



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

BILL:	House Bill (SB) 1267	DATE:	March 14, 2023
SUBJECT:	Promise Schools - Establishment	COMMITTEE:	Ways and Means
POSITION:	Support		
CONTACT:	Justin Dayhoff 410-767-0090 Justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov		

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) supports **House Bill 1267**, which establishes a new, Statewide program, the Promise Schools program, to address persistently low-performing schools head on. Currently, Maryland does not have a consequential process for formally turning around and transforming persistently low-performing schools and supporting the educators and support staff in those schools. Senate Bill 814 requires MSDE to establish a nationally benchmarked, evidence-based process to formally designate and subsequently transform persistently low-performing schools to accelerate student outcomes and support educator success.

Though the Promise Schools model would be new to Maryland – the approach itself is not new and evidence supports adoption. For example, the Education Policy Innovation Collaborative at Michigan State University just this fall found that students participating in Michigan’s version of a school improvement model during the pandemic:

“...made similar and, in some cases, greater gains on their benchmark assessments than did students in demographically and academically similar districts across the state. This suggests that while the COVID-19 pandemic generated immense challenges for student learning, the many services and supports Partnership schools and districts offered may have mitigated some of the negative effect.”¹

The evidence in Michigan follows data from other states, like Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in collaboration with the American Institutes for Research found in 2013 and again in 2016 that students in School Redesign Grant (SRG) schools (the Massachusetts iteration of this model):

“...performed better on the English language arts and mathematics sections of standardized state assessments than students in non-SRG schools.”²³

Data from Massachusetts are particularly instructive given the influence of many Massachusetts policy ideas codified in the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. This bill creatively leverages existing formula mechanisms in the Blueprint to fund Promise School program efforts via the Concentration of Poverty grant phase-in provision of the bill. Moreover, the bill’s stable annual appropriation ensures that, once a school begins performing well, the State

¹ https://epicedpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Yr4_PartnershipRpt_Full.pdf

² <https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/howitworks/research-brief.pdf>

³ <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/School-Redesign-Grants-Massachusetts-Implementation-Study-September-2016.pdf>

does not pull the rug out from under the school by sunseting the investments that are making the school successful.

Clear guardrails in the bill ensure that the law must be applied rigorously and require the Department to build, implement, and enforce a consistent process for administering the program – a task the Department takes seriously and one which MSDE stands ready to lead. This bill is anchored in and lays out all the necessary elements for a successful, research-based school transformation plan and framework to ensure Maryland is equipped to empower schools that need the most attention. See, for example, the Accelerating Campus Excellence framework, which:

*“...ensures that not only are a district’s more effective teachers working with the students with larger needs, but that the school is seen as a safe, warm, welcoming place, where children’s social-emotional needs are met”.*⁴⁵

In addition, the bill’s alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future and the strengthening of community school implementation plans are critical components of the bill and will stand only to bolster program success.

Equally important in this bill is the consequence of not seeing results. This bill, if enacted, will not force a school’s students to remain in a school that continues to underperform. Instead, in a school that does not meet improvement goals after three years, families are able to select a non-low-performing public school of their choice in their current local education agency (LEA) or another LEA in the State and be able to enroll (including transportation) in that school.

This program will ensure Maryland can close opportunity and achievement gaps for all Maryland’s children using effective, research-based strategies for school improvement. MSDE is eager for the opportunity to implement the provisions of this bill, if enacted, in partnership with local education agencies while not compromising on the expectation of student and educator success for those in persistently underperforming schools. The Maryland State Department of Education respectfully requests that you consider this information as you deliberate **House Bill 1267** and MSDE urges a favorable report. Please contact Justin Dayhoff, at 410-767-0439, or justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov, for any additional information.

⁴ <https://commitpartnership.org/blog/equity-works-ace-results>

⁵ <https://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/domain/98/evaluation/21-22/acadpe/EA22-601-2%20FULL%20Accelerating%20Campus%20Excellence%20ACE%20Program.pdf>