland Leads sets districts up to scale evidence-based programs that can drive results, particularly for children who need the most support and who were most disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Through this initiative, MSDE identifies seven high-leverage strategies and provide concrete, actionable focus areas, exemplar program models, related research, and the funds and partnership necessary to implement those strategies. The Maryland Leads grant programs was designed to support LEAs in kick starting some of their Blueprint goals and initiatives.



Objective 2.4: Establish New Statewide Educator Career Ladder and Professional Development System

10. Maryland Leads LEA Summary: Baltimore City

- Baltimore City utilized the Maryland Leads strategies of Staff Support and Retention, The Science of Reading, Reimagining the Use of Time, and Transforming Neighborhoods through Excellent Community Schools. Within the \$558,648 awarded for Staff Support and Retention, Baltimore City supports teachers earning their National Board Certification. The district expects 40% of teachers pursuing NBC submit at least one portfolio component in year one; increasing to 50% in year 2; and a difference of no more than 5% between the percentage of low-performing schools with at least one teacher pursuing National Board Certification and the percentage of other schools with at least one teacher pursuing certification.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 2.4: Establish New Statewide Educator Career Ladder And Professional Development System, MSDE will:

- Ensure that the MSDE National Board coordinator provides leadership and expertise for the development and institutionalization of the NBC initiatives established in the Blueprint, including the grant programs, candidate support, and recruitment campaigns.
- Continue to offer multiple annual technical assistance sessions to support local education agencies in the implementation of the National Board Certification state and local incentive program.
- Continue to partner with the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards in delivering information and resources to candidates interested in and participating in a National Board Certification candidacy.
- MSDE will modify the annual staff data collection to include National Board Certification status, and placement on the career ladder. This will allow MSDE to track movement up, and down, the career ladder, as well as the percentage of teachers who are National Board Certified.
- Collaborate with the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board during the 2023-2024 school year to develop a process through which an individual who is not an NBC teacher may receive a waiver to serve as a licensed principal as well as differentiated professional development that is aligned with the vision established by the Blueprint.
- Collaborate with a variety of stakeholders, including educators, collective bargaining units, LEAs, AIB, and others to develop a system of professional development that is connected to the career ladder. The initial LEA Blueprint Implementation Plan submissions in March 2023 will provide the State with a better understanding of each LEA's current progress in developing their career ladder and what support they need. During school year 2023-2024, MSDE will offer a series of technical assistance and professional development sessions, which will provide in-depth discussions of the intricacies of fully implementing the career ladder. Once the career ladders have been implemented in LEAs, MSDE will provide additional technical assistance and professional development sessions that focus on how to refine and improve the career ladder, including topics such as helping teachers move up the ladder and the responsibilities that teachers should hold outside of the classroom.



Objective 2.5: Improve Educator Compensation

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
2.5.2(a)	MSDE shall annually update the list of low-performing schools based on a statewide definition

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

A National Board Certified teacher teaching at a low-performing school as identified by the county board will receive \$7,000 annually, bringing their total salary increase up to \$17,000 annually, effective July 1 following National Board Certification attainment. A teacher that receives a salary increase for teaching at a low-performing school may not lose that salary increase while teaching at the school even if the school ceases to be low-performing.

In April 2022, MSDE released the first iteration of the State’s Framework for National Board Certified Teachers and Low-Performing Schools (Framework 1.0). The release of Framework 1.0 incorporated feedback from Maryland local superintendents, assistant superintendents, Blueprint coordinators and local accountability coordinators from across the state. Based on this feedback, MSDE incorporated using multiple years of data in the determination of National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) low-performing schools as well as providing an opportunity for all local education agencies (LEAs) to participate in the program through local flexibility. The Framework 1.0 allows for a consistent and comparable definition of low-performing across the state, a floor to identify schools and guided flexibility in scaling strategic staffing initiatives across all LEAs, and variation based on local circumstances and alignment with local priorities. The Framework 1.0 methodology for identifying NBCT low-performing schools includes the following key aspects:

- Schools earning a 1- or 2-star rating on the Maryland Accountability System for two of the last three years meet the state definition and must be included in the program. For the first year of the incentive program, Maryland only had two years of accountability results, school year 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- LEAs that do not have schools meeting the state definition may include schools up to 10% of their total schools. LEAs that have more than 10% of total schools meeting the state definition of low-performing cannot use the local flexibility option to include additional schools.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future also requires local education agencies to ensure that, by or in fiscal year 2024, all teacher salaries have increased by at least 10%. MSDE, in collaboration with Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), developed and released guidance that reflects the methodology LEA should use when reporting and demonstrating compliance with this requirement of the law. Given the year-to-year variations in LEA staff retention driven in large part by the pandemic, the Maryland State Department of



Objective 2.5: Improve Educator Compensation

Education and the AIB also permitted LEAs to choose between the calculation method identified in the original memorandum and an additional method for calculating 10% salary increases. Both methods are included in implementation artifacts, below.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 2.5: Improve Educator Compensation, the following documents are present:

1. **Nationally Board Certified Teachers and Low-Performing Schools Presentation**
 - MSDE presented to the Maryland State Board of Education on January 25, 2022, highlighting Framework 1.0 for the rollout of the NBCT low-performing school incentive program. Information highlighted included the methodology for the state definition and local flexibility to provide guided flexibility in scaling strategic staffing initiatives across all LEAs. A national perspective on strategic staffing initiatives is also provided.
2. **Initial Eligibility for National Board Certification Salary Increase Incentives: Memo**
 - On April 22, 2022, MSDE released implementation guidance on the NBCT Program, including the State's Framework for National Board-Certified Teachers and Low-Performing Schools and other clarifications for how the salary increases are to be operationalized.
3. **Nationally Board Certified Teachers: Overview Flyer**
 - As part of the recruitment and information campaigns, MSDE published an overview of the NBCT program highlighting the methodology and increase in salary. This document was shared widely through a variety of means.
4. **List of Participating Low-Performing Schools**
 - The Maryland State Department of Education has released the first iteration of the State's Framework for National Board Certified Teachers and Low-Performing Schools (Framework 1.0). This framework identifies which schools are eligible to be part of the program for 2022-2023. As state accountability has restarted after the pause due to the pandemic, the recently released Maryland Report Card results will support the development of an updated list of Low Performing Schools to be released in spring 2023.
5. **Nationally Board Certified State and Local Incentive Program Guide**
 - The Maryland National Board Certification State and Local Incentive Program provides Maryland public school teachers pursuing National Board Certification (NBC) funding to cover the cost associated with obtaining such credentials. This program is designed for LEAs to apply for MSDE to fund the cost of National Board Certification for eligible public school teachers within their jurisdiction.
6. **Clarification for Calculation of Blueprint 10% Salary Increase: Memo**
 - On February 24, 2023, MSDE providing technical clarification for local education agencies (LEAs) to assist with calculating the annual 10% increase requirements. MSDE supplemented the memorandum based on local education agency feedback to include an additional calculation method. That email guidance is appended to the original memo.



Objective 2.5: Improve Educator Compensation

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 2.5: Improve Educator Compensation, MSDE will:

- Update the NBCT low-performing program methodology to look across three years of results.
- Continue to annually release the list of NBC and low-performing schools based on the state methodology. The state methodology is determined by looking across school performance results on the Maryland Accountability System. The determination of schools will be available each year after accountability system results are finalized and published. This release will also include the schools that cease to meet the definition of NBC low-performing based on the state methodology.

Objective 3.1: Equitable Opportunities to Become CCR and Meet the CCR Standard at an Equal Rate

In Objective 3.1: Equitable Opportunities to Become CCR and Meet the CCR Standard at an Equal Rate

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
3.1.1(a)	A student shall meet the initial CCR standard when they have achieved the equivalent of a 4 or 5 in the mathematics and English portions of the PARCC or MCAP grade 10 assessments
3.1.1(b)	After the empirical study is completed, the updated CCR standard shall reflect the results of that study so that students are able to succeed in entry-level credit bearing courses or postsecondary education training at a State community college in ELA, math, and (when practicable) science
3.1.2	MSDE shall contract for an empirical study of the CCR standard to enable students to be successful in entry-level courses and postsecondary training offered at MD community colleges
3.1.2(a)	The external contractor conducting the study shall determine the levels and types of literacy in reading, writing, mathematics, and, when practicable, science that are needed to succeed in entry-level courses and postsecondary training offered at community colleges in Maryland
3.1.2(b)	MSDE and the external contractor shall engage and solicit feedback from key stakeholders across the State in conducting the study, including (but not limited to) AIB, LEAs, community colleges, local workforce development boards, educators, students, families, and community members
3.1.2(c)	The external contractor shall report the results of its study by 9/1/23 and recommendations to modify the CCR standard to align with the literacy standards necessary to be successful in State community colleges and, to the extent practicable, comparable postsecondary institutions and top-performing systems to the Governor, General Assembly, and AIB.
3.1.3	MSDE and LEAs shall develop a fully aligned instructional system in consultation with experienced and highly-effective teachers, including high-quality curriculum frameworks and instructional materials that build on one another in a logical sequence (with regular updates)
3.1.3 (a)	MSDE shall update the instructional system to align with the updated CCR standard as needed
3.1.4	State Board adopts assessments needed to meet the updated CCR standard
3.1.4(a)	MSBE shall determine whether current assessments are sufficient to assess whether high school students meet the CCR standard, including if they contain potential bias
3.1.4(b)	MSBE shall adjust assessments if they are not sufficient to determine whether high school students meet the CCR standard
3.1.5	MSDE shall develop and implement a communication strategy to inform parents, students, educators, and the wider public about the CCR standard



Objective 3.1: Equitable Opportunities to Become CCR and Meet the CCR Standard at an Equal Rate

Task ID	Requirement
3.1.5(a)	MSDE shall communicate with parents, students, educators, employers, and community members about the CCR standard in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to) virtual roundtable discussions, email, social media, and informational flyers
3.1.5(b)	MSDE shall develop resources about the updated CCR standard for LEAs to disseminate to educators, students, parents/families, and community members
3.1.6	MSBE shall coordinate and consult with MHEC, the Governor's Workforce Development Board/CTE Committee, the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, and AIB in performing its duties

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future has a central goal of ensuring that all Maryland public school students are College and Career Ready (CCR) before graduation, thus signifying an ability to transition successfully to postsecondary coursework at a two- or four-year institution or to the workforce. All instruction and assessments in public schools should work toward this goal of preparing students to be ready for college and career. To actualize this vision, the standard of what it means to be CCR needs to be defined and then set as the north star for Pre-K–12 education. The Blueprint set the interim CCR standard to be measured by meeting or exceeding the content standards (earning a score of 4 or 5 on PARCC) on high school assessments. The Maryland State Board of Education adopted the interim CCR standard as described in the Blueprint, on February 22, 2022, at the request of MSDE.

While the interim CCR standard is in place, the Blueprint also directs MSDE to contract for an empirical study of the CCR standard to enable students to be successful in entry-level courses and postsecondary training offered at Maryland community colleges. MSDE commissioned an exploratory research study and a long-term research study to define and verify the CCR standard and how it will be measured. There is a growing body of research that alternate measures beyond standardized tests, including high school GPA, can be strong predictors of post-secondary success.¹

MSDE contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct the long-term empirical research study on the content standards and alignment of the CCR standard to entry-level credit-bearing college courses in Maryland. As specified in the Blueprint, AIR will submit their final research report to the Governor, the Maryland General Assembly, the AIB, and MSDE on or before September 1, 2023. Based on the outcomes of the commissioned research studies and other research, MSDE will consider GPA and course completion, at a minimum, as additional ways for students to meet the CCR standard.

The Blueprint sets the expectation that students meet the CCR standard by the end of their 10th grade year. This could represent a major change in how state and local education agencies (LEAs) sequence courses and programs to ensure students meet the CCR standard by 10th grade, such that courses, normally

¹ <https://www.mdrc.org/publication/multiple-measures-assessment-and-placement-promotes-community-college-student-success>



Objective 3.1: Equitable Opportunities to Become CCR and Meet the CCR Standard at an Equal Rate

taught in 11th or 12th grade may be shifted to earlier grade levels. Aligned curricula and evidence-based classroom materials are crucial components to ensuring students' continued progress and success each year of their educational career.

To support all of Maryland's educators and to ensure all Maryland students have access to the highest-quality instruction that is aligned to the curriculum that will ensure that students are college and career ready, MSDE is redesigning its existing processes to review and approve high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) for courses across all pre-K-12 grade levels. The Blueprint requires that MSDE develop "curriculum standards and curriculum resources for each subject at each grade level, which build on one another in logical sequence, in core subjects that may be used by local school systems and public-school teachers." However, to develop a model statewide curriculum, Maryland must first have a robust and rigorous system to identify HQIM and tools that outline the elements of outstanding curricula in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Through the development of this HQIM identification process, MSDE will ensure that the curriculum standards and curriculum resources aligned to the college and career readiness standards are rooted in HQIM.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has developed and operates a High-Quality Instructional Materials and Professional Development (IMPD) Network of states to support with adopting and implementing policies and strategies that support the use of HQIM. The states included in the IMPD Network have demonstrated strong results for implementing HQIM policies and ultimately for improving student achievement. Building on the evidence and lessons learned from states in the IMPD Network and others who have developed strong HQIM processes, MSDE has joined the IMPD Network and is in the process of revamping its curriculum vetting process to ensure HQIM aligned to college and career readiness standards are used in all schools across the state.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 3.1: Equitable Opportunities To Become CCR and Meet The CCR Standard at an Equal Rate, the following documents are present:

- 1. College and Career Readiness Interim Standard**
 - On February 22, 2022, the State Board of Education adopted the interim CCR standard, as described in the Blueprint, at the request of MSDE. This document details the CCR standard and the options that a student may employ to meet it.
- 2. Blueprint CCR Presentation (January 2022)**
 - On January 25, 2022, MSDE presented to the State Board about the CCR standard, the research studies, the implementation timeline, post-CCR Pathways, implications for student schedules, financial implications, and engagement efforts. This presentation is also part of MSDE's communication strategy to support the public's knowledge and understanding of the Blueprint, the CCR standard, and how students will meet it.



Objective 3.1: Equitable Opportunities to Become CCR and Meet the CCR Standard at an Equal Rate

3. CCR Roadmap to Implementation

- In February 2022, MSDE released its report on College and Career Readiness: Roadmap to Implementation. The report was then updated in August 2022 with additional information, data, and discussion. In this report, MSDE provided information and guidance for schools, districts, and the public on the CCR standard, curriculum alignment and changes, assessments, post-CCR Pathways, the student Support Pathway, early warning indicators, finance and CCR, and MSDE's coordination and engagement. This report detailed a number of options for LEAs to implement the tasks related to this objective of Blueprint, research on best practices, and information on how ensure equity when implementing the CCR standard. The report is a living document and will be regularly updated as new information and data is available.

4. MSDE Presentation to AIB (December 2022)

- On December 15, 2022, MSDE presented to the AIB on topics that included the CCR standard, the exploratory research study, the long-term research study, research results, and national research and Maryland context. MSDE included discussions on how the CCR standard should be operationalized to ensure equitable opportunities for all students. A major strategy that can be used to ensure this equity is to utilize a student's high school GPA as an alternative indicator for college and career readiness, a practice that has been proven to have significant positive effects on college level course completion, especially among men and students of color. This presentation is also part of MSDE's communication strategy to support the public's knowledge and understanding of the Blueprint, the CCR standard, and how students will meet it.

5. BPW Contract – AIR

- On November 16, 2022, the Board of Public Works approved the recommended contract to fulfill the RFP, awarding the study to the American Institutes for Research (AIR). The proposal submitted by AIR was determined to be the most advantageous for the State. The evaluation committee determined AIR demonstrated a superior understanding of the work required and provided specific details as to how they would satisfy the State's requirements. AIR's proposal provided a strong background and related experience, having completed projects for the United States Department of Education, MSDE, and Anne Arundel County Public Schools. AIR defined a concise project timeline and plan for meeting the expected deliverables. MSDE facilitated the procurement process, including the solicitation of proposals, evaluation of responses, and contract negotiations.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 3.1: Equitable Opportunities To Become CCR and Meet The CCR Standard at an Equal Rate, MSDE will:

- Continue to manage the contracted research organization (AIR) to complete the research study into the CCR standard. As part of this process, MSDE will ensure that the research study will include



Objective 3.1: Equitable Opportunities to Become CCR and Meet the CCR Standard at an Equal Rate

feedback and engagement from key stakeholders. MSDE will ensure that AIR submits the results of the study by September 1, 2023.

- Work with Maryland educators to develop a fully aligned instructional system, emphasizing the utilization of high-quality instructional materials. In January 2023, MSDE conducted a survey of current LEA curricula in use, to better understand how MSDE can support the continuous improvement of HQIM being adopted in every school.
- Assess whether updates are needed to the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) system – which was recently adopted – along with the Maryland College and Career Ready (MCCR) Standards to better align with the CCR standard that will be informed by the results of the research study.
- Implement updates to the MCAP as required, which may include new procurements or amendments to existing assessment contracts.
- Continue to communicate with parents/guardians, students, educators, and the wider public about the CCR standard and develop resources to do so.
- Continue to coordinate and collaborate with MHEC, the Governor's Workforce Development Board/CTE Committee, the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, AIB, and other stakeholders throughout the implementation process.



Objective 3.2: Ensure Students Are Progressing Towards Meeting CCR

Objective 3.2: Ensure Students Are Progressing Towards Meeting CCR

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
3.2.3	LEAs shall create and implement a 9th grade student progress monitoring system to measure progress toward on-time graduation and report data annually to MSDE starting in FY 22
3.2.3(d)	MSDE shall compile and submit a statewide report to AIB and MLDS by 12/1 each year [on LEAs data collected through the 9th grade progress monitoring system.]

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

Implementing a 9th grade on-track progress monitoring system is a key step towards improving on-time student graduation rates and narrowing and closing equity gaps in student outcomes. The Maryland four-year graduation rate in SY 2021-2022 was 86.3%. The rates have decreased for nearly all race/ ethnicities and student groups except for Black/African American students and students with disabilities which increased. The on-time graduation rate in 2021-2022 for English learners was 56.6% and was 75.7% for economically disadvantaged, significantly below the rate for all students.

The development of 9th grade tracker systems nationwide was part of a broader movement to design early warning indicator systems, pioneered by researchers from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UCCSR), the Center for Social Organization of Schools at John Hopkins University, and the Philadelphia Education Fund. The purpose of early warning indicator systems was to systematically use data to identify students at-risk of not graduating from high school on-time and support them with interventions to ensure that they get back on track. Over time, a consensus developed on a set of powerful metrics that do not only help predict graduation with a high degree of accuracy, but also have the potential for meaningful improvement through timely school interventions. Researchers and practitioners refer to these metrics as the “ABCs” as a shorthand for attendance, behavior, and courses.

Recognizing the importance of identifying students on-track and off-track for graduation, Maryland has included a measure in the state’s federally approved accountability system, submitted in Maryland’s Every Student Succeeds Act Comprehensive State Plan. The on-track in 9th grade measure is defined as the percent of 9th grade students who earn at least four credits in any of the following courses: English Language Arts, mathematics, science, social studies, or world languages. Each high school’s results for the on-track in 9th grade measure are published on the Maryland School Report Card. School accountability results are currently published for school years 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2021-2022.

To support the Blueprint’s goals of collecting and reporting on the data from 9th grade progress monitoring systems in each LEA, MSDE added a new required data element to the standard annual High School Data



Objective 3.2: Ensure Students Are Progressing Towards Meeting CCR

Collection (HSDC). In addition to collecting student-level data from each LEA, MSDE also surveyed LEAs on two occasions to determine how they implemented a 9th grade progress monitoring system for school year 2021-2022, including the metrics used and data collection and reporting processes. All 25 LEA surveyed have a credit accumulation requirement for students to be considered on track, but the number of credits and the courses to which this requirement applied varied considerably from 4 credits up to 6 credits. Additionally, 5 LEAs include state assessment data in their 9th grade progress monitoring system, 5 LEAs include attendance data, and 4 LEAs consider grade point average as part of their 9th grade tracker systems. Only 1 LEA considers student discipline data as part of its system.

MSDE will continue to lead the state in its efforts to develop actionable 9th grade progress monitoring systems through facilitating the data collection and reporting processes, providing technical support to LEAs, and ensuring collaboration between all relevant stakeholders.

Understanding the growing importance of early warning indicators across the pre-K-12 spectrum, MSDE plans to develop and implement an evidence-based statewide early warning indicator system to support educators and students as they progress towards meeting college and career readiness. MSDE will benchmark its work against evidence-based practices, including against existing systems in place in other states, such as Massachusetts.¹

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for 3.2: Ensure Students Are Progressing Towards Meeting CCR, the following documents are present:

- 1. MSDE Blueprint Ninth Grade Tracker Report 2022**
 - This MSDE report on track in 9th grade data is the first required annual report to the AIB by December 1. This report includes information on LEA progress towards the implementation of the on track in 9th grade requirements, LEA data as provided by LEAs by September 1, and relevant research.
- 2. Maryland School Report Card Update Presentation**
 - On January 24, 2023, MSDE provided a briefing to the Maryland State Board of Education on the Maryland School Report Cards. As part of the briefing, information was presented on national context and best practices, the accountability system on-track in 9th grade, and the Blueprint required 9th grade tracker.
- 3. Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rates Presentation (February 2023)**
 - On February 28, 2023, MSDE provided a briefing to the Maryland State Board of Education on the Adjusted Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rates. Topics included the adjusted cohort four-year graduation rate, adjusted cohort five-year graduation rate, and the four-year dropout rate.

¹ <https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/ewis/default.html>



Objective 3.2: Ensure Students Are Progressing Towards Meeting CCR

Future Implementation Steps

As required by the Blueprint, LEAs will continue to identify students at risk of not graduating from high school on-time through their locally built 9th grade tracker systems. Each county board will report those data to local schools so that local schools can provide timely support to the students who need them.

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 3.2: Ensure Students Are Progressing Towards Meeting CCR, MSDE will:

- Continue to collect the information from each LEA by September 1 and provide the data to the AIB by December 1.
- Annually provide the data to the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center.
- Refine and update the existing statewide on-track in 9th grade accountability measure by considering its alignment to best-in-class research.
- As MSDE progresses towards implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and its Strategic Plan, the Department will also develop and implement a statewide early warning indicator system that tracks students' progression through key milestones from early learning to college and career readiness.

Objective 3.3: Implement CCR Pathways

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
3.3.2(f)	MSBE shall adopt regulations that include standards that guarantee statewide uniformity in the quality of post-CCR pathways, meet the specified course and program of study requirements, and require high school graduation credit to be awarded for any post-CCR programs that students complete, including credit towards high school graduation requirements for any college courses that are approved by MSDE

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions access to a rigorous and meaningful education that prepares students for success in college, career, and life. All students, regardless of family income, race, ethnicity, gender, address, socioeconomic status, or the language spoken in the student's home, and/or ability shall have equitable access to new curricula and post-CCR pathways. Once a student is designated as meeting or exceeding the College and Career Ready (CCR) standard, they will choose from three equally challenging post-CCR pathways they want to pursue, which all students meeting the CCR standard will be able to access at no cost. The three post-CCR pathway categories detailed in the Blueprint are:

- Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or the Cambridge International Diploma Program programs
- Dual enrollment or early college programs
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs

Post-CCR pathways should be flexible, allowing students to develop in-depth knowledge of a subject area, earn postsecondary credits, industry credentials, and/or engage in competitive entry college preparation programs. Students in 11th or 12th grade who have not yet demonstrated readiness for college and career and need additional support to meet the CCR standard will receive customized individualized supports. The services, support, and instruction that these students receive will be determined on an individual basis and which will include culturally responsive lessons and project-based learning.

Through the input of key stakeholders, MSDE has identified guiding principles for the implementation of post-CCR Pathways that are grounded in:

- Moving beyond using standardized test scores as the only measure of CCR.
- Equitable access to post-CCR Pathways, where students are able to access post-CCR courses while still working towards meeting the college and career readiness standard.
- Post-CCR Pathways that enable students to explore elective enrichment and academic opportunities.



Objective 3.3: Implement CCR Pathways

In late 2021 and early 2022, MSDE reviewed the time necessary for local education agencies (LEAs) to design and successfully implement any new or updated courses and programs, and MSDE found that the implementation dates specified in HB 1372 (2021) would need to be altered to ensure successful implementation and alignment between post-CCR and Support Pathways. MSDE worked with the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) and the General Assembly to ensure that the upcoming process allows for the best opportunities for students. In the Spring of 2022, the General Assembly passed HB 1450 (2022), which created alignment between the post-CCR Pathways and the Support Pathways, both now beginning in the 2023-2024 school year.

MSDE has provided initial guidance and support to LEAs on implementing post-CCR Pathways as part of the Blueprint Implementation Plan technical assistance sessions. This guidance included examples of possible post-CCR and Support Pathways, student schedules, career counseling, apprenticeships, among other topics.

Additionally, MSDE leveraged remaining one-time American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Relief Funds (ESSER III) for its new Maryland Works program to make a substantial investment in establishing an industry-aligned apprenticeship infrastructure for all Maryland's schools and business sectors. Maryland Works grants will be awarded for work focused on designing and developing an LEA infrastructure to expand the quality and proliferation of apprenticeship programs, as well as for launching innovative apprenticeship intermediaries – a core strategy identified by the CTE Committee to expand apprenticeships – for LEAs and industries at regional and statewide levels.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 3.3: Implement CCR Pathways, the following documents are present:

- 1. Memo to AIB: CCR Timeline**
 - In March 2022, MSDE sent a letter to the AIB regarding the implementation timelines of the post-CCR Pathways and the Support Pathways. MSDE recommended that the required implementation dates for the timelines be altered to provide Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with sufficient time to intentionally design and implement these pathways. The timeline proposal would allow for MSDE to partner with LEAs on effective implementation and proactively support districts with the technical assistance that will be needed.
- 2. Blueprint Implementation Guidance: College and Career Readiness Dual Enrollment Funding**
 - On October 7, 2022, MSDE, in collaboration with AIB provided guidance for LEAs and Maryland public institutions of higher education regarding funding implications related to dual enrollment and implementing post-CCR Pathways. This guidance included the clarification that “LEAs must pay the applicable tuition cost for students and students may not be charged a fee to cover costs for the LEA or college.”
- 3. College and Career Readiness Pathways: Apprenticeships**
 - The Blueprint sets a goal for 45% of high school graduates completing an apprenticeship or an industry-recognized occupational credential by the 2030-2031 school year. The

Objective 3.3: Implement CCR Pathways

ambitious goal of nearly half of the state's high school students participating in apprenticeships indicates the priority of this initiative and the immense benefits that students and employers can gain. On August 23, 2022, MSDE provided a briefing to the Maryland State Board of Education on apprenticeship programs in Maryland, information from the national context, and best practices.

4. Introduction to Post-CCR Pathways: Presentation

- The Blueprint for Maryland's Future sets the vision that every high school student, beginning at the earliest opportunity, participates and completes at least one post-CCR pathway aligned with their individual education and career goals. To support LEAs with planning and operationalizing this vision, in January 2023, MSDE and the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) held a post-CCR Pathways technical assistance session. The purpose of the session was to build the capacity of LEAs to understand the expectations related to post-CCR pathways, including individual requirements, access for students, and career counseling.

5. College and Career Readiness: Roadmap to Implementation

- In February 2022, MSDE released its report on College and Career Readiness: Roadmap to Implementation. The report was then updated in August 2022 with additional information, data, and discussion. In this report, MSDE provided information and guidance for schools, districts, and the public on the CCR Standard, Curriculum Alignment and Changes, Assessments, post-CCR Pathways, the Student Support Pathway, Early Warning Indicators, Finance and CCR, and MSDE's Coordination and Engagement. This report detailed a number of options for LEAs to implement the tasks related to this objective of Blueprint, research on best practices, and information on how ensure equity when implementing the CCR Standard. Also included in the report are sample course schedules that students could follow to complete a post-CCR Pathway.

6. Maryland Works Grant Information Guide

- The Grant Information Guide (GIG) for Maryland Works includes the full program description, purpose, examples of policy best practices for grant program application design and research on the efficacy of sample policies and programs currently implemented in other States and jurisdictions. The GIG also includes program timelines, reporting deadlines, and application information that highlights MSDE's commitment to investing in the infrastructure necessary to ensure LEAs can meet Blueprint CCR outcome goals.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 3.3: Implement CCR Pathways, MSDE will continue to:

- Engage local education agencies, post-secondary education institutions, and best practices research to enact propose specific and equitable policies for pathway requirements.
- Coordinate with the higher education community to align visions of how students should be prepared for college, and how institutions of higher education will continue to ensure student success, especially for historically underserved students.



Objective 3.3: Implement CCR Pathways

- Collaborate with representatives from local education agencies, students, families, teachers, principals, the newly established CTE committee, the Workforce Development Board, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Developmental Disabilities Administration, Behavioral Health Administration, the Department of Labor, and others to engage in problems of practice around implications for higher education; career opportunities for students completing a post-CCR Pathway; pathway completion requirements (number of courses, etc.), and how and when students should be allowed to switch between pathways if they so choose.
- After the completion of the independent content alignment research study, through engagement with stakeholders from across Maryland, and based on best-in-class research, MSDE will develop recommendations for the State Board of Education regarding post-CCR Pathways, Support Pathways, and how these connect to graduation requirements and other programs of study. These actions will lead to the development and adoption of regulations that ensure all students, regardless of family income, race, ethnicity, and/or ability have equitable access to new curricula and college and career pathways.

Objective 3.4: Provide High-Quality Career Counseling and CTE Programs

Objective 3.4: Provide High-Quality Career Counseling and CTE Programs

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
3.4.1(b)	MSDE shall provide school (guidance) and career counselors with professional development to help eliminate the potential for demonstrating implicit or explicit bias in their work with students
3.4.1(e)	MSDE shall provide professional development to guidance and career counselors on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future so that they can advise students appropriately about post-CCR options
3.4.4(n)	MSBE shall request a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to transfer responsibility for administering the Carl Perkins CTE Act to the CTE Committee

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

Career Counseling

Career counseling is a pivotal component of supporting students in navigating the multifaceted and ever-evolving landscape of post-secondary education and employment opportunities. The specific role of a career counselor involves providing tailored guidance, holistic support, and comprehensive resources to facilitate informed decision-making regarding students' future career paths. The collaborative efforts of students and career counselors enable the identification of strengths, interests, and values, as well as exploration of diverse career options that align with personal and professional goals. Additionally, career counselors provide information and access to several postsecondary and career awareness and exploration activities, such as assistance with college applications, financial aid, work-based learning and apprenticeship opportunities, empowering students to overcome challenges, and college and career pathway planning that supports and enables student success to and through graduation.

Notably, high school career counseling is of particular importance to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming. CTE programs offer students practical skills and knowledge relevant to specific career paths, positioning them for diverse employment opportunities. However, CTE program selection and certification requirements can be daunting, especially for students who may face limited access to support and resources. Through partnership with career counselors, CTE students receive personalized guidance and support in determining the most suitable programs and certifications aligned with their unique interests and goals. This, in turn, can result in expanded job prospects, higher compensation, and enhanced sense of purpose and fulfillment in their chosen career paths. Overall, high school career counseling is an integral mechanism for empowering students to actualize their full potential, both academically and professionally.



Objective 3.4: Provide High-Quality Career Counseling and CTE Programs

Professional development for career and technical education (CTE) counselors is critical for ensuring their success and effectiveness in supporting students' career development. Given the constantly evolving job market and technological advancements, CTE counselors must remain informed about emerging career fields, employer demands, and innovative training programs. Professional development opportunities enable CTE counselors to remain up to date on labor market information and trends, preparation and testing requirements associated with industry recognized credentials and college and career pathways, and to connect with other professionals in the field.

Moreover, these opportunities provide counselors with the chance to enhance their career counseling skills, expand their knowledge of student-centered practices, acquire new counseling strategies to engage with diverse student populations, and to eliminate the potential for demonstrating implicit or explicit bias in their work with students.

As part of the series of technical assistance sessions that MSDE offered to LEAs during the Blueprint Implementation Plan development process, the session on post-CCR Pathways included a section on career counseling, including the relevant Blueprint requirements, the goal and vision of the program, and a best practice spotlight on a Maryland LEA that is implementing elements of a strong career counseling program. Also, MSDE collaborated with the AIB as they organized a Career Counseling Information & Collaborative Work Session where LEA Blueprint implementation coordinators, community college representatives, and local workforce representatives were able to collaborate and work through the discussion at hand to develop a shared understanding of the objectives and to make connections with partners.

Administration of Carl Perkins Act and CTE Programs

The Carl D. Perkins Act is a federal law that provides funding for career and technical education (CTE) programs across the United States. MSDE plays a critical role in the administration of the Carl D. Perkins Act at the state by allocating Perkins funds to local education agencies (LEAs) and eligible institutes of higher education (IHEs) including community colleges, developing and submitting a state plan for CTE programs, and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of those programs. MSDE also works to ensure that CTE programs meet the needs of employers and students, align with state and local workforce development priorities, and provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in high-wage, high-skill, and/or in-demand careers. Overarching federal requirements include:

1. **Creation of the State Plan:** MSDE is responsible for developing and submitting a state plan that outlines how the Perkins funding will be allocated, how CTE programs will be aligned with state and local workforce development needs, and how student achievement and program effectiveness will be measured.
2. **Funding Allocation:** MSDE distributes Perkins funding to local education agencies (LEAs) and eligible institutes of higher education (IHEs), including community colleges, based on a formula that considers factors such as student enrollment and local economic conditions.
3. **Program Monitoring and Evaluation:** MSDE monitors and evaluates CTE programs to ensure that they meet the needs of students, employers, and the local economy. This includes monitoring



Objective 3.4: Provide High-Quality Career Counseling and CTE Programs

student performance and graduation rates, as well as assessing the effectiveness of the programs in preparing students for high-wage, high-skill, and/or in-demand occupations.

4. **Professional Development:** MSDE provides professional development opportunities for CTE educators, including academic counselors, career counselors, and administrators, to help them stay up to date on the latest industry trends and workforce needs, and to improve their instructional capacity.
5. **Program Improvement:** MSDE works with LEAs and other CTE stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and to develop strategies for strengthening CTE programs. This may include revising curriculum, adding additional pathways, and enhancing partnerships with local businesses and industry organizations.

As directed by the Blueprint, MSDE contacted the United States Department of Education to request a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to transfer responsibility for administering the Carl Perkins CTE Act from MSDE to the CTE Committee. On October 6, 2021, Mr. Clarence Crawford, Maryland State Board President, and Mr. Mohammed Choudhury, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, sent a joint letter to the Maryland General Assembly stating MSDE contacted the U.S. Department of Education to ascertain the process to submit a waiver request in alignment with federal statute for Perkins administration. The U.S. Department of Education advised that there are no provisions to request a waiver to the responsibilities of the eligible agency (State Board). Therefore, in the absence of this waiver, and as required by the Blueprint, MSDE will coordinate with the CTE Committee to develop an MOU outlining ways in which the committee can support MSDE's administration of the Carl D. Perkins grant.

By serving as a liaison between the federal government and local education stakeholders, MSDE helps to ensure that Perkins funding is used effectively to prepare students for successful careers and meet the workforce needs of their communities. Towards this end, MSDE has helped LEAs to think differently about CTE programming and approach it in a more strategic and systematic way. For example, MSDE recently reimagined the current version of the CTE Perkins Reserve Grant, which is a competitive grant program that leverages the Carl D. Perkins Reserve fund, to make transformational changes in the areas of pathway creation and enhancement, CTE student organizations, educator and counselor professional learning, and high school level registered apprenticeship programs. LEAs will use these funds to make substantial investments in evaluating and updating local CTE programs to ensure each student, especially underserved students, has access and opportunity to a variety of career pathways, aligned to the vision of the Blueprint.

MSDE will continue to work closely with LEAs, the CTE Committee, and other stakeholders from across the state to ensure robust, aligned, and well-communicated post-CCR Pathways are available to all students, leading to well-paying jobs and postsecondary opportunities. Most recently, MSDE provided a deep dive conversation to the CTE Committee about how LEAs are leveraging Perkins funding and to what extent there is alignment to the Blueprint and the work that needs to be going forward.



Objective 3.4: Provide High-Quality Career Counseling and CTE Programs

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 3.4: Provide High-Quality Career Counseling and CTE Programs, the following documents are present:

- 1. Introduction to Post-CCR Pathways: Presentation**
 - The Blueprint for Maryland's Future sets the vision that every high school student, beginning at the earliest opportunity, participates and completes at least one post-CCR pathway aligned with their individual education and career goals. To support LEAs with planning and operationalizing this vision, in January 2023, MSDE and the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) held a post-CCR Pathways technical assistance session. The purpose of the session was to build the capacity of LEAs to understand the expectations related to post-CCR pathways, including individual requirements, access for students, and career counseling.
- 2. Perkins Deep Dive Presentation**
 - On January 26, 2023, MSDE presented to the CTE Committee, providing a deep dive conversation on the Perkins law and administration, including topics such as apprenticeship and CTE data, post-CCR Pathways, and financial processes for allocating Perkins funding.
- 3. Perkins Waiver Correspondence**
 - The attached email correspondence includes the official guidance from the United States Department of Education pertaining to the inability to waive or otherwise shift Perkins program administration outside the Maryland State Department of Education. Also, a notification letter from the State Board of Education and MSDE was sent to the President of the Maryland Senate and the Speaker of the House of Delegates on October 6, 2021, detailing the guidance from U.S. Department of Education.
- 4. Maryland Works: Press Release**
 - The attached press release for the Maryland Works grant details how local education agencies and other partnering organizations can apply for, and utilize, funding to develop processes and systems to accelerate industry-aligned youth apprenticeship programs.
- 5. [Career and Technical Education Programs of Study](#)**
 - MSDE supports over 60 CTE pathways across the state. This website includes resources that outline how each of these programs link to industry-recognized credentials, postsecondary credit, and relevant Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs).

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 3.4: Provide High-Quality Career Counseling and CTE Programs, MSDE will:

- In collaboration with other MSDE offices, the Office of College and Career Pathways will provide professional learning to guidance and career counselors on strategies to recognize and eliminate implicit or explicit bias in their work with students, beginning in Fall 2023.



Objective 3.4: Provide High-Quality Career Counseling and CTE Programs

- Reassess current policies and practices, including grantmaking practices, to ensure all students have access to high-quality CTE programs across the state, especially historically underserved students.
- Implement changes and new policies where needed, to go into effect in the 2024-2025 school year.
- In addition to the professional development opportunities regarding career counseling, MSDE's Office of College and Career Pathways, in coordination with internal and external stakeholders, will develop an annual career counseling professional development conference in the 2024-2025 school year to address, at a minimum, the following topics:
 - **Emerging job fields:** As new industries emerge and the job market evolves, career counselors need to stay informed about the latest job trends, employer demands, and workforce needs.
 - **Industry-recognized credentials:** Career counselors need to be knowledgeable about the various certification requirements, testing procedures, and study resources available to students.
 - **Counseling strategies for diverse student populations:** CTE programs often historically attract students from diverse backgrounds and with different educational, physical, and emotional needs. Career counselors in CTE need ongoing training on effective counseling strategies for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students from historically underserved backgrounds.
 - **Apprenticeship identification and placement:** By guiding students through the apprenticeship process, career counselors can help students develop the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their chosen careers, and secure meaningful employment opportunities in their field of interest.

Objective 4.1: Accurately Identify Students From Low-Income Households as a Proxy for Students Who Need More Resources to be Successful

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
4.1.1(a)	MSDE shall modify the direct certification system so that it can receive and process Medicaid data while not double counting students who appear in Medicaid counts and counts for other categories
4.1.1(b)	MSDE shall perform a match between its Medicaid counts and enrolled students in order to determine the public school Medicaid count annually.
4.1.1(c)	MSDE and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) shall complete an MOU on how and when student data will be exchanged so that data is used safely and securely to determine enrollment counts.
4.1.1(d)	MSDE shall submit an interim report to the General Assembly and AIB that includes the fiscal year for which Medicaid data can be incorporated into the Direct Certification of students eligible for the compensatory education program on or before 11/1/21
4.1.2(a)	MSDE shall develop a State alternative income eligibility form
4.1.2(c)	MSDE shall submit an interim report to the General Assembly and AIB that includes the plan for developing and using the State alternative income eligibility form (initially due on or before 11/1/21)
4.1.3	MSDE submits a final report on incorporating neighborhood indicators of poverty to determine a school's eligibility for additional supports by 11/1/22
4.1.3(a)	MSDE shall evaluate the American Community Survey data available to provide school district poverty estimates as well as the Area Deprivation Index to rank neighborhoods by socioeconomic status
4.1.3(b)	MSDE shall collect the necessary data to implement the neighborhood indicators of poverty methodology recommended in MSDE's report to calculate the compensatory education formula and the Concentration of Poverty school grants by 12/1/22
4.1.4	MSDE explores possibility of using State income tax data from the Comptroller's office to verify income eligibility without collecting forms from students' families
4.1.4(a)	MSDE reports findings to AIB by 12/1/23
4.1.5	MSDE and the Juvenile Services Education Board determine whether funding associated with students included in the LEA enrollment counts follows students who enter the juvenile services system



Objective 4.1: Accurately Identify Students From Low-Income Households as a Proxy for Students Who Need More Resources to be Successful

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

4.1.1 – Medicaid and Direct Certification

The Blueprint requires that Medicaid be used as a matching element to directly certify children for free meal eligibility in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. On July 1, 2022, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs (OSCNP) successfully launched the expansion of the Maryland Direct Certification System (MDCS) to include electronic matching with Medicaid data. As of March 2023, 161,222 students have been newly matched for Free and Reduced Price Meals based on their Medicaid eligibility, representing 40% of all matched students. An additional 238,947 students (the remaining 60% of matched students) were directly certified under Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) or as foster children. MSDE continues to match student data with Medicaid records weekly to ensure that all free and or reduced-priced meal eligible students are identified as soon as possible to provide the students with the services they deserve.

Maryland was one of eight states approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to participate in the Medicaid matching pilot demonstration for school year 2022-2023. With the addition of 14 new states approved starting in school year 2023-2024 for the USDA pilot, a total of 39 states across the country are now able to take advantage of this matching program. In partnership with the Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Department of Human Services, and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, the MSDE direct certification system demonstrated success in identifying students who were not previously matched for free meals. As part of the implementation process, MSDE collaborated with the partner state agencies and developed an inter-agency data sharing agreement with Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) and Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) to ensure that the data matching process continues to run as smoothly as possible.

4.1.2 – State Alternative Income Eligibility Form and 4.1.4 – State Income Tax Data and Meal Eligibility

MSDE is leveraging two intertwined major subtasks of this objective to approach meal eligibility expansion and determination for Maryland students: the drafting of a new State alternative income eligibility form and the inclusion of state income tax data to automatically render determination using that same form.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future directs MSDE to develop an alternative income eligibility form, separate from the standard income eligibility forms, that are used to identify Free and Reduced Price Meals as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The alternative form must include a statement indicating that the income information requested on the form is used to determine local and state funding for education. MD Code, Education, § 5-222 states that the form must be used by all schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and may be collected by all other schools, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year.

The regulations around the CEP prohibit the collection of the standard Free and Reduced Price Meals forms used for the NSLP. Therefore, states and local education agencies can no longer rely on federal resources to

Objective 4.1: Accurately Identify Students From Low-Income Households as a Proxy for Students Who Need More Resources to be Successful

collect household forms from students' families to determine the family's income level or other socioeconomic status levels. To remedy this, some states require household alternative income forms to be administered to gather information on a family's income level. With the publication of the final, updated Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty report in January 2023, MSDE has now turned its attention to developing a State alternative income form, which local education agencies (LEAs) can use, even in CEP schools on non-re-certification years.

MSDE explored the ability to access and use individual-level state income tax data to render automatic meal eligibility with the Comptroller and the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center (MLDSC). Due to data privacy concerns, direct access to these data is not readily possible. However, MSDE continues to explore with MLDSC if it is possible to leverage MLDSC as an intermediary to report determinations back to MSDE without needing to share restricted income tax data. MSDE is working through this process to ideally include eligibility and potentially then implement the new State form as a meal eligibility opt-opt with automatic meal determination based on the eligibility status listed on the form.

4.1.3 – Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future calls attention to the ways in which Maryland defines and measures poverty. The law recognizes that existing measures of poverty (rural and urban) are insufficient to carry out the Blueprint as intended. The Blueprint specifically calls for the study of data collection for new measures of poverty – neighborhood indicators of poverty – that better capture the number of students in circumstances of poverty, the number of students in circumstances of concentrated poverty, and the depths of poverty in which a student lives. Current law notes (Ed. Article § 5-223 (2) and (3)): “the Department shall submit a report to the Accountability and Implementation Board on incorporating neighborhood indicators of poverty to determine a school's eligibility for the compensatory education program and the concentration of poverty grant” and “Collect the data necessary to implement the neighborhood poverty indicator methodology recommended by the Department to calculate the compensatory education formula under § 5-222 of this subtitle and the Concentration of Poverty School Grants under this section.”

On October 1, 2022, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) submitted its final report and completed a report update in January 2023 when full local education agency (LEA) data were available. In this report, MSDE recommended:

- Maryland should incorporate the Maryland Neighborhood Tiers as one eligibility determinant for Compensatory Education State aid as defined in Ed. Article § 5-222 and incorporated by reference into Concentration of Poverty State aid as defined in Ed. Article § 5-223.
- Maryland should utilize the weights as identified in one of the report's two policy options for the purposes of identifying a Compensatory Education State aid-eligible students' full-time equivalency (FTE) rate. MSDE recommends policy option one for adoption as the option constitutes a more comprehensive increase to Compensatory Education.

For that reason, MSDE drafted and attached a model bill to the updated report as Appendix Two. The model bill language adopts the Maryland Neighborhood Tiers policy option one and the teacher incentives and placement policy from the report's Further Policy Recommendations chapter.



Objective 4.1: Accurately Identify Students From Low-Income Households as a Proxy for Students Who Need More Resources to be Successful

4.1.5 – Juvenile Services Education and Meal Funding

MSDE annually calculates the basic daily cost rate as described and required in MD Code, Human Services, § 9-605. MSDE uses this rate to ensure that State aid funding properly flows to and follows students in residential care facilities, including those who are a part of Juvenile Service Education programs managed by Maryland’s Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). Prior to FY 2023, Juvenile Service Education programs were housed at MSDE, but these programs transferred to DJS in Summer 2022. Despite the transfer, MSDE continued to calculate and communicate the daily cost rate accordingly in FY 2023 and will continue to do so in the years ahead.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 4.1: Accurately Identify Students From Low-Income Households as a Proxy for Students Who Need More Resources to be Successful, the following documents are present:

1. Medicaid Pilot Project Launch: Press Release

- On September 15, 2022, MSDE announced Maryland’s new approval to participate in the USDA’s Direct Certification Medicaid (DC-M) pilot project. The benefits of this initiative, which launched on July 1, 2022, include increased student access to nutritious school meals by identifying students who are income eligible via Medicaid and a streamlined process of identifying children eligible for free or reduced-price meals and reduced administrative burden for local education agencies (LEAs).

2. Implementation Process for Medicaid Matching in Maryland

- To launch the expansion of the Maryland Direct Certification System (MDCS) to include electronic matching with Medicaid data, several complex technical tasks and robust inter-agency collaboration was needed. This document provides a detailed report of the process that MSDE led to ensure that student access to nutritious school meals increased by identifying students who are income eligible via Medicaid.

3. Direct Certification and MDCS Training for LEAs: Presentation

- MSDE’s Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs (OSCNP) provides regular training, technical assistance, and support to the local education agencies in support of their food and nutrition programs. In October 2022, OSCNP provided this training that delved into direct certification and the data sharing process, as well as a step-by-step tutorial on how to use the Maryland Direct Certification System to ensure all student records are entered and accurate.

4. Maryland Direct Certifications System (MDCS) Data Report – March 1, 2023

- MSDE’s Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs (OSCNP) publishes regular reports about the number of students matched by the Maryland Direct Certifications System (MDCS). As of this report on March 1, 2023, over 400,000 Maryland students were identified as eligible for Free and Reduced Price Meals through direct certification.

Objective 4.1: Accurately Identify Students From Low-Income Households as a Proxy for Students Who Need More Resources to be Successful

5. Interim Report on Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty

- In November 2021, MSDE submitted the Interim Report on Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty. This report included background on indicators of poverty, updates on MSDE's progress on analyzing neighborhood indicators of poverty, national best practices and research, and a progress update on incorporating Medicaid data. The report also included an in-depth discussion of concentration of poverty and its impact on students' success. Research indicates that poor families in a neighborhood with a concentration of poor families have a double disadvantage – it is meaningfully worse to grow up poor in a poor neighborhood than to grow up poor in a better resourced neighborhood. Also included as an appendix in this report is MSDE's presentation to the State Board of Education on September 28, 2021, sharing a deep dive into neighborhood indicators of poverty. This presentation included updates on Maryland's exploration of a neighborhood poverty indicator, national best practices, and case studies into neighborhood indicator systems in place across the country.

6. Interim Report on Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty [Spanish]

- MSDE translated the report into Spanish to ensure equity and access to this resource for our Spanish speaking constituents.

7. Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty: Data Collection Report

- The Blueprint directs MSDE to collect the necessary data to implement the neighborhood poverty indicator methodology and to submit a report on the data collected. MSDE submitted this report to the General Assembly, Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), and the Department of Budget and Management on December 1, 2022. This data collection report serves as an extension of MSDE's main report on neighborhood indicators. The statewide data collected at this point supported the implementation of a methodology to calculate compensatory education funding and the Concentration of Poverty Grants.

8. Final Report on Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty

- MSDE submitted the report on Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty on October 1, 2022. In the report, MSDE presents its recommended methodology to develop and apply a system of neighborhood indicators of poverty, known as Maryland Neighborhood Tiers (MNT). The report also includes multiple detailed options of how to operationalize the MNTs for use in the Compensatory Education and Concentration of Poverty grant funding formulas. Ultimately, MSDE suggests its final methodology recommendation for how to calculate Compensatory Education and Concentration of Poverty funding based on the MNT. In the report, the chapter Incorporating an Alternative Income Eligibility Form speaks directly to the Department's status of, and plans to, implement this provision of the Blueprint. On January 20, 2023, MSDE provided a final version of the report which includes the final recommendations of this report and now include the specific dollar amounts and relative weights MSDE recommends for statutory adoption. MSDE also included a second policy option in its final update to reflect a modified approach for implementing the report's recommendations at scale.



Objective 4.1: Accurately Identify Students From Low-Income Households as a Proxy for Students Who Need More Resources to be Successful

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 4.1: Accurately Identify Students From Low-Income Households as a Proxy for Students Who Need More Resources to be Successful, MSDE will:

- Continue to run the weekly direct certification matching process to identify students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Meals.
- Continue to streamline and improve the data matching process and will continue to collaborate with the LEAs, USDA, the MDH and other state agencies to improve the workflow of the Maryland Direct Certification System (MDCS).
- Complete the development of and release a state alternative income eligibility form and make it available to all schools and districts, including those participating in CEP, by July 1, 2023. Mandating the distribution and collection of these forms will create a labor burden for families, schools, and districts to facilitate the collection of the forms. For that reason, MSDE is exploring the utilization of the form as an opt-out meal eligibility determinant leveraging income eligibility verification from the Comptroller via the MLDS. In this case, the State will report back to families the known income data from the Comptroller/MLDS.
- Continue to calculate and communicate daily basic cost rates to ensure that students who receive educational services through and as part of the Juvenile Services Education program continue to receive their share of funding.
- MSDE is actively advocating for the adoption of the recommendations from the required Blueprint report on Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty. House Bill 1211 operationalizes the recommendations of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in its January 2023 updated report on Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty. The proposed legislation directly addresses this policy area through the establishment of Maryland Neighborhood Tiers (MNT) in the identification of students eligible for compensatory education aid and increases Concentration of Poverty aid for Concentration of Poverty Per-Pupil Grants based on the depth and concentrated poverty of students in a given school.

Objective 4.2: Improve the Education of English Learners (ELs)

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
4.2.1	Establish a workgroup to collect student data and review instructional methods and services provided to English learners
4.2.1(a)	WEL shall collect data on the number and percent of EL students at each P-12 school; the services available to them; and the accessibility of P-12 teachers, administrators, and staff to EL students and their families
4.2.1(b)	WEL shall review methods of teaching and providing services to EL students in public P-12 schools in the State
4.2.1(c)	WEL shall make recommendations on improving the education of EL students in P-12 schools in the State, including whether additional funding should be provided and addressing learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
4.2.1(d)	WEL shall identify professional responsibilities and criteria for EL family coordinators
4.2.2	WEL shall submit a final report with its findings and recommendations, including addressing learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, by 12/1/22 (AIB requested early submission by 11/1/22)
4.2.2(b)	MSDE and LEAs shall implement WEL's recommendations to improve the education of EL students in Maryland P-12 schools

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

English learners are the fastest growing student subgroup in Maryland's public schools – growing from 56,072 English learners in 2014 to 105,653 in 2023. ELs in Maryland make up 12 percent of the total grade K-12 student population. The success of English learners will determine Maryland's future success. MSDE believes that multilingualism is an asset and a highly sought-after skill in the educational and professional realm. As part of MSDE's effort to transition to asset-based terminology, this plan will use multilingual learner and English learner interchangeably as the agency begins to adapt the term, multilingual learner.

With its emphasis on equity, the Blueprint established the Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools in 2021 and charged it to study the availability of and access to resources for English learners and their families and make recommendations that will accelerate their academic achievement. Specifically, the Blueprint charged the Workgroup to:

- Collect data on services available to English learners (ELs) in the State and the effectiveness of the services,
- Review methods of teaching and providing other services to ELs, and

Objective 4.2: Improve the Education of English Learners

- Make recommendations on improving the education of ELs including whether additional funding should be provided.

The Workgroup was chaired by State Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury and held 16 meetings from August 2021 through October 2022. The workgroup members included legislators, national experts, EL advocates, educators, and stakeholders all working collaboratively to discuss and develop initiatives to transform the education of multilingual learners (MLs) in Maryland. Each meeting began with a guiding question on a topic aligned with the legislative requirements, and experts and practitioners provided national best practices and research on the topic. Most meetings also included an examination of Maryland's data related to the topic and an opportunity to highlight local education agencies' (LEA) best practices. Each meeting included an opportunity for workgroup members to engage with the presenters and with each other by asking clarifying questions and generating recommendations aligned with the research.

At the conclusion of the Workgroup's series of meetings, it developed a final report that built on the Workgroup's interim report, that provides demographic and achievement data about multilingual learners in Maryland, information on existing practices and policies in the State, and financial and professional learning implications. This information, along with presentations and discussion by national and state experts and partners about national best practices informed the development of the recommendations that will transform the education of multilingual learners in the State moving forward. The report presents a set of these recommendations that are designed to evolve Maryland's existing policies and practices to focus on the assets of our multilingual learners and ensure the best-in-class education for them. This report was presented to the AIB, the General Assembly, the Governor, and other stakeholders across Maryland.

After submission of the Workgroup's final report, House Bill 1098 of 2023 (The Multilingualism is an Asset Act) was introduced and addresses two key sets of findings from the final workgroup report and recommendations for which statutory modification are necessary. First, this bill codifies the EL workgroup report's recommendations associated with the establishment of high-quality two-way immersion programs throughout the State. Also, the bill provides a pathway to resource adequacy for students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). These additional resources would position Maryland's LEAs to implement the best-in-class instructional opportunities the Blueprint envisions. MSDE, along with a broad cross-section of stakeholders, is actively advocating for the passage and enactment of this bill, to better support the implementation of the Blueprint's goals and to ensure that all students, regardless of family income, race, ethnicity, gender, address, socioeconomic status, language spoken in the student's home, and/or ability shall have equitable access to a world-class education.

As an additional route to codify and implement supports for English learner students, amended regulations governing educator preparation are currently being promulgated by the State Board of Education and Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board to require preparation programs to align with national standards and newly developed Maryland candidate competencies. These competencies, when implemented with fidelity, ensure that all teacher candidates begin their careers with the knowledge and strategies to impact the experience of English learners.

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In addition to ensuring those who are being prepared have the skills necessary to serve English learners, the regulations that govern educator licensure are being amended to require professional learning for existing teachers in the area of English learners, Sheltered English, or bilingual education as a requirement to renew their Maryland certificate.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 4.2: Improve the Education of English Learners (ELs), the following documents are present:

- 1. EL Workgroup Interim Report**
 - The EL Workgroup interim report was completed in December 2021. It includes data on the number and percent of EL students in each pre-K-12 school and the services available to them. Additionally, the workgroup reviewed methods of teaching and providing services to ELs in public pre-K-12. Finally, the report culminates with a set of preliminary recommendations for improving the education of ELs in schools, helping to actualize the vision of the Blueprint for providing an equitable education for all students.
- 2. EL Workgroup Interim Report [Spanish]**
 - MSDE translated the report into Spanish to ensure equity and access to this resource for our Spanish speaking constituents.
- 3. MSDE English Learner Education Virtual Roundtable**
 - State Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury and Executive Director of CASA Gustavo Torres cohosted a roundtable on March 29, 2022 with students, families, educators, and community organizations to discuss their perspectives on what is working well and innovative ideas for how to better support EL students and families through our public education system. A recording of the roundtable is available through the link in this document.
- 4. EL Workgroup Final Report**
 - The final report builds on the interim report by fine-tuning the recommendations from the interim report that are designed to evolve Maryland's existing policies and practices to focus on the assets of our English learners and ensure the best-in-class education for them. The report also addresses the learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and includes detailed guidance for increased funding for EL education. The nine overarching and nine sub-recommendations in the final report are the catalysts for change that guide MSDE's work to improve education for English learners. These recommendations were also the basis for House Bill 1098 of 2023 (The Multilingualism is an Asset Act).
- 5. ELs and Community Schools Presentation**
 - A cross-functional group of MSDE offices collaborated to provide two professional learning opportunities for community school coordinators in January and February 2023. This technical assistance included data on ELs in Maryland schools, research and best practices for engaging and meaningfully including multilingual families and ELs in community schools, and insights from current practitioners across Maryland. The collaborative session also

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focused on ensuring that all Maryland schools utilize an asset-based approach to working with ELs, supporting the Blueprint's vision of equitable opportunities. The strategies discussed in this session will help provide EL family coordinators with the roadmap needed to support the communication and engagement between schools and families.

6. EL Workgroup (Folder)

- This folder includes the slideshow presentations from each of the 16 virtual workgroup meetings. Each meeting focused on a guiding question and included a spotlight on national best practices and research on the topic. The virtual format enabled national experts and researchers to present and answer questions from Workgroup members. MSDE staff provided an overview of Maryland's existing policy and practices as well as an examination of pertinent data. Each meeting included an opportunity for community partners and Workgroup members to provide input and discuss the topic.

7. HB 1098 Multilingualism is an Asset Act

- This bill is currently being considered by the 2023 General Assembly and addresses two key sets of findings from the final workgroup report and recommendations for which Statutory modification are necessary. If enacted, this bill would provide additional funding for English learners to establish the dual language immersion program to be administered by MSDE and would provide a pathway to resource adequacy for students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE).

8. MSDE Testimony – Support – HB 1098

- MSDE is actively advocating for the enactment of this bill through the submission of this written testimony and by providing in-person oral testimony in support of the bill. MSDE supports the codification of the EL Workgroup's recommendations and will continue to support any legislative, regulatory, or policy changes needed to ensure that Maryland's English learners have high-quality instructional opportunities now and in the future.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 4.2: Improve the Education of English learners, MSDE will:

- Collect job descriptions from LEAs and other states for EL family coordinator positions to understand best practices. Combining the insights from these job descriptions, best-in-class research for engaging multilingual families and other strategies discussed in the ELs and Community Schools technical assistance session, MSDE will provide further guidance about the professional responsibilities and criteria, as well as develop a cultural competency training for EL family coordinators during the 2023-2024 school year.

MSDE will also address and implement the recommendations of the Workgroup on English learners through actions that are under its authority, support any legislative, regulatory, or policy changes that are aligned with the Workgroup's recommendations, and meaningfully engage and collaborate with LEAs, students, and other stakeholders to ensure that all Maryland students and families benefit from a world-class education system. MSDE's actions to implement each Workgroup recommendation with fidelity are included below:

Objective 4.2: Improve the Education of English Learners

- **Recommendation 1: Support and Sustain Multilingualism by Promoting an Asset-Based Approach**
 - To implement this recommendation, MSDE will launch an engagement campaign sharing the benefits of multilingualism, that will include social media and on-the-ground strategies. Additional plans include an update to MSDE’s website to include ongoing stories about multilingual learner success. Stories and resources on the benefits of multilingualism. During the 2024-2025 school year, MSDE will formally shift from “English learner” to “multilingual learner” by updating formal communications, COMAR regulations, MSDE websites, and other documents. MSDE will also facilitate professional learning opportunities on the assets of multilingualism for LEAs and other stakeholders.
- **Recommendation 2: Equitable Engagement and Communication with Multilingual Families**
 - To ensure equitable and transparent communication is provided to the families of multilingual learners, MSDE will develop, in collaboration with stakeholders, a comprehensive language access policy for LEAs by the 2024-2025 school year.
- **Recommendation 3: Implementation of Instructional Programs to Support ELs**
 - 3a: Scale Two-Way Immersion Programs**
 - 3b: Literacy Instruction Aligned to the Science of Reading that Meets the Needs of ELs**
 - 3c: Effective English Language Development (ELD) Programs**
 - MSDE will advocate for the expansion of research-based dual language two-way immersion programs, as envisioned in House Bill 1098. The Multilingualism is an Asset Act makes the necessary funding available for LEAs to implement two-way immersion programs if LEAs submit a clear plan that demonstrates the program will be aligned to the structures and conditions for which research indicates likelihood of positive student outcomes. While permanent funding sources for dual language programs are yet to be determined, MSDE will develop a dual language playbook by the 2024-2025 school year.
- **Recommendation 4: Assessment and Accountability Systems to Support ELs**
 - 4a: Equitable and Valid Assessments for ELs**
 - 4b: Transparent and Equitable Accountability and Reporting for ELs at All Stages of English Language Developments**
 - 4c: New and Expanded Ways to Reclassify ELs**
 - The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) is the assessment used in Maryland for school readiness. To provide equitable access to the assessment for Spanish speaking multilingual learners – who make up more than 70% of Maryland’s English learners, a Spanish version of KRA will be piloted in the 2023-2024 school year and will be administered in the 2024-2025 school year.
 - As the multilingual learner population expands, Maryland’s accountability and data reporting system should also evolve. To meet these needs, MSDE will expand the current reporting system to include progress and performance of English learners and reclassified English learners, in comparison to non-ELs. One EL student group that is often overlooked in the reporting system is long-term ELs. MSDE is committed to providing transparent and robust reporting on long-term ELs by the 2024-2025 school year.

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- Beginning in summer 2023 and continuing through the 2023-2024 school year, MSDE will engage representatives from LEAs, local and national experts, and MSDE content specialists to develop and codify evidence-based pathways for reclassifying English learners beyond Maryland's existing practices.
- **Recommendation 5: Teacher Preparation Policies to Support ELs**
 - 5a: All Teachers Prepared to Serve ELs
 - 5b: Maryland Bilingual Teacher Certification
 - 5c: Teacher Pipeline
 - As part of a set of Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) that are currently being promulgated, MSDE is amending educator licensure regulations to require professional learning for existing teachers of ELs, sheltered English, or bilingual education to renew their Maryland certificate. The Department will also advocate for the establishment of permanent funding opportunities to expand educator preparation programs leading to ESOL and bilingual certification.
- **Recommendation 6: Identification and Support for Young English Learners**
 - During the 2023-2024 school year, MSDE will revamp existing surveys and develop a multilingual learner family interview questionnaire to gather information about pre-K students' language experiences. Additionally, MSDE will strengthen its guidelines for identifying and supporting young multilingual learners to ensure asset-based, language-focused, and high-quality instruction is integral to English language development and to sustain home language use.
- **Recommendation 7: Support for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)**
 - Maryland welcomes a diverse group of immigrants and refugees that includes Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). These families typically place great importance on education; however, civil unrest, refugee experiences, economic circumstances, and other variables are among the factors that interrupt schooling for these students. SLIFE undergo a unique and extensive process of adjustment to the school setting in the United States that may impact their ability to show what they know in formalized educational settings. MSDE will ensure a statewide definition for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). MSDE will also develop a professional learning series, using research-based state guidelines that highlight best practices to support educators working with SLIFE.
- **Recommendation 8: Equitable Access to College and Career Readiness Curriculum and Pathways**
 - English learners currently face substantial inequities in accessing advanced coursework, gifted and talented education, and CCR Pathways. MSDE will work to ensure that the new CCR standard will not continue or exacerbate this problem.
 - MSDE will support the implementation of specialized programs and customized supports to ensure that multilingual learners benefit from rigorous curricula, achieve college and career readiness, and are granted access to and succeed in post-CCR Pathways.



Objective 4.2: Improve the Education of English Learners

- MSDE will provide technical assistance and guidance to LEAs and strengthen policies to ensure English learners are accurately identified for gifted and talented services and have equitable access and opportunity to advanced coursework.
- **Recommendation 9: Funding Allocations and Spending Decisions that Support Successful ELs**
 - The EL report makes additional key recommendations associated with providing nuance to the EL weight in the law. Formula adjustments to the Blueprint formula English learner weight in House Bill 1098 would ensure the Blueprint for Maryland's Future can provide the resources necessary to ensure proper opportunities for English learners, regardless of the local prevalence of their home language, diseconomies of scale associated with low EL enrollments not generating the per-pupil revenue necessary to serve ELs, and the relative English proficiency level of a local education agency's EL population.

Objective 4.3: Improve Education For Students with Disabilities

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
4.3.2	MSDE shall establish a workgroup to collect student data and review instructional methods provided to students who receive special education services
4.3.2(a)	The workgroup shall collect data on the number and percent of students receiving special education services at each P-12 school, the services available to them, and the accessibility of P-12 teachers, administrators, and staff to these students and their families
4.3.2(b)	The workgroup shall review methods of teaching for students who receive special education services in public P-12 schools in the State
4.3.2(c)	The workgroup shall make recommendations on improving the education of students receiving special education services in P-12 schools in the State, including whether additional funding is needed and addressing learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
4.3.3	The workgroup submits a final report with its findings and recommendations, including addressing learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, by 7/1/24
4.3.3(b)	MSDE and LEAs shall implement the workgroup’s recommendations to improve the education of students receiving special education services in Maryland P-12 schools

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

MSDE’s Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) currently collects and reports on enrollment data for all students with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individualized Education Programs (IEP). MSDE DEI/SES also collects data from local jurisdictions via the Maryland Online IFSP, Maryland Online IEP, and Special Services Information System. The Division reports this data annually in the Maryland Early Intervention and Special Education Services Census Data and Related Tables report as well as the Maryland Public Schools Report Card website, among others. Data-informed decision-making is a driving force behind the work and priorities of DEI/SES. The Division plays an active role in the provision of technical assistance, programmatic support, and guidance to inform the provision of services to children and students with disabilities throughout Maryland.

Successful implementation of the Blueprint in each local education agency (LEA) requires improving existing structures to ensure high-quality, evidence-based instructional practices, especially tier 1 instruction aligned to CCR standards. This fundamental requirement is essential for instruction for all students and will be the pathway to the effective delivery of specially designed instruction for students with disabilities. Over 70% of students with disabilities receive specially designed instruction within the general education setting more than 80% of the day. A commitment to improved performance for all students through evidence-based



Objective 4.3: Improve Education For Students with Disabilities

practices is essential to narrowing and closing the opportunity and achievement gap between students with disabilities and nondisabled peers.

MSDE coordinates over a dozen pre-existing workgroups and advisory councils that facilitate the improvement of services and outcomes for children and students with disabilities and their families. Current special education and early intervention workgroups are:

- **State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC):** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires each state to establish an SICC. The Maryland SICC is a Governor-appointed council that advises and assists the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program to ensure that a comprehensive delivery system of integrated early intervention services is available to all eligible infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children and their families. The SICC advises the State on unmet needs of students with disabilities, including the development of evaluations, reports, and/or corrective action plans in response to federal monitoring, and implementing policies and procedures to coordinate services for infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children with disabilities.
- **Special Education State Advisory Council (SESAC):** The IDEA requires each State to establish and operate an advisory panel, referred to as SESAC in Maryland. Under federal law, students with disabilities and families of students with disabilities must comprise at least 50 percent of the committee's membership. The purpose of the committee is to advise the State on unmet needs of students with disabilities, including the development of evaluations, reports, and/or corrective action plans in response to federal monitoring, and implementing policies and procedures to coordinate services for students with disabilities.
- **DEI/SES Meetings with the Education Advocacy Coalition (EAC):** The EAC group has regular meetings with the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education (DEI/SES). The group provides recommendations and guidance for early intervention and special education work in Maryland and provides ongoing, meaningful engagement of a broad constituency of education and disability rights organizations through high stakes discussions.
- **Workforce Data Collection Workgroup:** The Workforce Data Collection Workgroup was established to ensure ongoing input and participation from the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Center's key stakeholders. The workgroup provides input and consultation on the MLDS Center's data Inventory, collection, quality, privacy and security and makes recommendations for future data collection and reporting structures in order to help identify and address issues related to staffing shortages.

Additionally, the current special education steering committees in Maryland are:

- **Adapted Physical Education:** The purpose is to educate, advise, and advocate for appropriate physical education to be provided to all students in the State of Maryland.
- **Assistive Technology:** The purpose is to develop and implement assistive technology (AT) statewide policies and procedures for individuals from birth through age 21, including AT documentation in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), the IEP, and the 504 plan. The goal is to increase thoughtful consideration of the role of AT in student achievement.

Objective 4.3: Improve Education For Students with Disabilities

- **Behavior:** The purpose is to effectively collaborate with behavior support professionals, representing all school systems in all Maryland regions, to share best practices that identify, teach, support, and monitor social, emotional, and behavioral learning for all students.
- **Deaf/Hard of Hearing:** The purpose is to provide information regarding educational concerns and issues in the public school setting for deaf and hard of hearing students. In addition, the committee holds an annual conference specifically designed for professionals who work with deaf and hard of hearing students in the educational setting.
- **Occupational and Physical Therapists:** The purpose is to provide leadership supporting statewide occupational and physical therapy practice on behalf of children/students birth through 21 by promoting strategic collaboration with families, MSDE, LEAs, public agencies, and other stakeholders in the State of Maryland, incorporating national trends and policies that impact statewide practice, and partnering with higher education and professional organizations.
- **Speech Language Pathologist:** The purpose is to provide leadership, guidance, and resources regarding professional practices of Speech-Language Pathologists on behalf of all stakeholders.
- **Teachers of the Visually Impaired:** The purpose is to provide information, communication, professional development, and advocacy on behalf of students with visual impairments, birth through 21, and the professionals who serve them.

Workgroups make recommendations to improve the education of children and students through participation from various stakeholders, such as MSDE staff, local education agency staff, advocates, families, and community partners.

MSDE is committed to engaging in a problem-solving model that includes critical voices, especially those from historically underserved communities. MSDE anticipates understanding, evaluating, receiving, and responding to identified needs to supports infants, toddlers, and students with disabilities through existing and new engagement opportunities. MSDE plans to both leverage existing workgroup spaces and establish new spaces to accelerate education for students with disabilities.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 4.3: Improve Education For Students with Disabilities, the following documents are present:

1. **Data Deep Dive: Students with Disabilities, Part 1**
 - On September 27, 2022, MSDE presented to the State Board of Education on data related to Maryland's children with disabilities (birth through 21 years) and the strategic response and programming of the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services.
2. **Data Deep Dive: Students with Disabilities, Part 2**
 - On January 24, 2023, MSDE continued its presentation to the State Board of Education on students with disabilities, through topics including demographic and outcome data, significant disproportionality, and Maryland initiatives.

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3. Technical Assistance Bulletins

- The MSDE Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) provides a large series of technical assistance materials to support teachers, parents, schools, LEAs, and other stakeholders to provide evidence-based instruction and services to students with disabilities in Maryland.

4. **Family Guide to Early Intervention Services in Maryland**

- This guide is part of Maryland's Birth to Kindergarten Parent Information Series, a collection of publications designed to support families in the statewide early intervention and education system of services in Maryland.

5. **The Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services Strategic Plan**

- To support the ultimate vision of closing opportunity and achievement gaps for all students, this Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services plan guides the work of DEI/SES, compels stronger interagency and intra-agency collaboration in support of children and families, and serves as a necessary resource to educational leaders, parents, and stakeholders. The plan refines key measures of success and key strategies for implementation, and expands innovative tools, resources, and evidence-based practices.

6. **Secondary Transition Planning Guide for Individuals with Disabilities**

- This guide provides information to students, parents/guardians, educators, and community agencies about the transition process. Although every student will have individualized transition goals and outcomes, this guide provides preliminary information about the requirements of the transition process under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as well as recommended strategies and resources to acquire a positive outcome.

7. **Parent's Guide to IEP Rights in Maryland**

- This guide is designed to help parents understand their rights and responsibilities as a member of their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) provide parents certain protections called procedural safeguards.

8. **Maryland Elevates Grants Program: Press Release**

- On September 19, 2022, MSDE announced the launch of the Maryland Elevates Grants Program, designed to enhance and sharpen the State's steadfast focus to narrow gaps for infants and toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families in a comprehensive system of early intervention and special education services, birth through age 21.

9. **Reducing Overidentification in Special Education (ROSE) Grant Information Guide**

- The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) announced the launch of a new grant opportunity on March 1, 2023, that will leverage American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Relief Funds (ESSER III) to reduce the overidentification of historically underserved students in special education programs. Through the Reducing Overidentification in Special Education (ROSE) program, local education agencies (LEAs) will invest in strategies that address and mitigate the learning loss of persistently underperforming students who risk being misidentified with intellectual and/or emotional

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disabilities, particularly African American, English learner, male, and economically disadvantaged students. Reducing overidentification in special education is essential to transform and create the necessary change to actualize the Blueprint for Maryland's Future for all Maryland's children. To care about special education means to care about being certain in who and for what children become eligible for special education services. MSDE will award up to three \$1 million grants to local education agencies.

Future Implementation Steps

The Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan directs MSDE to establish a Workgroup on Instruction and Services for Students with Disabilities to collect student data and review instructional methods provided to students who receive special education services. Pending AIB approval of this plan, MSDE will implement the following actions to implement this Objective.

To implement Objective 4.3: Improve Education For Students With Disabilities, MSDE will:

- MSDE has recently conducted a review of existing workgroups in Maryland that focus on special education and early intervention topics. MSDE is dedicated to ensuring that it engages with these existing workgroups as well as other stakeholders around the state, especially those from historically underserved populations, while working to ensure that children and students with disabilities benefit from the best-in-class instructional methods.
- As part of the Workgroup on Instruction and Services for Students with Disabilities development process, MSDE will hold a series of listening sessions in May and June 2023 with various stakeholders from existing workgroups and advocates. MSDE will place a special emphasis on including stakeholders from underrepresented populations. These listening sessions will seek to assess and uncover strengths and opportunities for growth to guide the development of resources and discussion topics for the Workgroup on Instruction and Services for Students with Disabilities.
- As part of the stakeholder engagement process, MSDE will share the current landscape of special education services in Maryland schools through a data deep dive, including the number and percent of students receiving special education services at each pre-K-12 school, the services available to them, and the accessibility of pre-K-12 teachers, administrators, and staff to these students and their families. Also included in the data deep dive will be analyzed results of the Maryland Special Education Family Involvement Survey (Part C) and MSDE Parent Survey (Part B) over the past five school years to identify trends in families' perceptions of and experiences with special education services. Additionally, MSDE will analyze data regarding the quality and certification level of early intervention and special education services staff by LEA and school, and conduct a fact-finding survey of LEAs to better understand their unique staffing gaps as they relate to early intervention and special education service.
- Based on the information gathered during the series of listening sessions, MSDE will assemble a group of stakeholders from existing special education workgroups as well as new stakeholders, with a special emphasis on underrepresented populations. The workgroup will then meet regularly starting in September 2023 through July 2024. Following the model of the Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools, workgroup meetings will include data and information on students with



Objective 4.3: Improve Education For Students with Disabilities

disabilities in Maryland, local and national best practices, best-in-class research, and in-depth discussions into how Maryland can best address the issues affecting children and students with disabilities. The workgroup will develop and submit an interim report of recommendations on December 1, 2023, and a final report on July 1, 2024.

- As part of the workgroup’s meetings, members will understand the current strengths and opportunities for growth related to special education services in Maryland, based on information gathered during the listening sessions. Additional meetings will focus on identifying priority areas for recommendations and to share and discuss research on evidence-based, high-leverage, and promising practices used in other states and countries to address teaching and providing services to children and students who receive special education.
- After the report has been finalized and submitted, MSDE will work diligently to implement the recommendations through actions that are under its authority, support any legislative, regulatory, or policy changes that are aligned with the Workgroup’s recommendations, and meaningfully engage and collaborate with LEAs, students, and other stakeholders to ensure that all Maryland students and families benefit from a world-class education system.



Objective 4.4: Provide Supports For Students Attending Schools With a High Concentration of Poverty

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
4.4.4(b)	MSDE shall submit an annual report to the DBM and DLS on the percentage of students at each school eligible for FRPM in the prior school year and each public school's eligibility for a grant in the upcoming fiscal year
4.4.5(a)	MSDE shall provide guidance and support to community school coordinators on integrating schools and their communities
4.4.6	There is a Director of Community Schools position within MSDE to coordinate professional development for community school coordinators and staff at each community school
4.4.7	MSDE and AIB shall analyze the use of personnel and per-pupil grants for their authorized purposes by LEAs

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

Community schools reflect a comprehensive school model designed to promote equitable outcomes for all students by providing students, families, and communities with the support needed to thrive. Community schools are designed to bring families, communities, and partners together to identify institutional and structural barriers to student achievement and to establish wraparound services and resources to help remove those barriers. Under the management of the community school coordinator and the school principal, the community school addresses the needs of the students, families, and communities in historically underfunded and underserved neighborhoods.

Funded by Concentration of Poverty grants, which are formula-based grants based on a calculation of the number of students living in poverty, community schools provide wraparound services to students and families. These services can include extended learning time, safe transportation, vision and dental services, additional staff, healthy food, behavioral health services, family and community engagement supports, linkages to Judy Centers, student enrichment experiences, supports to improve student attendance and the learning environment of the school, and professional development for school staff to identify students in need of resources. The two types of Concentration of Poverty grants, personnel grants and per-pupil grants, each have their own specific eligibility requirements and purposes.

Currently in FY 2023, there are 358 community schools that are receiving Concentration of Poverty grants. By statute, eligible schools are required to submit a needs assessment within one year of being designated a community school. Within one year of submitting a needs assessment, schools are required to complete and submit an implementation plan.



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Objective 4.4: Provide Supports For Students Attending Schools With a High Concentration of Poverty

Starting in Fall 2021, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has conducted an audit of the needs assessment and implementation plans processes and decided to revamp these procedures to inform the development of future community schools. In addition to the audit, MSDE has been conducting site visits to community schools across the state to observe best practices and provide support and technical assistance. The audit and site visits revealed that the needs assessment process did not properly connect student achievement trends to root causes and many community schools were missing implementation plans from prior fiscal years. Updates have been made to this process and there is now an implementation plan on record for each community school. The MSDE audit and school visits also ensured that the proper personnel were in place at each community school, as required by statute.

The Blueprint requires MSDE to establish a Director of Community Schools position to coordinate professional development for community school coordinators at each community school. This position was originally classified as a contractual position, which limited the talent pool interested in fulfilling its duties. In its FY 2024 budget request, MSDE requested that the Director of Community Schools position be converted into a permanent position, instead of a contractual position. The FY 2024 Governor's Allowance approved this request and includes a permanent position for the MSDE Director of Community Schools role.

Since July 2021, MSDE has also begun expanding its professional development offerings to community schools with topics focusing on developing a high-quality needs assessment, engaging multilingual learners and families, and furthering continuous improvement for established community schools. It is crucial that professional development and technical assistance are provided for community schools across the spectrum of implementation. Most recently, MSDE is offering funding to send district teams to the National Community Schools and Family Engagement Conference, hosted by the Institute for Education Leadership, in summer 2023.

MSDE has made additional investments in strategies that support students attending schools with high concentrations of poverty/community schools. Wraparound services are not sufficient alone and implementing evidence-based approaches to supporting community schools, including the use of a broader, more strategic, and less siloed collective impact is necessary to ultimately ensure community school success in serving the needs of a neighborhood community. MSDE jumpstarted this work in Maryland through the Maryland Leads grant program where one of the initiative's core strategies was to transform neighborhoods through excellent community schools. Community schools go beyond academics to service students and their families as a whole. The Maryland Leads grant enabled LEAs to launch a robust and high-quality community schools initiative that serves a designated community and/or neighborhood and utilizes an asset approach to strengthen school-to-home relationships as well as the school's relationship to the community. For example, Worcester County Public Schools committed \$1,150,000 of their Maryland Leads award to establish a collective impact partnership to coordinate wraparound and support services across community agencies, non-profit organizations, schools, and stakeholders for the central (Snow Hill) and southern (Pocomoke) regions of the county. The expected impact is for 100% of students who participate in wrap-around services to experience increased positive engagement in school and parents report satisfaction with services.

Objective 4.4: Provide Supports For Students Attending Schools With a High Concentration of Poverty

Additionally, the State Superintendent of Schools and two members of the MSDE team serve as members of the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports. The State Superintendent co-chairs the Framework, Design & RFP subcommittee. The framework sub-committee has been responsible for the design of the overall model for coordinated community supports partnerships. The Consortium ensures the establishment of partnerships, outreach, and community-based, family-driven, youth-guided, holistic, and coordinated services and supports. The framework sub-committee has established the “hubs and spokes” delivery model based on collective impact to coordinate all of the services offered to students and families, which the Consortium has recently unanimously adopted as the structure for the RFP to launch community supports partnerships. Overall, the framework subcommittee has operationalized the collective impact model for the Consortium. Additional MSDE staff serve on the data sub-committee and the best practices sub-committee.

As part of MSDE’s assistance to Community School Coordinators and LEAs, MSDE provides guidance and support with Blueprint grant spending, resource deployment, and monitoring through near-constant engagement, including weekly calls with LEA chief financial officers. Successful, rigorous, and correct Blueprint resource allocation and expenditure at the LEA- and school-level is a monumental policy shift. MSDE is working diligently to provide support as LEAs enact the programmatic work of the Blueprint; and one to which our LEAs are equally committed. In addition to leveraging its new forthcoming Statewide Finance and Data System, discussed in Objective 5.4, for grant budgeting and spending, MSDE will also procure audit services to bolster monitoring by confirming LEA supporting documentation for reported expenditures.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 4.4: Provide Supports for Students Attending Schools with a High Concentration of Poverty, the following documents are present:

- 1. Blueprint Deep Dive: MD Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports**
 - MSDE provided a briefing to the State Board of Education on September 27, 2022, that addressed community schools in Maryland, Concentration of Poverty Grants, the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports, collective impact, and other related programs created or expanded through the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.
- 2. Community Schools Needs Assessment 2023**
 - The Blueprint requires that community schools must complete a needs assessment within one year of becoming a community school receiving the Concentration of Poverty grant. The needs assessment must be submitted to the local education agency (LEA) and MSDE. This revamped needs assessment template is provided, which includes information on the components of the needs assessment and questions that require reflection. The purpose of the questions is to identify the root causes of the school’s most significant needs and provide information to guide the development of the implementation plan.
- 3. Administering the Community Schools Needs Assessment Presentation**
 - MSDE provides in-depth technical assistance on developing the community schools needs assessment. MSDE ensured that Community School Coordinators in each LEA with a first-

Objective 4.4: Provide Supports For Students Attending Schools With a High Concentration of Poverty

year community school attended one of the sessions. The sessions were offered on two different dates to accommodate schedules. Office hours and meetings with experts were also available to address any remaining questions or concerns. The technical assistance covers all components of the needs assessment, including asset mapping, partnership inventory, gathering and analyzing data and surveys, and conducting focus groups and interviews.

4. English Learners (ELs) in Maryland's Community Schools Presentation

- Community Schools include diverse populations of students. In order to address the needs of EL students and to transform the education for EL students, MSDE presented a technical assistance session to share EL data, describe the Home Language Survey – which is used to identify potential ELs, explain an asset-based approach to teaching EL students, address multilingual family experiences, and provide strategies on equitable engagement and communication with multilingual families. This session combined the needs of EL students with community schools.

5. Concentration of Poverty Reports (2021, 2022)

- MSDE annually submits a report with the percentage and number of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals in the prior school year and each school's eligibility for the Concentration of Poverty grant in the upcoming school year. These reports are submitted to the Department of Budget and Management and the Maryland General Assembly.

6. Community Schools Roundtable

- On August 11, 2022, State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury and Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) member Fagan Harris facilitated a live streaming roundtable conversation, bringing together students, families, community school coordinators and partners, and health practitioners to discuss successes and ideas to improve community and school partnerships.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 4.4: Provide Supports for Students Attending Schools with a High Concentration of Poverty, MSDE will:

- Continue to review needs assessment and implementation plan reports upon submission to MSDE to determine if the needs assessments and the plans reflect the required elements. MSDE will provide feedback to each LEA with community schools regarding the reports and support the revision process for strengthening those that need improving.
- Continue to communicate information regarding the proper use of funds for each of the two types of Concentration of Poverty grants. MSDE will continue regular meetings with chief finance officers and community school coordinators to address program and budgetary questions and issues.
- Continue to provide professional development for community school coordinators and LEA community school points of contact regarding the development of goals and measurement of outcomes for implementation plans. MSDE will continue to expand its series of workshops and



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other technical assistance related to rigorous implementation and continuous improvement strategies for accountability in community schools.

- Continue to ensure that implementation plans are rigorous and provide support to FY 2024 second-year community schools in the development of implementation plans, utilizing a newly revamped implementation plan template, based on the community school's needs assessment. Though MSDE does not have direct statutory authority to require an implementation plan template and revisions to a plan, the majority of community schools are utilizing MSDE developed materials, including an implementation plan template.
- Provide on-going professional development about implementation science, collective impact, and continuous improvement strategies for expanding the community school services and the impact they have in Maryland.
- Ensure that the MSDE Director of Community Schools provides leadership and expertise for the development and continuous improvement of community schools across the State.
- Procure additional audit services to ensure that reported expenses from LEAs for grant programs have sufficient supporting documentation. MSDE is in the process of releasing a Task Order Request for Proposal (TORFRP) to bolster MSDE monitoring of reported grant spending.

Objective 4.5: Enhance Student Health Services

Objective 4.5: Enhance Student Health Services

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
4.5.1(b)	MSDE shall dedicate staff to coordinate with behavioral health service coordinators and LEA staff, including designating an employee to be the primary contact for school behavioral health services and expand services through coordinated community supports partnerships
4.5.3(a)	MSBE shall require all certificated school personnel who have direct contact regularly with students to complete training on or before 12/1 each year on skills required to, among other things, recognize student behavioral issues and students experiencing trauma or violence and, in community schools, support students needing services at a community school
4.5.3(b)	MSBE shall adopt regulations to implement behavioral health training
4.5.4(b)	MSDE shall work with the Consortium, MLDS, and other youth-service agencies to establish shared goals, processes to collect and share data, and ways to leverage and blend funding to support behavioral health in schools
4.5.4(g)	The Consortium, in consultation with MSDE, shall develop best practices for the creation and implementation of a positive classroom environment for all students that recognizes the disproportionality of classroom management referrals
4.5.5(a)	MSDE and the MDH shall each designate a single primary contact employee to assist individuals involved in SBHCs across the State; provide technical assistance to support the establishment/expansion of SBHCs; and coordinate efforts to build a network of SBHCs
4.5.6(a)	MSDE, MDH, DHS, the Consortium, and LEAs shall coordinate to establish memorandums of understanding regarding data sharing to implement identified best practices

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

The Blueprint recognizes that mental health is an overwhelming challenge for school communities and that mental health issues have been on the rise, even prior to the pandemic. Additionally, mentally healthy students are more likely to go to school ready to learn, actively engage in school activities, have supportive and caring connections with adults and young people, use appropriate problem-solving skills, have less aggressive behaviors, and add to positive school culture.¹ Students are six times more likely to complete mental health treatment through their schools rather than elsewhere.² Therefore, the Blueprint dedicates financial resources and expert staff to support the mental and physical health of all Maryland students.

To address these health issues, the Blueprint created the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports which has the directive to support the development of coordinated community supports

¹ School-based Mental Health. Youth.gov, 2021.

² US Department of Education, Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Health Needs, 2021



Objective 4.5: Enhance Student Health Services

partnerships to meet student behavioral health needs and other related challenges in a holistic, non-stigmatized, and coordinated manner; provide expertise for the development of best practices in the delivery of student behavioral health services, supports, and wraparound services; and provide technical assistance to local education agencies (LEAs) to support positive classroom environments and the closing of achievement gaps so that all students can succeed. MSDE is an active member of the Consortium and has helped to lead the direction of the Consortium as well as its subcommittees. MSDE presented to the Consortium on multiple occasions and the State Superintendent of Schools is honored to co-chair the Framework, Design & RFP subcommittee. Other MSDE staff are members of the Data Subcommittee and the Best Practices subcommittee.

Aligned with the Blueprint's directives, the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) requires each LEA to provide a coordinated program of student services that includes, but is not limited to, school counseling, pupil personnel, school psychology, and health services. The LEA student services program must focus on health, including behavioral health, of students as well as the personal, interpersonal, academic, and career development of students. Student behavioral health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Behavioral health determines how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. MSDE works collaboratively with the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) and the Maryland Departments of Health (MDH), Human Services (DHS), and Juvenile Services (DJS), nonpublic schools, and other key stakeholders to provide leadership and technical assistance in implementing programs and initiatives that address students' behavioral health.

MSDE annually administers the Maryland School Survey that provides information from students and educators in the areas of safety, the environment, community, and relationships. Starting in the 2018-2019 school year, all teachers and students in grades 5-11 had the opportunity to take the Maryland School Survey. The survey collects important information about relationships, engagement, the school environment, and safety. Information from the survey is used to ensure that schools across the state promote climates that support student learning. The Maryland School Report Card includes the results of the statewide school survey. A composite score provides results based on input about safety, community, environment, and relationships, all of which are important factors in supporting a positive learning environment for all students. The report card also includes detailed information about the performance of student groups. The survey is administered in two languages, English and Spanish. Accommodations for students who may need assistance from proctors or other school staff are also available.

Additionally, MSDE works closely with the behavioral health coordinator in each LEA. Behavioral health coordinators provide technical assistance and support in identifying students in need of behavioral health support. Upon identification, behavioral health coordinators identify existing behavioral health services and referral procedures within the LEA and collaborate with local health departments and other entities that provide behavioral health services. The LEA works to ensure that a student obtains the necessary services by maximizing external funding for behavioral health and wraparound services and developing plans for delivering behavioral health and wraparound services to students.

Supported with the unique opportunity of federal covid-relief Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) set-aside funds, MSDE has developed the Maryland School Mental Health Response Program



Objective 4.5: Enhance Student Health Services

(MHRP) to provide timely consultation and support to LEAs in addressing student and staff mental and behavioral health concerns. The program uses a consultancy approach to achieve its objectives and to generate distributive impact. The effort is coordinated by MSDE core staff and works in partnership with University of Maryland's National Center for School Mental Health. All 24 LEAs completed initial assessments and developed action plans.

The program and its team of experts work directly with LEAs to identify specific needs of their school communities. The MHRP team consists of a behavior analyst, a substance use counselor, two school social workers, two system navigators, and a child and adolescent psychiatrist. The team draws on its network of expertise to provide consultation, training, technical assistance, and additional supports that allow LEAs to meet these needs. The team has conducted a 2022-2023 Learning Community for Maryland School District Leaders which has included monthly discussions since September on topics such as school staff well-being, workforce recruitment and retention, universal screening and referral pathways, positive teacher-student relationships, funding school mental health, and family partnership in student mental health. The team has also provided direct support to schools that have experienced tragedies during the 2022-2023 school year. Additionally, 18 of 24 Maryland districts are enrolled in SHAPE (School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System), which is an interactive tool intended to improve school and/or district mental health accountability, excellence, and sustainability. It is designed to assess school mental health systems and to prioritize areas for improvement. Nationwide over 15,000 schools, in all 50 states, are engaged in SHAPE.

The MHRP team has delivered 21 trainings, which, in addition to SHAPE, include Classroom WISE, youth mental health first aid, medicine and effects, behavioral health, trauma informed practices, school social work, role of the school counselor, and classroom management. An additional six trainings are scheduled for the remainder of March 2023, which include trauma informed response, school refusal, classroom behavioral health, diversity and cultural appropriate practices, and substance use awareness. The MHRP team has received 315 support requests, the highlight of which has been complex case consultation with the team psychiatrist.

MSDE is also leading the charge to support schools in providing services to students by utilizing Medicaid funding to reimburse schools for the services it provides. While schools have been able to receive reimbursement from Medicaid for services provided to Medicaid-enrolled students since 2014, receiving these funds required navigating confusing billing codes and outdated federal guidance. MSDE is now taking advantage of new federal legislation, enacted in June 2022, and is currently working with the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland General Assembly to submit a Medicaid State Plan Amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This State Plan Amendment would allow for Medicaid reimbursement for students who participate in Medicaid but who do not have an IEP or IFSP. Pending the status of House Bill 82/Senate Bill 201, which are currently in consideration for the Maryland General Assembly, MSDE will continue its efforts to expand access to mental health services. This bill would provide the funds necessary for the time-study required for Maryland to submit a second State Plan Amendment, which would then expand the types of positions for which the State can seek reimbursement and to allow Maryland to utilize administrative billing.



Objective 4.5: Enhance Student Health Services

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 4.5: Enhance Student Health Services, the following documents are present:

1. **Mental Health in Schools Presentation to the State Board of Education (February 2022)**
 - This presentation to the State Board emphasized mental health as a key component of student success and explored and highlighted the programming and supports that positively impact mental health in schools. Both MSDE and the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) have dedicated staff to work collaboratively with LEA behavioral health coordinators to provide leadership and technical assistance in analyzing data, identifying needs, and implementing evidence-based strategies to address student behavioral health. MSDE and MCSS host monthly convenings of LEA behavioral health coordinators. The meetings are co-chaired by the MSDE Behavioral Health representative, the School Psychology Supervisor and the MCSS representative, the Prevention and Intervention Specialist.
2. **A Trauma-Informed Approach for Maryland Schools**
 - The Trauma-Informed Approach Guidance was developed in March 2021 to provide a framework for LEAs in establishing a holistic approach to education in which all teachers, school administrators, staff, students, families, and community members recognize and effectively respond to the behavioral, emotional, relational, and academic impact of stress on those within the LEA. MSDE staff are available to provide assistance to LEAs and schools with implementing a trauma-informed approach.
3. **[MSDE Student Services Website](#)**
 - The MSDE Student Services website serves as the hub for resources to support a coordinated system of student supports. The site includes resources related to school culture and climate, behavioral health, school safety, and more.
4. **[MSDE Youth Suicide Prevention Website](#)**
 - The MSDE Youth Suicide Prevention web page contains information and resources to assist LEAs and families with suicide prevention and intervention. In collaboration with MDH and various community agencies, MSDE supports the development of youth prevention programs within LEAs that include staff development, classroom programs of instruction, crisis intervention, and other related policies and procedures. State statute requires that youth suicide prevention be taught as a part of the comprehensive health program in public schools.
5. **COMAR 13A.07.11 Student Suicide Prevention and Safety Training**
 - The State Board of Education, in alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, adopted COMAR 13A.07.11 Student Suicide Prevention and Safety Training, which requires each LEA to provide annual training to all certificated school staff to: (1) understand and respond to youth suicide risk and (2) identify professional resources to help students in crisis. Effective July 1, 2021, the legislation was updated to include the requirements to: (4) recognize student behavioral health issues; (5) recognize students

Objective 4.5: Enhance Student Health Services

experiencing trauma or violence out of school and refer student to behavioral health services; and (6) if the school is a community school, support students needing the services at a community school. A survey and certification statement were created to capture this information from LEAs, which is due to MSDE in April each year.

6. [MSDE School Based Health Centers Website](#)

- MSDE has a registered nurse on staff as part of the student services team. Effective July 1, 2022, the Maryland School Based Health Center Program (SBHC) transitioned to MDH. However, the MSDE staff member serves as the agency's single point of contact to assist individuals involved in SBHCs across the State to provide technical assistance to support the establishment/expansion of SBHCs and coordinate efforts to build a network of SBHCs. MSDE staff members work collaboratively with MDH to review and evaluate SBHC programs and foster ongoing communication between SBHCs and local school health services programs. The MSDE website maintains links to the MDH website, SBHC standards, and links to the Maryland Assembly of School-Based Health Care and Maryland Council for the Advancement of School-Based Health Centers websites.

7. **Maryland School Mental Health Response Program State Board Presentation**

- Information on the School Mental Health Response Program was presented to the State Board on September 27, 2022. The presentation described the program and emphasized the goal of enriching and enhancing the work of site-based student support services personnel. The presentation outlined the core components of the program, program funding and evaluation, program highlights from an LEA perspective, and the School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation system (SHAPE). The presentation also highlighted the intended outcomes of the program.

8. **Maryland School Survey Frequently Asked Questions**

- The Maryland School Survey Frequently Asked Questions document outlines how each LEA organizes and documents data for the survey administration. It also defines key concepts related to the data collection. Additionally, it provides answers to commonly asked procedural questions including corresponding due dates and timelines.

9. **Maryland School Survey Results: Presentation**

- The Maryland School Survey provides families, LEAs, and MSDE with valuable information about the learning environment of each public school in the State. The Maryland School Survey for students provides information on four domains including safety, environment, community, and relationships. The educator school survey has a fifth domain for instructional feedback. MSDE presented the data from the spring 2022 administration of the survey to the State Board of Education on December 6, 2022, including data disaggregated by LEA and student group.



Objective 4.5: Enhance Student Health Services

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 4.5: Enhance Student Health Services, MSDE will:

- Continue to collaborate with agency and community partners to develop and refine guidelines, policies, practices, and professional learning opportunities that will enhance student behavioral health services. This work will include positive behavioral interventions, a multi-tiered system of supports, restorative approaches, social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, school safety, and other related topics.
- Continue to regularly engage stakeholders, including directors of student services, supervisors of school counseling, school psychological services supervisors, supervisors of pupil personnel and social work, school health services coordinators, behavioral health coordinators, and supervisors of school safety to brainstorm, problem-solve, and provide professional development to address the behavioral health needs of all students.
- Continue to work with the Consortium, MLDS, and other youth service agencies to establish shared goals, processes to collect data, and ways to leverage and blend funding to support behavioral health in schools. The Best Practices subcommittee of the Consortium is charged with evaluating best practices in the delivery of behavioral health services and support for inclusion in the first Call for Proposals. As part of his role as the co-chair of the Framework, Design & RFP subcommittee, the State Superintendent of Schools developed the structure for the RFP to launch community supports partnerships, that was unanimously approved on February 21, 2023.
- Continue to work with the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports to develop best practices for the creation and implementation of a positive classroom environment for all students that recognizes the disproportionality of classroom management referrals.
- Continue to work with the Consortium, MDH, DHS, and LEAs to establish and implement memoranda of understanding in FY 2024 regarding data sharing to implement identified best practices.
- Continue to implement the Maryland School Mental Health Response Program in collaboration with University of Maryland's National Center for School Mental Health to provide consultation, training, technical assistance, and additional supports to LEAs.

Objective 5.1: Support Blueprint Implementation Planning

Objective 5.1: Support Blueprint Implementation Planning

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
5.1.2(c)	Blueprint Implementation Plans shall be submitted to AIB by every State entity that is required to implement the Blueprint by (initially) 3/15/23 except the Juvenile Services Education Program Board, which shall submit its plan by 6/15/23
5.1.3	AIB and MSDE review implementation plans submitted by LEAs; AIB approves/disapproves plans (plans subject to periodic updates)
5.1.3(b)	MSDE shall submit criteria to review LEA plans by 9/1/22 for AIB review and approval (subject to periodic updates)
5.1.3(d)	AIB and MSDE shall provide training and technical assistance to LEAs while developing Blueprint Implementation Plans
5.1.3(f)	MSDE shall review LEA plans and provide recommendations for approval/disapproval to AIB

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

MSDE has taken a leading role in supporting the Blueprint implementation planning for all state and local entities in Maryland, especially each of the 24 local education agencies (LEAs). The foundation of any coordinated implementation requires a shared mission and understanding of the vision and components of the plan. Therefore, MSDE took the initiative to deliver a series of deep dive presentations to the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), State Board of Education, and public at-large that provide in-depth discussions of the Blueprint requirements and MSDE’s current implementation efforts. Each presentation also included current Maryland data disaggregated by a variety of factors including student subgroups, gender, socioeconomic status, LEA, or region, so that the full context of the current realities in schools is understood by everyone.

Additionally, to further assist the coordination of initiatives across state agencies, MSDE produced a series of in-depth reports that have been submitted to the AIB, the Maryland General Assembly, the Governor, and other stakeholders. These reports are also all available on MSDE’s Blueprint website: blueprint.marylandpublicschools.org/reports. These reports again include detailed information about Blueprint requirements, relevant data and context, national best practices and research, and current implementation status and future plans as well as the most current advice and guidance for LEAs to implement various components of the Blueprint. The series of MSDE Blueprint Reports include topics such as Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty, Ninth Grade Tracker, the Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools, College and Career Readiness: Roadmap to Implementation, and Pre-K Implementation Planning.



Objective 5.1: Support Blueprint Implementation Planning

Going into the 2022-2023 school year, Blueprint implementation entered a new phase as the AIB was developing the Comprehensive Implementation Plan, and each state entity was solidifying its plans for implementation. With a shared vision between MSDE and AIB and dedication to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, MSDE submitted its proposed Criteria for Success to be used to recommend approval or disapproval of LEA Blueprint Implementation Plans. In addition to the Criteria for Success, MSDE also included a proposed Blueprint Implementation Plan Template and supporting documents that each LEA would use to develop and submit their Blueprint Implementation Plans. After this initial submission, MSDE engaged in conversations with the AIB to evolve the Plan Template and documents so that the two organizations, in collaboration with the State Board of Education, could collectively usher in a new era for Maryland's education system through the innovative and comprehensive approach that the Blueprint embraces, emphasizing support for our most historically underserved communities.

After the AIB adopted the revised LEA Blueprint Implementation Plan Template, corresponding Criteria for Success, and other documents, MSDE immediately started providing a comprehensive series of technical assistance and support sessions in a very tight three-month timeline. MSDE supported LEAs in digging into the requirements and aiding them in developing and implementing their Blueprint Implementation Plans. MSDE, in collaboration with AIB, hosted a series of information sessions, workshops, cross-district collaboration sessions, open office hours, and other events. These covered topics including background information on the Blueprint and project management, information and collaboration sessions by pillar, draft implementation plan review sessions, individual LEA support sessions, as well as regular office hours throughout the implementation plan development period. As part of this series of hands-on support sessions, each LEA received detailed feedback on their draft implementation plans. While more support and planning is needed beyond what could be done within this initial submission period, MSDE's support provided over the past three months, has allowed LEAs to kickstart and scale key initiatives of the Blueprint.

To further assist and accelerate LEAs in identifying and implementing tangible, evidence-based strategies as part of their Blueprint Implementation plans, MSDE took advantage of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to award more than \$169 Million to LEAs as part of the Maryland Leads grant program. The innovative grant program also generated more than \$25 million in local investments to supplement Department awards, which will build sustainability on the Maryland Leads grant programs and activities. Maryland Leads offered LEAs the opportunity to propose initiatives and programs across seven high-leverage strategies rooted in best practices for driving student outcomes, bolstering teacher pipelines, and supporting teacher and staff recruitment and retention. These strategies are the Science of Reading, Grow Your Own, Staff Support and Retention, High-Quality School Day Tutoring, Reimagining the Use of Time, Innovative School Models, and Transforming Neighborhoods through Excellent Community Schools. All 24 Maryland school districts applied to the Maryland Leads program and received an award. One of the major priorities of the State Board of Education and MSDE will be to ensure all Maryland educators – not just new educators – will be fully trained in the science of reading. The Maryland Leads grant program has accelerated the efforts to achieve this goal. MSDE has also offered additional grant funding through Maryland Rebuilds and Maryland Works to support Blueprint implementation and pandemic recovery at the same time.



Objective 5.1: Support Blueprint Implementation Planning

Through MSDE's current strategic planning engagement efforts with the State Board of Education, over 85% of polled stakeholders believe the quality of public schools is "extremely important" for Maryland's success as a state. MSDE will work collaboratively and transparently with educators, families, local education agencies and boards of education, institutions of higher education, the AIB, employers, and stakeholders across our state to ensure success. MSDE and the State Board look forward to the continued engagement and support as we seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform public education so that all students in Maryland are ready to be successful in college, career, and life.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 5.1: Support Blueprint Implementation Planning, the following documents are present:

1. Maryland Leads Awards \$169M: Press Release

- On June 28, 2022, MSDE announced the award of Maryland Leads grants funds to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), a bold, foundational initiative to reimagine the State's education system and realize the promise of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. In total, MSDE is disbursing more than \$169 million in funding to LEAs across the State to directly accelerate learning and seed long-term, sustainable, and transformational change in Maryland school communities. The innovative grant program also generated more than \$25 million in local investment to supplement Department awards, which will build sustainability for Maryland Leads grant programs and activities.

2. MSDE Presentation to AIB (February 2022)

- MSDE provides regular updates, briefings, and deep dives for the Accountability and Implementation Board members. On February 14 and February 28, 2022, the State Superintendent of Schools shared information on the organizational shifts and reimagining being done within MSDE, updates on the strategic planning process, recent engagement highlights, and the Maryland Leads grant program. Also included in the presentation were updates and summaries of recently published Blueprint implementation reports, progress on developing a neighborhood indicator of poverty system, National Board Certified teachers and low performing schools, Expert Review Teams, college and career readiness, problems of practice around key strategic policy decisions, and an update on the collaborative relationship between MSDE and AIB.

3. MSDE Presentation to AIB (July 2022)

- As part of MSDE's regular series of presentations to the AIB, on July 28, 2022, the State Superintendent of Schools provided in-depth updates and discussions on the Expert Review Team development process and deployment plan; the supply and demand of the teacher workforce, including teacher attrition and educator preparation program completers, and racial disparities between teachers and students; and an update on the implementation of Maryland Leads, including the application review process, each of the seven high-leverage strategies, and the financial investments awarded to LEAs.

Objective 5.1: Support Blueprint Implementation Planning

4. MSDE Presentation to AIB (August 2022)

- On August 25, 2022, the State Superintendent was invited back to the AIB meeting for additional discussion on the supply, demand, and diversity of the teacher workforce in Maryland. The presentation shared information on exit survey data, teacher vacancies by certification area, national trends and research, insight from the MSDE teacher diversity roundtable, and suggestions for opportunities to implement new change in Maryland.

5. MSDE Presentation to AIB (December 2022)

- As Maryland reaches nearly a year and a half since the Blueprint was enacted, MSDE provided in-depth updates on December 15, 2022, on key implementation items, including the college and career readiness exploratory and long-term studies, neighborhood indicators of poverty, and the Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools. Results from the exploratory CCR study were shared, as well as the approved partner for the long-term CCR study, and the opportunity to utilize multiple measures for the CCR standard. MSDE also discussed the final proposed methodology for implementing neighborhood indicators of poverty, which included a review of neighborhood poverty, an exploration of tiers by county, preliminary data analysis, and three potential calculation methodologies. Finally, MSDE shared the recommendations from the final report of the Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools, which include supporting multilingualism by promoting an asset based approach, two way immersion programs, and adjusting funding allocations and spending decisions for English learners.

6. Joint Statement from the State Board of Education and AIB

- On December 17, 2022, the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE) and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) met in joint session in pursuit of their shared commitment to the school children of the state of Maryland. The Boards reviewed the five pillars and expected outcomes of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and discussed what success might look like in the next 5 years.

7. MSDE Submission of Blueprint Implementation Plan Template and Criteria for Success (Folder)

- On August 31, 2022, MSDE submitted proposed Criteria for Success to be used to recommend approval or disapproval of Local Education Agency Blueprint Implementation Plans, as well as the Blueprint Implementation Plan Template, and supporting documentation, that each LEA will use to develop and submit their Blueprint Implementation Plans. This folder contains all of the submitted materials and additional guidance documents,

8. Implementation Plan Resources for LEAs (Folder)

- After a robust collaboration process with the AIB and other stakeholders between August and December, 2022, the AIB approved the finalized Blueprint Implementation Plan Template, Criteria for Success, and Guidance Document. In this folder are these final materials that LEAs used to develop their Implementation Plans as well as information on the technical assistance that MSDE and AIB offered.

Objective 5.1: Support Blueprint Implementation Planning

9. Blueprint Implementation Plan LEA Technical Assistance Calendar

- Throughout the months of December 2022 and January through March 15, 2023, MSDE, in collaboration with AIB, hosted a robust series of information sessions, workshops, cross-district collaboration sessions, open office hours, and other events that will assist each LEA in developing their Blueprint Implementation Plan. Workshop topics included an overview of the Blueprint implementation plan development process, project management and facilitating cross-functional teams; detailed information and collaboration sessions by Pillar; and draft implementation plan review sessions. MSDE and AIB also hosted individual LEA support sessions for each LEA. These sessions allowed for tailored support or technical assistance needed to complete their individual Blueprint Implementation Plan

10. Technical Assistance for LEAs (Folder)

- MSDE, in collaboration with AIB, hosted a robust series of technical assistance sessions throughout the months of December 2022 through March 2023. This folder contains the presentation slides and other materials to support each LEA in their Blueprint Implementation Plan development process.

11. [MSDE - Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Website](#)

- In 2022, MSDE developed and released a new engaging and user-friendly website that showcases the Blueprint, each of its pillars, the reports and actions that MSDE has taken to implement the Blueprint, and more.

12. Maryland Rebuilds Grant Information Guide

- The Maryland Rebuilds program is centered around six high-leverage strategies that have been proven to be effective and transformative for early childhood systems and reflect the input of partners across the State, including “Growing a Highly-Effective Child Care Workforce.” This strategy prioritized and called out career pathways in early education, noting: “MSDE is especially interested in proposals that address alternative teacher preparation, apprenticeships, and career pathways.”

13. Maryland Works Grant Information Guide

- The Grant Information Guide (GIG) for Maryland Works includes the full program description, purpose, examples of policy best practices for grant program application design and research on the efficacy of sample policies and programs currently implemented in other States and jurisdictions. The GIG also includes program timelines, reporting deadlines, and application information that highlights MSDE’s commitment to investing in the infrastructure necessary to ensure LEAs can meet Blueprint CCR outcome goals.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 5.1: Support Blueprint Implementation Planning, MSDE will:

- Conduct reviews of LEA Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan reviews in April 2023. The plans will be rated by a team of experts, who will undergo calibration training. These reviewers will use the Criteria for Success to determine whether LEA submissions meet the criteria to be recommended for approval to the AIB by MSDE. Each set of questions reviewed will receive a rating, evidence of



Objective 5.1: Support Blueprint Implementation Planning

why the questions received the rating they did and any additional feedback for LEAs. Additionally, LEAs will receive a summary of feedback for each pillar. LEAs that do not meet the criteria to be recommended for approval will be required to revise and resubmit their plans.

- Continue to provide targeted technical assistance to LEAs as they implement their plans and assist them with developing their next submission of their Blueprint Implementation Plans.
- Adjust and refine its Implementation Plan based on student data and stakeholder feedback and assess and improve upon its programs and initiatives in order to best implement the requirements of the Blueprint to lead Maryland's educational system forward.

Objective 5.2: Establish And Deploy Expert Review Teams

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
5.2.1	MSDE develops a plan for selection, assembly, and deployment of Expert Review Teams (part of MSDE Blueprint Implementation Plan)
5.2.1(a)	MSDE shall select highly regarded ERT members
5.2.1(b)	MSDE and AIB shall deliver training for reviewers on the Blueprint and the review process
5.2.2	Every July 1, MSDE develops and submits to AIB for approval a plan to deploy Expert Review Teams in the following school year
5.2.2(a)	MSDE shall send Expert Review Teams to visit schools that continue to be impacted by COVID learning loss to determine why learning loss continues starting in the 2022-23 academic year
5.2.2(b)	MSDE shall send an ERT to a school determined to be one of the lowest performing schools in the State once each year, schools determined to be lower performing schools in the State on a regular schedule but not every year, schools determined to be the highest performing in the State, and all other schools at intervals determined by a randomized selection process
5.2.3	Expert Review Teams visit approximately 10% of all schools annually until all schools have been visited at least once by FY 31
5.2.3(a)	ERTs shall collect similar quantitative and qualitative data between school visits
5.2.3(b)	During school visits, ERTs shall conduct comprehensive in-school investigations of the causes of poor student performance and make recommendations on the measures needed to improve the performance of low-performing schools and correct identified problems to the following entities: principal and county superintendent, school faculty, county boards of education, and the community
5.2.3(c)	An ERT may perform evaluations of behavioral health services provided in a school and, if the team determines that poor student performance is due, in part, to missing or inadequate health services, make recommendations to the appropriate entities to correct the identified problems
5.2.3(d)	An ERT shall submit a post-visit report to MSDE within the time period, in the manner, and including the information required by MSDE
5.2.3(e)	Beginning 7/1/25, MSDE shall use ERT reports and recommendations as the basis for a recommendation to AIB as to whether to release a portion of the annual increase in funding for the upcoming school year because the school and LEA have developed a satisfactory plan for the use of funds consistent with the ERT's recommendations



Objective 5.2: Establish And Deploy Expert Review Teams

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

The Expert Review Team (ERT) Program is comprised of teams of expert educators that utilize a comprehensive approach to determine the extent to which the Blueprint for Maryland's Future is being implemented in each school as well as in each local education agency (LEA). This approach includes school observations, interviews, and an analysis of data, along with collaboration with school-based and district level staff to determine why student progress is insufficient. Additionally, the ERT Program should result in the development of recommendations, measures, and strategies that address the issues identified by an Expert Review Team.

MSDE began the Expert Review Team Program pilot in the Fall of 2021 based on best-in-class research and engagement with stakeholders across Maryland, with student achievement at the forefront, especially focusing on historically disadvantaged students. Based on the insights from this research and engagement, MSDE created the draft Deployment Plan that included the program design, visit protocols, and pilot evaluation rubric documents. These documents continued to be shared with groups of stakeholders that included school principals, local education agency (LEA) central office leaders, new members of the Expert Review Team, teachers, and other experts to provide feedback. In April 2022, the first Expert Review Team pilot school visits were completed by trained MSDE staff who had prior experience as educators and school leaders. Teams of six reviewers visited three schools and observed classrooms, conducted interviews and focus groups, and used additional data to analyze the extent to which the Blueprint for Maryland's Future initiatives were being implemented, as well as identified instructional best practices. After each visit, reviewers collaborated with school-based faculty and central office staff to develop recommendations, refine outcome measures, and identify strategies to address growth areas as identified by data collected during the visits.

Throughout 2022, MSDE continued to facilitate feedback discussions with the pilot schools and review national best practices and research to refine the ERT Deployment Plan and other documents. MSDE has also partnered with the Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic (REL) to identify key elements of school-visit rubrics used elsewhere, research on school inspection rubrics, and sources of research-based strategies and interventions. REL also provided recommendations for elements that MSDE could incorporate into their design, including the ERT rubric, the process of collecting data and conducting reviews, the method of reporting findings, and considerations on how ERTs may develop recommendations and point to resources for school improvement relevant to each school's needs. REL is currently working on how to reformat the school review reports to include more narrative based content.

In addition to conducting pilot school reviews, MSDE also engaged in a rigorous process to select high-quality ERT members. Since Expert Review Teams are expected to visit every school in Maryland by the end of the 2030-2031 School Year, a large cadre of Expert Review Team members is needed, including a number of reviewers "on the bench" and ready to join a team on a moment's notice. As of March 2023, there have been over 400 applications to be part of the Expert Review Team, and 140 experts have been hired. These reviewers must also represent the diverse demographic makeup of the student body of Maryland schools. Once hired, MSDE conducts a robust series of trainings for the reviewers to ensure that all reviews are well

Objective 5.2: Establish And Deploy Expert Review Teams

calibrated with each other. MSDE is also conducting a survey of ERT members to understand the reviewer's experience and recommendations to improve the process.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 5.2: Establish And Deploy Expert Review Teams, the following documents are present:

1. **2022-2023 Expert Review Team Deployment Plan**
 - The Expert Review Team Deployment Plan provides expectations and timelines for Expert Review Teams, local education agencies (LEAs), and schools; and an in-depth overview of the process, induction, and training requirements of the program. MSDE developed this plan and submitted it to the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) for approval.
2. **Expert Review Team Revised Methodology: Memo to AIB**
 - The attached methodology was used to identify schools in the Expert Review Team (ERT) pilot process that began in the spring of 2022 as well as for schools that will receive visits beginning in early 2023. To identify these schools, MSDE staff compiled a list of all public schools in Maryland that were open during the 2021-2022 school year and had enrollments greater than or equal to 10 students. Three criteria were used to identify schools: (1) schools with the largest learning loss from 2019 to 2021, (2) schools with the lowest academic performance in 2019, and (3) schools with the largest within-school achievement gaps by student group in 2019.
3. **Expert Review Team FAQs**
 - MSDE provided additional guidance and clarity around the Expert Review Team process through a set of Frequently Asked Questions that explain the selection, deployment, and review processes for a school, as well as the time commitments, compensation, and qualifications for ERT members.
4. **Expert Review Team Flyer**
 - As part of the marketing campaign to recruit high-quality ERT members, MSDE released a set of marketing materials, including this flyer, which encourages qualified experts to apply to join the ERT.
5. **Expert Review Team: Press Release**
 - MSDE released a statement in December of 2021 to announce and advertise the upcoming ERT process and to encourage qualified experts to apply to join the ERT. Expert Review Team members reflect the diversity of Maryland public school students and have demonstrated experience in improving student outcomes.
6. **Expert Review Team Presentation**
 - On July 28, 2022, MSDE presented updates on the Expert Review Team implementation process to the Accountability and Implementation Board. The presentation included information on the purpose and background of the program, the project timeline, stakeholder engagement completed, feedback received, details on the deployment plan, the rubric in use in the pilot deployments, and the next steps in the process.



Objective 5.2: Establish And Deploy Expert Review Teams

7. Considerations for MSDE Expert Review Team Rubric and Reports: Memo

- The attached memo explains the research work that Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) has completed in partnership with MSDE to give background information on school inspections and reviews for assessing school quality and informing improvement. The memo also summarized RELs recommendations to the ERT rubric, the process of collecting data and conducting reviews, the method of reporting findings, and considerations on how ERTs may develop recommendations.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 5.2: Establish And Deploy Expert Review Teams, MSDE will:

- Continue to refine, revise, and strengthen its Expert Review Team Deployment Plan and other materials, including the review rubric, based on ongoing meaningful stakeholder engagement, feedback, best-in-class research, collaboration with educators, and alignment with the Blueprint.
- Continue to recruit, identify, and hire high-quality ERT members that reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender diversity of the population of public school students.
- Continue to deliver training for reviewers on the Blueprint, the review process, calibration processes, how to conduct classroom reviews, focus groups, interviews, consensus building, and report writing.
- Continue to deploy the Expert Review Teams to schools across Maryland, according to the Deployment Plan, and visit every school in Maryland by the 2030-2031 school year.
- Beginning July 1, 2025, use Expert Review Team reports and recommendations as the basis for a recommendation to AIB as to whether to release a portion of the annual increase in funding for the current or upcoming school/fiscal year.



Objective 5.3: Coordinate Maryland's Participation in PISA

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
5.3.1	AIB and MSDE work together to include Maryland in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) beginning in 2024
5.3.1(a)	MSDE shall formally request that OECD include Maryland in the next PISA cycle in 2024

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

Created by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science. The assessment is administered every three years. Seventy-nine countries and economies participated in the 2018 assessment, which had reading literacy as its focus subject, joined by math and science as additional subjects assessed. While the next administration was scheduled for 2021, OECD member countries and associates decided to postpone the PISA 2021 assessment to 2022 to reflect post-Covid difficulties. This decision also postponed the 2024 PISA assessment to be administered in the fall of 2025.

The United States participates in PISA each cycle; however, the U.S. national PISA results are representative of the nation as a whole but not of individual states. A state or territory may elect to participate in PISA as an individual education system—as Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Puerto Rico did in 2015—and in that case a sample is drawn that is representative of that state. No states elected to participate in PISA 2018 separately from the nation.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 5.3: Coordinate Maryland's Participation in PISA, MSDE will:

- Work with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to formally request that Maryland participate in the 2025 PISA administration as an individual education system.

Objective 5.4: Monitor Blueprint Outcomes

MSDE Tasks

Task ID	Requirement
5.4.2(a)	On or before 1/1 each year, MSDE shall submit information on the use of school-level expenditures in the current fiscal year to AIB
5.4.2(e)	MSDE, in collaboration with AIB, shall implement a financial management system and student data system capable of tracking and analyzing minimum school funding requirements and integrating local school system data

MSDE Actions to Implement the Blueprint

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future includes changes to State Aid calculations and changes to reporting requirements, which current financial systems cannot support. §5-234 of the Education Article requires MSDE, in collaboration with Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), to implement a new statewide finance and data system capable of supporting fiscal and student information requirements in the Blueprint. MSDE cannot, with its current systems, meet the reporting requirements of this objective, let alone properly measure and enforce accountability. For example, MSDE does not have a mechanism to, with quality and validation, collect and report current-year school-level expenditures. MSDE has required local education agencies (LEAs) to complete bi-monthly detailed expense reporting in the Annual Financial Reporting (AFR) system corresponding with major State aid, but LEAs are still transitioning into this process and the data are far from complete or accurate. Further, the AFR system does not have the ability to validate, aggregate, synthesize, or consolidate these data for reporting purposes.

MSDE is working diligently to roll out a new Statewide finance and data system to meet the requirements of this objective. The potential results of this work cannot be understated – these financial and student information data will underpin the Department’s ability to ensure key provisions of Blueprint funding and reporting are met and maintained while providing an avenue to advance public transparency and understanding of how State aid calculations work, where Blueprint dollars are spent, and on which student groups (and related services) those dollars are budgeted and spent. True public transparency is more than publishing a complex data file or report– transparency requires the scaffolding of public understanding so that any stakeholder can readily engage, interact, and understand the data and information. This project will be the cornerstone of MSDE’s efforts related to Blueprint fiscal monitoring, support, accountability, and transparency.

To successfully implement the Blueprint’s minimum school funding requirements, MSDE must collect data in new ways and with greater frequency than previous practices. Current systems are unable to support this work in the short and long term. With the new Blueprint requirements, MSDE must be able to collect school-level budget data, per-pupil, by major State Aid category, as described in §5-234. MSDE must also be



Objective 5.4: Monitor Blueprint Outcomes

able to collect and report on school-level expense data in line with the major State Aid categories and based on the account structure of Financial Reporting Manual for Maryland Public Schools. MSDE must also collect, distribute, and validate National Board Certification data, disaggregated by LEA and employee. Additionally, MSDE must collect and implement Pre-K Tier I and Tier II enrollment data collection and validation for Blueprint Pre-K programs. MSDE has a number of disparate systems maintained on premises such as the MSDE Annual Financial Reporting system, that are unequipped to fulfill these statutory requirements.

MSDE project team personnel work closely with MSDE leadership and LEA designees to ensure all stakeholders are engaged in and involved with project build-out. MSDE will also continue to collaborate with AIB to ensure these systems are ready for MSDE to meet the requirements of the statute and related task in the Comprehensive Implementation Plan. MSDE has held six collaboratives to date with meetings scheduled every 2-3 months.

In the Fall of 2021, MSDE established a Maryland Data System Collaborative working group that has representation from all twenty-four local education agencies and the AIB. MSDE utilizes these regular meetings to communicate project information and provide customer service. MSDE also surveyed each LEA to determine which data systems are currently in use across the state and how to best integrate with any existing practices that will be sustained.

Informed by the results of the LEA survey, MSDE began sourcing and procuring a vendor to support the implementation of the Blueprint's requirements and to modernize the State's financial systems. The vendor sourcing stage of the project included MSDE headquarters representation across various programs and divisions, including the Division of Financial Planning, Operations, and Accountability; the Division of Accountability, Assessment, Performance Reporting, and Research; the Office of Information Technology; and the Office of Procurement and Contract Management. The cross-functional team on this project identified two potential vendors with solutions that were available to the MSDE via existing statewide contracts, competitively bid statewide contracts/awards in other states, and competitively bid vendors that have an available contract in a purchasing consortia. MSDE worked with the Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT) and the Department of General Services to select and award a contract in July 2022 to PowerSchool Inc, following the unanimous Board of Public Works approval on July 6, 2022.

Quickly after approval, MSDE began the collaborative development process with PowerSchool. The initial phase of the project, which aligns with Fiscal Year 2023, focuses on the areas of most immediate need to meet statutory requirements. Specifically, year one focuses on:

1. Identifying LEA fiscal data that MSDE will need to meet compliance and reporting requirements of the Blueprint.
2. Curating LEA fiscal data requirements into file record layouts for each LEA.
3. Establishing a transmission process whereby LEAs validate and transmit the requisite files containing the data elements specified by MSDE.
4. Receiving and vetting LEA data submitted through and stored in the transmission process.



Objective 5.4: Monitor Blueprint Outcomes

5. Storing, retaining, and issuing reporting based on data submitted to MSDE through the new process.

The financial data system development project is in its first year (Phase I) of a three-year implementation design. The project is on track with the development and implementation timeline.

To test data transmission capabilities, PowerSchool asked that each LEA load four different file types into the system. These tests have had promising results, specifically as of March 2023:

- Three LEAs have successfully loaded four valid files that were identified as being 100% accurate according to PowerSchool. The LEAs are: Anne Arundel County, Dorchester County, and Talbot County.
- Four LEAs have successfully loaded four valid files and PowerSchool has been able to load at least one row from each of these files. The LEAs are: Frederick, Harford, Prince George, and Wicomico.
- Ten LEAs have successfully loaded at least one file. The LEAs are: Baltimore County, Calvert County, Caroline County, Charles County, Garrett County, Howard County, Saint Mary's County, Washington County, Worcester County, and Baltimore City.
- Seven LEAs have not loaded any files.

MSDE continues to assess the level of support desired by and required by local education agencies throughout implementation. For that reason, MSDE is analyzing the data received to date and exploring next steps based on LEA participation in existing support mechanisms. Each of the seven LEAs that have not submitted any files yet have each attended at least one combined support session ensuring that all LEAs are engaged in this critical project. Additionally, three of those LEAs also attended a one-on-one support session. PowerSchool also reported that of the ten LEAs who have submitted at least one of the four requested files, six LEAs are actively working with the PowerSchool support team.

Implementation Artifacts

In the MSDE Implementation Plan folder for Objective 5.4, Monitor Blueprint Outcomes, the following documents are present:

1. **PowerSchool Proposal Summary Presentation**
 - The summary presentation includes the initial and subsequent phase plans for the new Statewide Finance and Data System required under Education Article 5-234. This presentation is a top-level summary of proposed work associated with the project.
2. **PowerSchool Unified Insights Proposal**
 - The detailed proposal, which accompanies the summary presentation, includes specific deliverables, hours, timelines, and project requirements associated with years one through three of the Statewide Finance and Data System project required under Education Article 5-234.



Objective 5.4: Monitor Blueprint Outcomes

3. BPW Award – PowerSchool

- The Board of Public Works award information documents the successful conclusion of procurement, which is necessary to proceed with the implementation work of the Statewide Finance and Data System project required under Education Article 5-234.

4. Collaborative Meeting Presentation

- This December 2, 2022, presentation was delivered to the members of the MSDE Finance and Student Data System Collaborative and discussed topics including updates on the implementation timeline, technical support opportunities, data file requirements, and time for the LEA points-of-contact to collaborate with each other.

Future Implementation Steps

As MSDE continues to implement Objective 5.4, Monitor Blueprint Outcomes, MSDE will:

- Continue to evaluate and provide technical support to LEAs in implementing the new data system.
- Upon successful completion of Phase I, expected to be completed by end of summer 2023, embark upon Phase II of the project, which includes examining the student information requirements to better allow MSDE to consolidate student and finance data into the one system.
- Explore fiscal transparency efforts through utilizing the newly reported data. Phase II will begin in Fiscal Year 2024 and continue into Fiscal Year 2025.
- Continue to annually submit the required reports to the Accountability and Implementation Board.