



In 2021, the Maryland State Legislature passed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, legislation that codified the recommendations of the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission). This law aims to:

- Transform Maryland's public schools into a world-class system of education by expanding early access to education;
- Remodel teaching into a high-status profession and incentivize teachers to pursue professional development while maintaining focus on classroom instruction;
- Enable most students to achieve college and career readiness by the end of 10th grade;
- Broaden resources to ensure all students are successful, including students with disabilities, students who are English learners, and students living in poverty; and
- Create an accountability framework to evaluate compliance with the Blueprint's mandates, determine effectiveness of student learning, and identify areas where the State can support the local school systems as they implement these programs.

The Blueprint will be implemented over the course of the next 10 years. Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) staff have been meeting since September to plan how the school system will meet these goals in a manner that is programmatically appropriate and fiscally responsible.

FOCUS AREAS

Early Childhood Education

The Blueprint establishes a significant expansion of free full-day prekindergarten to low income families so that all children have the opportunity to begin kindergarten ready to learn. Prekindergarten will be free for all 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents meet income eligibility requirements and will be available on a sliding scale to all other 4-year-old students.

In order to support such expansion, the Blueprint will provide funding to both public and community-based early education programs that meet rigorous quality standards. Expansion will be an ongoing process, as it requires adjustments to early education preparation programs, increases to physical and staff capacity, and demonstration of quality and continuous improvement as measured by a quality rating system.

High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders

The Blueprint raises the status of the teaching profession and encourages professional development through a performance-based Career Ladder with salaries comparable to those in other professional fields with similar education requirements. Local educational agencies will work with their bargaining units to create a Career Ladder that recognizes effective teachers and school leaders and incentivizes them to stay in the classroom. Advancement up the ladder is based on the acquisition of specified knowledge and skills, rigorous evidence of success as a classroom teacher,

and willingness to take on leadership responsibilities.

By increasing the rigor of teacher preparation programs and raising compensation to be more comparable to that expected in other professions, it is hoped that Maryland will create and sustain a teaching faculty that reflects the diversity of the public school student population.

Teacher salary progression and classroom performance will be linked to teacher achievement of National Board Certification (NBC). HCPSS is prepared to expand existing programs to support its teachers who are pursuing NBC and looks forward to increasing the number of NBC teachers in all of its schools.

College and Career Readiness Pathways

Maryland public schools will use their internationally benchmarked curricula to facilitate most students achieving "College and Career-Ready" (CCR) status by the end of 10th grade. CCR status will be aligned with global standards to ensure students have the literacy and mathematics skills to succeed in first-year Maryland community college courses. Students who achieve CCR will have the opportunity to pursue no-fee pathways that include earning up to 60 credits at Howard Community College, enrolling in competitive entry college programs such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and/or earning industry-recognized credentials through a rigorous technical education program that prepares students to join highly-sought and well-paid professions.

MARYLAND'S BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE

Brief Overview, *continued*

To provide ample opportunities to students who achieve CCR status by the end of 10th grade, HCPSS will provide free access to the 60 credit JumpStart dual enrollment program, expand its Career Academy offerings, both at the ARL and high schools, and increase supports for students taking AP exams. HCPSS will also expand elementary, middle, and high school interventions, during and beyond the school day/year, to help struggling learners develop the necessary literacy and mathematical skills to graduate college and career ready.

Resources to Ensure All Students are Successful

The Blueprint supports all students being successful in school by increasing funding based on the numbers of students with IEPs, who receive ESOL services, and/or who live in poverty. Schools that have high concentrations of poverty, measured by the number of students receiving Free and Reduced Price Meals (FARMS) or through other factors, will be provided additional funding to transform into community schools offering wraparound services for students and their families. These services may include extended day programs; access to health, vision, and dental services; additional behavioral health supports; and family and community engagement programming.

The Blueprint also requires school systems to address the negative impacts of traumatic events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures. Additional funds are also available to support reading and literacy instruction in Grades K–3 through universal screening and small group tutoring or instruction. Mathematics supports can also be provided for struggling learners in the primary grades.

Governance and Accountability

The Blueprint establishes an accountability-oversight board that has the authority to ensure that the Commission's recommendations are successfully implemented and produce the desired results. This board will have a more direct role in shaping how the Blueprint is put into action once it secures funding and personnel support.

HCPSS has created five workgroups representing each Blueprint major initiative, which have analyzed the legislation, identified needed clarifications, established timelines for implementation, and begun to budget the fiscal impacts of both the Blueprint's additional funding and its new mandates. HCPSS staff have been collaborating with the Maryland State Department of Education and neighboring school systems to build common understandings of ambiguities in the legislation and share best practices and next steps.

While the promise of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future is immense, there are still many logistical hurdles that will need to be navigated. Not least among these is obtaining sufficient funding to both meet the Blueprint's requirements and provide all students with the quality well-rounded educational opportunities that they and their families have come to expect.

Funding Formulas and Costs

The programmatic goals to advance Maryland's public education as a world-class system will require substantial increases in costs over the next 10 years. Understanding that the existing funding formulas would not align with generating sufficient revenue to support increased costs, the Blueprint overhauls the funding formulas.

Maryland's education funding formulas are rooted in the principle of per pupil funding with safeguards established that do not allow the funding per pupil to decrease year over year. The basic components of the funding formulas are: an established baseline per pupil funding level; an enrollment count basis; and an allocation of the funding share between the state and county. The Blueprint makes modifications in each of these areas. More specifically, it revises the methodology for calculating enrollment, establishes new per pupil funding levels for major aid program areas, and broadens the calculation of the required state and county share of the funding applying it to the major aid programs. These changes are phased-in and modulated over the next 10 years. Initial projections by the Department of Legislative Services indicate that the formula changes will require state funding to grow.

Revenue growth will be necessary to support the expenditure increases to implement Blueprint mandates. A comprehensive summary of expenditure estimates for the FY23 budget and the outer years are being finalized. Costs are being analyzed in each programmatic area including needs for additional staffing and related expenditures. Projected changes in formula funding and state revenues for FY23 will be provided by MSDE. Once revenue and expenditure estimates are finalized, a clearer picture will emerge of how Blueprint changes will impact County funding in FY23 and the outer years.

