

Maryland State Board of Education

2024 Legislative Platform

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Overview

As the 2024 legislative session approaches, the Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) is embracing its role as the lead education policy body in Maryland. For a number of years, the State Board has been tangentially involved in matters pertaining to legislation in Annapolis. The establishment of a legislative platform is an opportunity to reset the State Board's role and voice in education policy making during the legislative session.

The State Board appreciates and commits to collaboration with the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) and other public agencies to develop positions and effectuate change. We also commit to maintaining strategic partnerships with key stakeholders as we advocate for legislation.

We maintain a laser-like focus on improving outcomes for all students by building coalitions with key stakeholders to further the policy goals of the Blueprint and the State Board's Strategic Plan.

The development of the State Board's legislative platform is consistent with the State Board's statutory role embedded within §2-205(k)(2) of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland that states:

"With the advice of the State Superintendent, (the State Board shall) recommend to the Governor and the General Assembly any legislation that it considers necessary."

The State Board recognizes the State Superintendent's critical role as Chief Executive of the Board and as a policy matter expert in this process. The State Board strongly supports the Maryland State Department of Education's responsibility in carrying out the educational policies of the State Board on a day-to-day basis as the accountability leader, central implementation driver, and technical assistance provider for the State's education system. However, the State Board is clear on its role as the head of the Department and its oversight entity.

The State Board strongly believes in the historical political independence of the State Board and the Department, which arose as a result of the 1916 Flexner Report. This report, chartered as a review of public schools in Maryland, concluded that this independence was critical to the success of children in the State to keep education "as far removed from political influences as possible". The General Assembly adopted the report's recommendation and the system remains in place to this day.

We will operate during this legislative session on a series of key principles with a focus on the more than 1,400 schools in Maryland serving as the primary units of change.

Building on Educational Transformation

Fully-Funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and Safeguarding Investments into Education

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is a once-in-a-generation investment into public schools in Maryland. The State Board will advocate during the legislative session for **full funding of the Blueprint** as it was designed to ensure that the intent of the law remains intact. The State Board maintains this focus to provide children with the skills, resources, and opportunities necessary to reach their full promise and potential, while eliminating achievement and opportunity gaps for children.

To that end, the State Board will operate on a series of principles pertaining to its position on legislation this session.

Legislative Principles

1. The State Board supports the full funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
2. The State Board calls special attention to the urgent need for educational equity and the Blueprint's focus on closing entrenched opportunity and achievement gaps, so that all students – including but not limited to students with disabilities, students learning English, and students from historically underserved communities – can reach their full potential.
3. The State Board advocates for fiscal accountability and prudence during difficult budgetary times. The State Board prioritizes support for legislation that minimizes fiscal impact on the State budget and results in the strategic reallocation of funding from existing Blueprint or other existing educational appropriations.
4. The State Board may support policy amendments to the Blueprint that prioritize and accelerate improved outcomes for all students.
5. The State Board generally opposes unfunded legislative mandates for the State Board, MSDE, and local school systems.
6. The State Board supports maintaining the longstanding collaborative process between the State Board, MSDE, local school systems, and stakeholders to establish standards and frameworks for curriculum development by local school systems.

Priority Bills

1. Immediate Vesting of the State Superintendent of Schools in the State Retirement and Pension System

The State Board has submitted departmental legislation that would immediately vest the State Superintendent of Schools in the State Retirement and Pension System. The State Superintendent is one of few Cabinet-level appointees that does not currently receive this benefit. As the State Board seeks to recruit high-quality, highly-qualified individuals to the role in future years, we believe immediate vesting is a crucial tool to attracting the best candidates to Maryland.

Policy Statements

Maryland Neighborhood Tiers

The Blueprint charged MSDE with conducting a study into measures that can better capture the number of students in circumstances of poverty. The intent of the study was to identify ways to move Maryland towards a State aid package that reflects the funding adequacy the law strives for.

The final [study and recommendations](#) provided by MSDE to the General Assembly and the AIB lays out a methodology to more precisely identify neighborhood indicators of poverty and allocate funding based on a clearer understanding of individual student-level geodata and accurately identifying students in the measures of poverty.

The State Board supports the usage of the neighborhood indicators of poverty methodology in funding formulas over time, wherever appropriate, to better reflect the depths of poverty experienced by students.

Literacy

The notable improvement in literacy results are promising in the latest data from the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP), which surpass pre-pandemic levels.

The State Board and MSDE have led the way in this work – committing and reaffirming its commitment to early literacy and early literacy interventions, like, for example, with the Ready to Read Strategic Plan priority in the [Maryland Transforms](#) Strategic Plan, which decisively codifies

early literacy as a paramount focus, ensuring that foundational reading skills are not just encouraged, but are systematically woven into the fabric of Maryland’s educational trajectory. This priority is not just the priority of the State Board – it reflects the priority of Marylanders.

There are a number of strategies that the State Board supports to build on the progress we have already made in literacy, including but not limited to: strengthening accountability measures around implementation of evidence-based literacy principles through an ongoing review process and embedding professional learning requirements for all K-3 teachers focused on literacy.

Educator Recruitment and Retention

The State Board and MSDE have made recruiting and retaining high-quality educators a priority in the last two years. It remains a top priority. The Maryland Educator Shortage Reduction Act of 2023 was a significant step in addressing the development of a pipeline of effective educators. Work continues with the State Board and MSDE through the regulatory process to build out flexible pathways aimed at recruiting a diverse educator workforce and to ensure transparency and accountability in the educator preparation process.

The State Board supports additional efforts to bolster the educator workforce including, but not limited to: entering into the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact to increase Maryland’s ability to import high-quality educators, and codifying and sustaining the work that MSDE has done through the establishment of grow-your-own-programs in 23 of Maryland’s 24 local education agencies as a part of the Maryland Leads initiative.

Pre-K

The State Board supports continued legislative efforts to build a sustainable model that moves Maryland towards universal access to full-day Pre-K. The State Board supports thoughtful approaches to removing access barriers to Pre-K programming for families across the state and meeting the desired goal of an effective Pre-K mixed delivery system.

Child Care

Finding affordable and accessible child care remains burdensome for many families. Both the State Board and MSDE have supported legislative initiatives and developed a portal to facilitate faster, more convenient access to the Child Care Scholarship Program.

The State Board strongly supports growing access to affordable child care for families and offering assistance to child care providers as they operate in a challenging system. The State Board supports additional flexibilities for families and providers that minimizes burden and offers stability in the availability of affordable child care.

Student Mental Health

Our school buildings should provide safe and healthy learning environments for all students. The State Board and MSDE work with the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community

Supports and the Maryland Center for School Safety, as well as through the Maryland School Mental Health Response Program to provide support and best practices to school systems and families.

The State Board supports access to critical mental and behavioral health resources and empowering school systems to offer support to students through the identification and referral to appropriate services within the professional mental and behavioral health community.

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