



Update on The Blueprint for Maryland's Future

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Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
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Topics

- **Reflections on Year 3 - Legislative & Policy Recommendations from the 24 Local Superintendents**
- **Blueprint Successes & Top Recommendations**
- **Budget - Early Days**
- **Questions**



PSSAM

Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

PSSAM's Legislative

&

Policy Recommendations



PSSAM Legislative and Policy Recommendations The Blueprint for Maryland's Future

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future creates a bold trajectory for Maryland's public education system. As the state's top educators, we stand behind the Blueprint and applaud those who have fought hard to make this vision a reality.

We have gained invaluable experience and insight after three years of implementation - celebrating early successes, but also experiencing frustrations and challenges. Our requests for policy and legislative changes are the result of the real experiences from education experts doing the Blueprint "work" every day in school buildings and leadership offices. Our experiences in education reform have taught us that it is not enough to put a program in place, but to evaluate its effectiveness and make adjustments along the way.

The Blueprint's goals are achievable, but the implementation needs to be streamlined and realistic with clearer expectations and guidance from State leaders. While it is too early for a complete evaluation of our work, we believe these valuable lessons should be considered, and our recommendations for changes embraced as "course corrections" to ensure long-term success.

This document includes requests for policy adjustments we believe can be made by the State Board of Education (SBOE) and/or the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) without statutory changes, or within the AIB's plenary authority.

Part of the Blueprint's innovative approach is that every Pillar is transformative; but, it is the coalescence of these five Pillars that will create dynamic outcomes and achievements. In practice, it is also this coalescence that has been one of the biggest challenges to successful implementation. In addition, each of Maryland's twenty-four Local Education Agencies (LEAs) has a different starting point and growth trajectory. The Blueprint tends to have a one-size approach that does not "fit all," especially in districts that were previously demonstrating efficiency and excellence in many areas of the Blueprint.

Our Core Mission and Measure of Success - Student Growth and Achievement

The recommendations in these pages are the result of analysis of student data, qualitative experiences of educators and staff, and thoughtful contemplation of the following questions:

- How is this pillar/activity/initiative performing against *Our Core Mission and Measure of Success - Student Growth and Achievement*?

Pillar 1: Early Childhood Education

Successes!

- Over 31,378 students, about 21% of Maryland's 3- and 4-year-olds, are enrolled in publicly funded full-day pre-K.
- Judy Centers have grown from 53 to 86 since SY 20-21.
- *Harford County*: Every Tier 1 student seeking full-day pre-K now has a spot in expanded offerings and more students are demonstrating kindergarten readiness.
- *Baltimore County* has rapidly accelerated full-day Pre-K expansion for four year olds, boosting filled seats from 268 to 2026 in just two years, a 656% increase.

Pillar 1: Early Childhood Education

Priority Recommendations

For LEA programs - focus public school expansion on Tier I four-year-olds

This does not preclude public schools from serving all families, but gives LEAs autonomy in expansion decisions based on capacity, demand, and funding. ***This also creates a strong business model for private providers to serve Tier I three-year-olds, as well all non-Tier I three and four-year olds.***

Remove the required participation percentage for the mixed delivery system and permanently shift the responsibility of supporting and cultivating private providers to MSDE.

Public school systems are not equipped to develop educational programming or ensure profitable business models for private providers. Cultivating and supporting private providers should not be a mandated extension of the delivery of public education

Successes!

- Most LEAs are on track to provide a \$60,000 starting salary for teachers beginning in FY '27, with several already achieving this pivotal milestone.
- All teachers in Maryland received a 10% salary increase by July 2024 as part of the Blueprint's goals to retain teachers and elevate the teaching profession.
- Teachers pursuing National Board Certification (NBC) increased 39% in SY23-24, with 11 of 24 LEAs in the top 25 of the country in terms of numbers of individuals pursuing NBC. Maryland is first in the country for the number of new teachers earning NBC and has the second highest number of teachers of color earning NBC ([AIB Highlights](#)).

Priority Recommendations

Amend the statute to remove administrators (Assistant Principals and Principals) from the Career Ladder

This adjustment aligns with the established bargaining structures in school systems; APs and Principals should not have mandated teaching time or be required to obtain National Board Certification (NBC) requirements as these are impractical requirements for their roles.

Study Request

We urge the appropriate entities to *explore critical questions related to the effectiveness of NBC in teacher recruitment and student achievement*. Specifically addressing:

- The relationship between incentives and teacher recruitment in low performing schools;
- The impact of NBC on success rates for diverse teacher candidates;
- The suitability of NBC as an incentive and benchmark for teacher retention.

Pillar 3: College and Career Preparation

Successes!

- Apprenticeship Maryland Program participation increased from 124 (SY 21-22) to 507 (SY 22-23). In *Harford County*, 265 students have been placed in apprenticeships this year and that number grows daily.
- *Harford County*: Dual enrollment students are excelling, performance data show students with earning college credits has increased 21% in the last five years.
- *Baltimore County*: Dual enrollment increased 28.7% since 2022 and 67% of our early college access students have a college GPA between 3.0 and 4.0 which is 5% higher than all ECAP students.

Pillar 3: College and Career Preparation

Priority Recommendations

Career Counseling - allow LEAs to discontinue the pilot partnerships with community colleges and workforce investment boards (WIBs) a year ahead of the pilot's expiration.

Dual Enrollment/Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate/CTE - LEAs should have the flexibility to target funding for tuition and ancillary costs.

If sufficient State funding is provided, require districts to cover all costs for ***income-eligible students***, but allow districts to limit costs for other students. The implications of unfettered access to all of these resources is not just poor policy, but fiscally negligent

Successes!

- 2024 brought a total of 621 community schools statewide and expansion of community schools to secondary schools for the first time*. (*excluding Baltimore City which already had secondary programs)
- *Baltimore County Public Schools* has 91 Community Schools, each with a dedicated Community School Facilitator who collaborates with stakeholders, local governments, and parents to enhance wraparound services. Additional roles include registered nurse, health assistants, C.A.R.E. Liaisons, Fine Arts staff, Multi-Tiered System of Support Teachers, School Counselors, and Social Workers.

SB 439 - Governor's Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act

Proposes a freeze on Community Schools Funding at the FY '26 for two years
= \$473 million reduction in funding

A “pause” in funding = a “pause” in the success and momentum of these programs

The Governor's abrupt halt for is blunt solution to a problem that has not been well articulated

- Let us be partners to find a more nuanced solution with less impact on the students and schools with the most need





Pillar 4: Resources to Ensure All Students Are Successful??

Special education and transportation costs cut into the ability to fund every other aspect of delivering public education

Local school systems spend over \$1,038,848,168 in direct *special education* services that are *NOT* reimbursed by the state and federal governments. The federal government has never lived up to its obligation to provide up to 40% of the costs of special education (the highest level has been 17%). This has created profound needs for **local funding** for special education. *Transportation* costs also consume more than \$511,959,938 in “discretionary” funding that is not reimbursed or recognized in State and local funding formulas.

	Local Education Agency	Total State and Local Revenue	LEA Budget	Amount Funded by LEA in Excess of Formula
<u>Special Education Costs</u>	Frederick	\$43,857,716	\$89,929,868	\$46,072,152
	TOTAL (24 districts)	\$917,161,593	\$1,951,892,320	\$1,038,848,168
Transportation Costs	Charles	\$14,364,062	\$43,729,558	\$29,365,496
	TOTAL (24 districts)	\$363,364,286	\$857,384,190	\$511,959,938

Priority Recommendations

Require the MSDE, AIB, DBM, DLS and a representative sample of the LEAs to *analyze and update the fiscal mandates and viability of the Blueprint*.

- Unlike the original analysis, include ALL components of funding education, including **special education**, transportation, building maintenance, operating and capital funds for school security, health services, food services, employee and retiree health benefits.
- This analysis should include forecasting of State and local revenues.

A part of the study should be focused on the possibility of *tiered or differentiated levels of special education funding*, a model implemented in the majority of states.

Pillar 5: Governance & Accountability

Successes!

- All LEAs have undergone two gargantuan efforts to develop local Blueprint Implementation Plans - these have been developed with extensive local stakeholder collaboration and months of public meetings and collaboration.
- SY 23-24 [Highlights \(AIB\):](#)
 - Expert Review Teams (ERTs) and the Maryland Initiative for Literacy and Equity (MILE) visited 133 schools (~10% of Maryland schools).
 - 150 school visits planned for this year, focusing on elementary literacy and math.
 - Fiscal 2025 marks the start of monthly fiscal reporting through PowerSchool, tracking education funding at the school level.

Pillar 5: Governance & Accountability

Priority Recommendations *It's not sexy but it's how the work gets done...*

Implementation Guidance - in order to strengthen our partnership and mutual respect for work and capacity, ***we are working with the Boards to establish more timely guidance and reasonable schedules for the submission of reports and data.***

As part of this effort, we are also working with the MSDE to:

- Undertake a ***comprehensive review of the current required 179 reports*** and updates that are required under the Blueprint and in compliance with existing requirements in the Education Article, COMAR, and joint AIB/MSDE established policies.

Pillar 5: Governance & Accountability

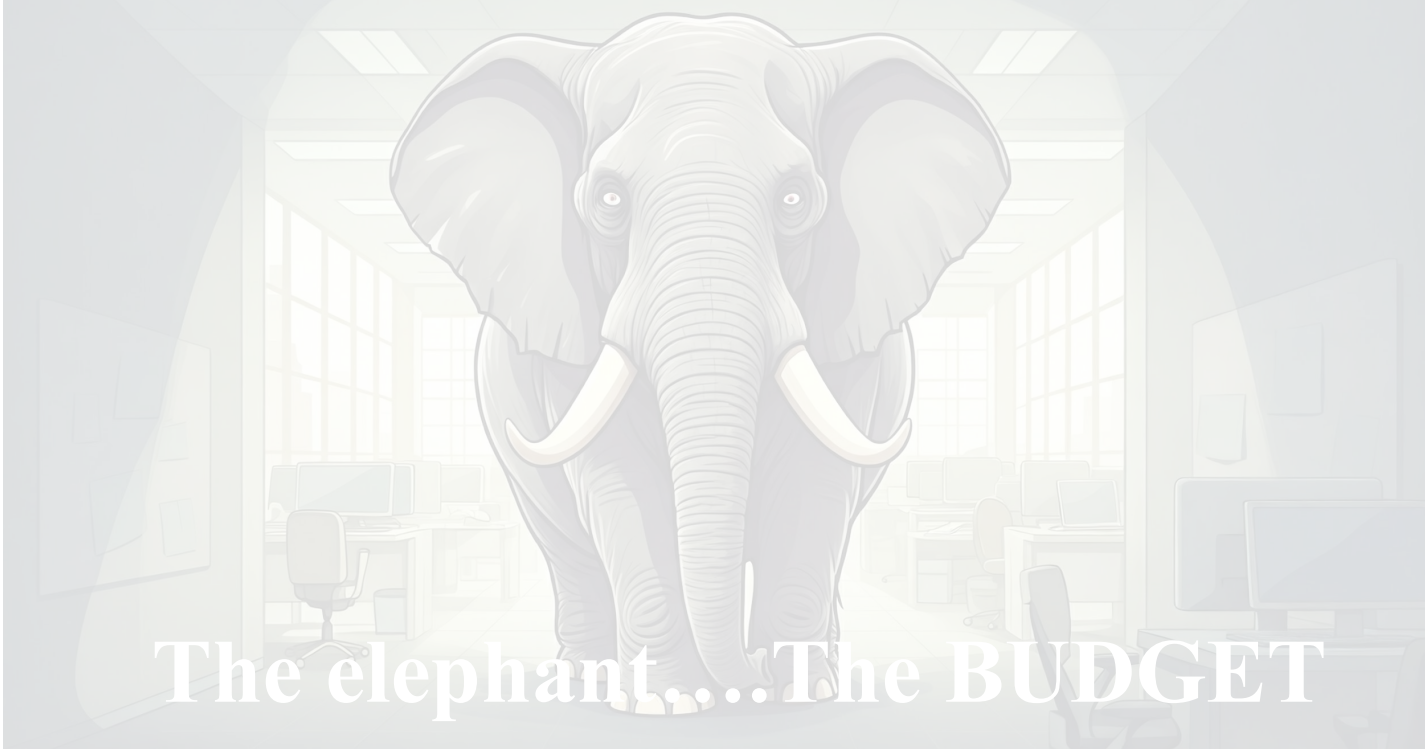
Priority Recommendations

Staying focused and invested in the Blueprint.

We need the Department, AIB, and the General Assembly's partnership to ***resist any new programs or unfunded mandates*** that are not directly aligned with the Blueprint or funded appropriately.

All new legislative initiatives should be ***discretionary and/or authorizing***.

The obligations and expectations on schools since the pandemic have ***exploded*** and the time for clear focus and dogged determination to ***educate*** our students ***has*** to rise to the highest priority.



The elephant...The BUDGET

The proposed education budget *reductions*

		FY 2026 - promised Blueprint funding	PROPOSED
Per Pupil Amount “the Foundation		\$9,226	\$9063
% increase		4.97%	3.11%
Increase Per Pupil (over FY '25)		\$437	\$274

None of this helps the State's FY 2026 Budget Deficit





The proposed budget changes are a **DOUBLE WHAMMY** in **lost funding** to local school systems totaling **\$234,033,647**

None of this helps the State's FY 2026 Budget Deficit

*Matches DLS Fiscal Briefing Info

Blueprint Category	State Funding	Local Funding
Foundation Reduction	\$70,339,286	\$69,533,799
Comp Ed Reduction	\$31,299,669	\$30,284,444
Multilingual Learner Reduction	\$9,750,947	\$9,449,529
Education Effort Effort Reduction	9,876,397	
Guaranteed Tax Base (addition)	(1,699,606)	—
Comparable Wage Index Reduction	\$2,789,441	\$2,408,741
Total “Savings” (or cut to education)	\$122,356,134*	\$111,677,513

Please stay invested in the Blueprint and
give us *time* to succeed



We ask the committees to **RESIST** reductions to the Blueprint until an updated fiscal analysis is completed*

Please honor the foundation and the ‘blueprints’ we have created for success.

Please honor the hard work accomplished over the last three years by thousands of educators, administrators, advocates to pave the way for academic success.

Questions?