

June 27, 2023

On Tuesday, June 27, 2023, Board President Clarence Crawford convened the State Board's monthly meeting and was joined by Vice President Susan Getty, Chip Dashiell, Jr., Shawn Bartley, Gail Bates, Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, Jean Halle, Joan Mele-McCarthy, Rachel McCusker, Joshua Michael, Lori Morrow, Warner Sumpter, Holly Wilcox, and student member Merin Thomas.

[Link to June 27, 2023 meeting agenda, materials, and video.](#)

Public Comments

Public comments were delivered by:

- Donna Blaney, Accountability Coordinator, Montgomery County Public Schools, requested a one-year delay before mandating the administration end-of-course (EOC) exams in the 2023-2024 school year. She outlined concerns with the lack of adequate information for school systems to prepare to schedule the EOCs and incorporate them into final course grades. She also noted that the pending regulations exclude EOCs in both English and Algebra, whereas the initial plan was for all 4 content areas, not only Government and Life Science. Therefore, MCPS requests that regulations modifying the state assessment system should be adopted a year in advance of their administration, not one month before the new school year.
- Sharon Saroff, a special education consultant and advocate, spoke in support of the recently enacted House Bill 448 concerning non-public special education schools and her concerns that school systems continue to resist assigning students to these schools. She requested MSDE's attention to implementation and enforcement issued under the new law.
- Buzzy Hettleman, former Baltimore City School Commissioner and member of the Kirwan Commission, spoke in favor of the State Board adopting a strategic plan that places emphasis on early literacy in grades K-3, and in support of the adoption of uniform evidence-based standards consistent with the science of reading, the Ready to Read Act, and the Blueprint.
- Caroline County Superintendent Derek Simmons requested that MSDE and the AIB work collaboratively on Blueprint implementation plan review in the future, to avoid the unexpected multiple review processes which have unnecessarily slowed and complicated the ongoing process of state review and approval of local plans. He emphasized that all state and local entities are laser focused on the success of the Blueprint, and requested the prioritization of streamlining the implementation plan review process.
- Liz Zogby, representing the Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition, called for greater state oversight and enforcement of standards ensuring adequate resources for the high quality instruction of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. She urged the adoption of statewide standards for evidence-based instruction and accountability

measures, noting that only 20% of students with disabilities are in inclusive classrooms 80% or more of the time. She looks forward to the work of the department's special education workgroup to develop comprehensive recommendations to pursue these objectives.

- Gabby Fleming, a student with Down Syndrome and a recent graduate of Walt Whitman High School in Montgomery County, read her statement describing her positive inclusive experiences from elementary school through her six years of high school, including band, Spanish, swim team, and many other classes and activities. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to tell her story.
- A mother of a student with Down Syndrome spoke to the need for her son and others to be able to experience inclusion throughout their educational experiences. She shared that she has been warned that in third grade the school system will want to assign her son to a self-contained classroom. She hopes and dreams that her son Patrick will be included in all aspects of education and that this will be the case throughout this life.
- Kalif Rose-Holman, a student with Down Syndrome, shared his experience being home schooled by his mother since third grade because, although his mother was pleased with the Baltimore City school system's early intervention services, she had concerns with the services and amount of inclusion being offered beyond third grade. He urged support for greater inclusion and improvement in educational services for all students with disabilities.
- Cheryl Bost, President of the Maryland State Education Association, thanked outgoing State Board members for their service, acknowledged the principals being recognized, and shared her concerns with the report on school improvement and the unintended consequences of labeling schools without thinking more broadly about how to best use needs assessments and improvement plans to turn around all low-performing schools.

President's Remarks

Board President Clarence Crawford addressed concerns that he described as "swirling around" concerning Superintendent Choudhury, the department, and State Board, and he emphasized that his, and the Board's, number one priority is the education of children. He reiterated that there is absolutely zero confusion about that being the top priority, and that while he is fond of the Superintendent, the Blueprint provides a window of opportunity and we are here to get a job done.

He described the process of narrowing the pool of 50 talented candidates for the position of State Superintendent to four excellent finalists. The Board was forward thinking enough to make their top criteria "Who will give us the greatest likelihood of success in reversing the decade-long trend of decline in student performance" with the best indicator being their past performance. He stressed that any time you engage in transformation you will have push-back. He noted that Superintendent Choudhury is young, comes from a nontraditional background, is not from the State of Maryland, is brown, is Muslim, wears a beard, and for some people these are going to be issues. He said the State Board was aware of these issues and remained focused on the track record of transformation rather than what he described as window dressing.

President Crawford described his high-level experiences in the private sector and federal government, his roles and responsibilities in leading transformational change. He asserted that public education woefully underinvests in its leaders relative to the military and federal agencies and private sector. He urged the pursuit of funding to establish a leadership institute to support this work of transformation at the local and school level.

President Crawford addressed issues raised in the eight or nine letters circulating regarding working conditions at MSDE. He cited a recent survey finding a 62% satisfaction rate among state employees, described one former MSDE employee as having been too far removed from the Superintendent to have direct experience with him, and touted the improvement in MSDE's vacancy rate by about 50%, as well as improvement in the attrition rate since Superintendent Choudhury's arrival.

Mr. Crawford also addressed the concerns he has heard from leaders in Annapolis that the AIB has concerns with the Board, Superintendent, and department. He corrected this misconception by highlighting the excellent working relationship between the AIB and State Board, their frequent meetings and communications, and shared focus on transforming education on behalf of students. Mr. Crawford then noted his concern that nobody has been asking him or the State Board about the children. He then asked Superintendent Choudhury whether Maryland has received any national recognition for what we have been doing. Superintendent Choudhury described Maryland as the second state to partner with the Biden administration to access federal tutoring funding and the recognition for the Maryland Leads grants he established with federal ESSER funds.

President Crawford cited the 1916 Flexner report on Maryland's public education system, and the description of the state school system as well organized but achieving poor results. The report credits politics and the personal considerations of adults as limiting the independent educational leadership which leads to the successful education of students.

President Crawford indicated an Op-Ed would be forthcoming to address these issues and concerns and put them in context. In conclusion, he stated he believes the Board has done the right thing even when the right thing may not be the most popular thing.

Superintendent Choudhury then recognized his Human Resources team as being extraordinarily talented, dedicated, and successful in recruiting employees and bringing MSDE's vacancy rate down to 96, which is the first time it has been below 100 in a decade.

Consent Agenda

The Board approved the consent agenda including personnel actions and budget adjustments.

Principals of the Year Recognition

Terry Ball, Executive Director of the Maryland Elementary School Principals Association, presented the 2023 Elementary School Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year.

- E. Rodney Walker (Anne Arundel County) was named the 2023 National Distinguished Elementary School Principal of the Year by the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP). Walker has served as Principal of Brooklyn Park Elementary School since 2015.
- Heather Moraff (Howard County) was named the 2023 Outstanding Elementary School Assistant Principal of the Year by the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP). Moraff has served as Assistant Principal at Triadelphia Ridge Elementary School since 2015.

Addie Kaufman, Executive Director of the Maryland Secondary School Principals Association, presented the 2023 Secondary School Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year.

- James Allrich (Montgomery County) was named 2023 Middle School Principal of the Year by the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP). Allrich has served in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) for the past 21 years in various roles. He has served as a math teacher, a staff development teacher and administrator, and in 2015, he was appointed as Principal of Argyle Middle School.
- Dr. Kimberly Culbertson (Baltimore County) was named Maryland 2023 Secondary School Assistant Principal of the Year by the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP). Dr. Culbertson has served as the Assistant Principal at Towson High School for the past five years.
- [Recognition of 2022-2023 Principals of the Year](#)

National Association of State Boards of Education Presentation

Paolo DeMaria, President and CEO of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), provided a summary of the findings and feedback from the State Board's self-assessment using a tool developed by NASBE. The State Board began a self-assessment process in March that covered several topics related to Board operations, functioning, and policy focus. Mr. DeMaria presented the detailed findings of the self-assessment, highlighting the following key takeaways: 1. Better define stakeholder engagement and work to improve it; 2. Further discussion to discern ways to increase the nature and value of public comments; and 3. Clarify staff engagement.

Board Vice President Susan Getty observed that next month five new members will be joining the State Board and asked whether another survey should be conducted to reflect their input. Mr. DeMaria responded he believes it was wise for the outgoing Board members to conduct this self-assessment to inform the Board's work and to benefit the new members.

- [NASBE Presentation](#)

School Improvement Programs

Chandra Haislet, MSDE's Assistant State Superintendent of the Division of Assessment, Accountability and Performance Reporting, presented an overview of the state accountability system, which rates schools using a 5-star system and is based on the performance of all students in the school, while also reporting the performance of each student group. She noted the waivers granted by the U.S. Dept. of Education regarding performance targets, growth calculations, and timelines will no longer apply in the 2023-2024 school year. Matthew Duque, MSDE's Director of the Office of Research, Planning and Program Evaluation, then described the criteria for the identification of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools.

Superintendent Choudhury emphasized the goal to increase the level of proficiency at those schools identified as the lowest-performing five percent of schools in the state. He noted that he inherited a process that was not focused on leveraging the state's authority to improve school performance, and he highlighted the significant overlap of community schools which are receiving increased resources

that need to be invested effectively. Mr. Choudhury stressed his goal is to improve the proficiency rate at all schools, and to reduce the rate of the same schools being in the bottom five percent from year to year. Dr. Deann Collins, MSDE's Deputy State Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, outlined the school improvement plan process, including a root cause analysis, and broad stakeholder engagement. Superintendent Choudhury shared he would be revamping the plan review and approval process in July to ensure a focus on improving student and school performance and not merely compliance. President Crawford urged Mr. Choudhury to engage the State Board and leverage their support for what will be difficult work. Mr. Choudhury also shared his interest in MSDE's content teams visiting and assisting in improving performance in these schools.

Dr. Collins described the requirement to align the root cause analysis and budget allocations of the per pupil funding being provided to improve performance at CSI and ATSI schools. She emphasized the need for not only improvement plans but also sustainability plans and the critical role of professional development. Superintendent Choudhury added he has the authority to require that schools invest more and address teacher quality in manners that have not been done previously. Board member Rachel McCusker, the teacher association representative on the Board, called attention to provisions of local school system collective bargaining agreements and urged that any professional development be provided during the school day and paid for.

Dr. Collins then described the process of aligning the root cause analysis and budgetary allocations on a per pupil basis. Mr. Duque also reviewed the reflective accountability data simulation tool, which is based on the 2022 accountability system, which he distinguished from the predictive tool that will be rolled out this year.

Superintendent Choudhury reiterated his belief in the ability to turn low-performing schools around in three years, but that as the new State Superintendent he needs the next three years to do so. Board members voiced their support for this work, while also emphasizing the role of school system and community engagement. Board member Mele-McCarthy asked about applying this type of rigorous evidence-based and budget-aligned work on behalf of our three lowest performing groups of students including students with disabilities.

- [School Improvement Presentation](#)

School Profile: Lakeland Elementary/Middle School (Baltimore City Public Schools)

Mr. Duque presented data on the school's enrollment and performance, noting the enormous growth in the numbers of English Learners. He also reviewed funding, demographic, and household income data using Census block data.

School Principal Najib Jammal presented on his focus on improving student performance through reforms to instructional strategies, aligned partnerships, and staffing and professional learning. He described reducing class size from 26 to 23, increasing the numbers of teachers and aides, and partnering with outside organizations such as Higher Achievement and the YMCA as a community school. He also shared the partnership with Northrup Grumman to invest to renovate the local community center as a new STEAM center. Mr. Jammal also described the work to dramatically improve math and reading levels through a focus on data and partnership with UMBC. Lastly, he shared the work during and following the pandemic to address social emotional learning and revise

the schedule to maximize the work of interventionists and tutors, work he demonstrated is having dramatic results to improve literacy rates.

Superintendent Choudhury informed the Board that Mr. Jammal was coming on board to MSDE to lead school improvement and transformation.

- [School Profile Presentation](#)

State Student Assessment Program

Assistant Superintendent Chandra Haislet presented a detailed overview of the administration of the state's student assessment program in the 2022-2023 school year. She outlined federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); the components of the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP); the timeline for reporting results; and the federal and departmental efforts to ensure the protection of personal student information when releasing results.

[Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program Presentation](#)

Multilingual Learners

Dr. Collins, joined by Laurel Williams, Coordinator of Multilingual Education, and Ilhye Yoon, Coordinator of EL/Title III, presented an overview of English Learners in Maryland, English Language development services, academic performance data, long-term outcomes, and the recommendations of the Workgroup on English Learners.

Dr. Collins reviewed the EL Workgroup recommendations, including:

- Support and Sustain Multilingualism by Promoting an Asset-Based Approach
- Equitable Engagement and Communication with Multilingual Families
- Implementation of Instructional Programs to Support ELs
- Assessment and Accountability Systems to Support ELs
- Teacher Preparation Policies to Support ELs
- Identification and Support for Young English Learners
- Support for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)
- Equitable Access to College and Career Readiness (CCR) Curriculum and Pathways
- Funding Allocations and Spending Decisions that Support Success for ELs

Superintendent Choudhury shared that 85% of EL students are born in the United States, highlighting the need to address the need for improvements in elementary school programs and services.

Student board member Merin Thomas introduced a panel of EL educators and students, who shared their experiences in Maryland schools and the impact of state and local funding and policy decisions and the need for consistently high expectations for EL student success.

- [Multilingual Learner Education Panel and Data Presentation](#)

Regulations

The State Board approved the following requested actions on proposed regulations.

- [COMAR 13A.01.08 Public Information Act Request – Permission to Adopt](#)
- [COMAR 13A.01.09 Correction of Amendment of Public Records – Permission to Adopt](#)
- [COMAR 13A.08.01 Lawful Absence – Permission to Adopt](#)
- [COMAR 13A.06.07 Student Transportation – Permission to Adopt](#)

Board members engaged in lengthy discussion of their concerns with the emergency regulations to ensure the prohibition of any cannabis use on the premises of child care facilities. Amendments were adopted to clarify that the prohibitions should not be limited to those in the immediate presence of children, with board members agreeing to approve the emergency regulations with only minor amendments to ensure they are in place in advance of the July 1, 2023 date for the legalization of recreational cannabis use in Maryland.

- [Cannabis Regulations for Code of Maryland Regulations \(COMAR\) 13A.15 Family Child Care, 13A.16 Child Care Centers, and 13A.17 Child Care – Letters of Compliance and 13A.18 Large Family Child Care Homes – Permission to Publish Emergency and Standard Regulations](#)

Strategic Plan Update

Board member Chip Dashiell, chair of the State board's Strategic Planning Subcommittee, presented the final Phase 3 of the State Board's Strategic Plan. He thanked the Board, MSDE staff, stakeholders, and Superintendent Choudhury for feedback through all three phases and leading to the finalization of the Strategic Plan. Mr. Dashiell highlighted that the plan is aligned with the Blueprint and when fully implemented will result in the equitable and excellent outcomes that every student deserves. Mr. Choudhury shared that the plan is designed to support the department implementing the Blueprint with fidelity, but also the fulfillment of other goals not included in the Blueprint.

Superintendent Choudhury presented the takeaways from the roundtables, charettes, and listening sessions conducted throughout the state.

- [Strategic Plan Release \(Phase 3\)](#)
 - [Maryland Transforms: Strategic Plan Guidebook](#)
 - [Maryland Transforms: Strategic Planning Engagement Report](#)

Board Member Recognition

President Crawford thanked the board members concluding their terms and service on the Board and for whom this was their last meeting, including: Chip Dashiell, Jean Halle, Lori Morrow, and student member Merin Thomas. Outgoing members thanked President Crawford for his leadership, and thanked other members for their collegial and consensus-building approach to decision making.

Board Opinions

The State Board issued legal opinions for the following cases:

- *In the Matter of Baltimore City Public Schools Mandatory Blueprint Fee*, denying the charter schools' petition for a declaratory ruling that the local board's funding formula constitutes an illegal mandatory fee on charter schools.
- *M.A. v. Queen Anne's County Board of Education*, dismissing the appeal as untimely.
- *Kari B. v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education*, affirming the student residency decision of the local board.
- *Kellie G. v. Baltimore County Board of Education*, dismissing the appeal for failure to exhaust administrative remedies.