Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools
Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D.
President, State Board of Education

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 429 and House Bill 504 – Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act

Dear Chairs Guzzone, Barnes, Feldman, and Atterbeary, and members of the Senate Budget & Taxation, Senate Education, Energy, and Environment, House Appropriations, and House Ways and Means Committees:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), led by the State Superintendent and the State Board of Education, stands deeply committed to realizing the promise of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future for providing a world-class education for children from all backgrounds in Maryland. As leaders in implementing the Blueprint, we focus on ensuring that every student is safe, supported, and connected in our schools, that they receive a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy, and that we are preparing them for success in college and their future careers. We believe the Blueprint pointed us in the right direction four years ago, and, in order to stay on that trajectory, we must continue to adapt the Blueprint to meet the realities of public education today. Therefore, we offer perspective on policy proposals related to the Blueprint intended to improve outcomes for students across Maryland. Outlined here is information on education policy matters related to Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504.

Sincerely,

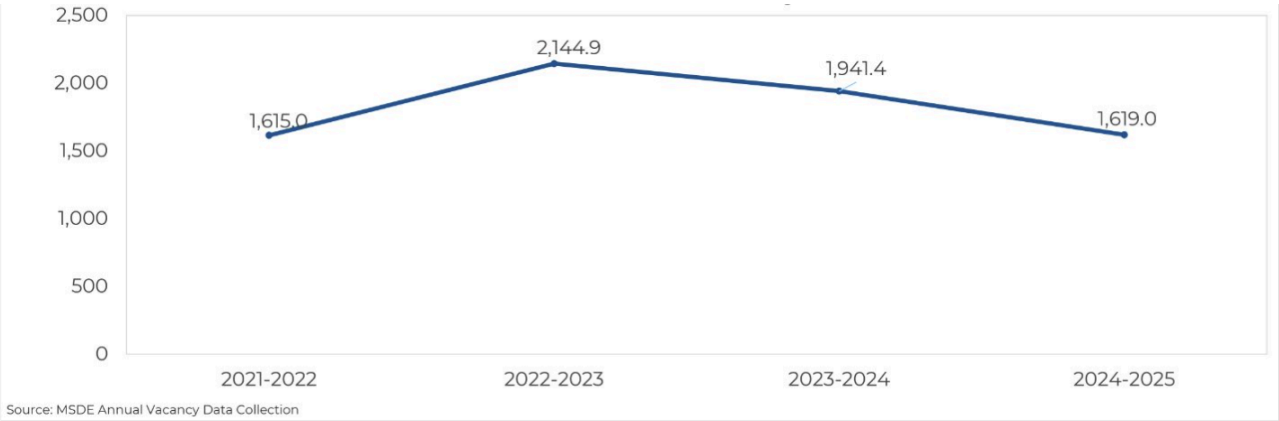
Carey M. Wright, Ed.D
State Superintendent of Schools
Maryland State Department of Education

Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D
President
Maryland State Board of Education

Teacher Shortage

Districts across the country face widespread teacher shortages, including those in Maryland. According to the Learning Policy Institute State Teacher Shortage 2024 Update, estimates indicate that, at a minimum, 406,964 positions nationally were either unfilled or filled by teachers not fully certified for their assignments, representing about 1 in 8 of all teaching positions.[1] At the start of this school year, there were 1,619 unfilled teaching positions and 6,074 positions filled by conditionally licensed educators.[2] While the number of teacher vacancies has declined 25% over the past three years, one in ten Maryland classrooms remains either staffed by a substitute teacher or an unlicensed teacher. And one in three new teachers hired in Maryland is not a licensed teacher before entering the classroom.

Figure 1: Teacher Vacancies on the First Day of School



Furthermore, the teacher shortage disproportionately impacts our students in high-poverty schools. Inexperienced teachers, teachers teaching outside of their field, and teachers who hold emergency and provisional licenses are placed in high-poverty schools at higher percentage rates than in low-poverty schools.[3] Despite incentives to recruit more Nationally Board Certified teachers to low-performing schools, only 12%, or 264, of Maryland's distinguished teachers opt to teach in our schools that need the most support. Further, NBC teachers are underrepresented in community schools, schools serving our highest-poverty communities.

[1] Tan, T. S., Arellano, I., & Patrick, S. K. (2024). State teacher shortages 2024 update: Teaching positions left vacant or filled by teachers without full certification. Learning Policy Institute.
https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/state-teacher-shortages-vacancy-2024

[2] Teacher Recruitment, Development, and Retention Report to AIB and MSBOE, January 25, 2025

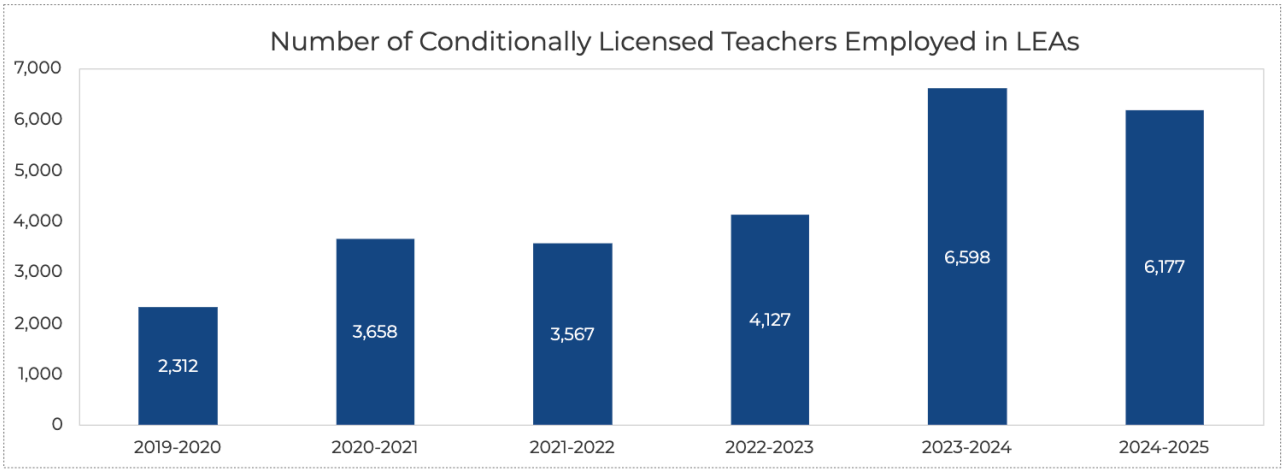
[3] 2023-2024 LEA Staff Data collected through the 2024-2025 MSDE Annual Staff Data Collection

Table 1: Teacher Qualifications - High and Low Poverty Schools, SY 2023-2024

Category	All Schools	High Poverty Schools	Low Poverty Schools	Difference (Percentage Points)
Inexperienced Teachers	17.8%	22.7%	12.8%	9.9
Out-of-Field Teachers	11.2%	15.8%	6.2%	9.6
Teachers with Emergency or Provisional Licenses	9.9%	14.6%	5.1%	9.5

Like many other states, Maryland allows local education agencies (LEAs) to issue a conditional teacher license to an individual who has not yet met the requirements for professional certification if the position cannot be filled with a licensed teacher. The issuance of conditional teacher licenses in Maryland increased significantly from 2019 to 2023 (Figure 2).[4]

Figure 2: Number of Conditionally Licensed Teachers Statewide

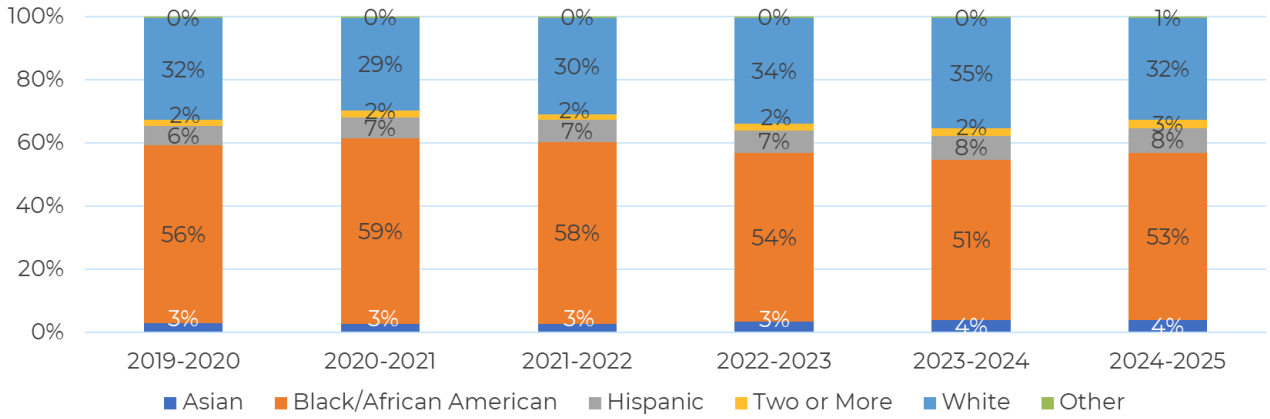


Source: MSDE Staff Data Collection and MSDE Educator Licensure System.

Of critical importance is the fact that conditionally licensed teachers are significantly more diverse than traditionally prepared teachers and more closely mirror Maryland's student population. Over 60% of our conditionally licensed teachers are Black and Brown educators (Figure 3) and are more often from the community of the students they serve. This presents an opportunity to support and develop leaders from your neighborhoods who have stepped up to serve students in our public schools in your districts.

[4] MSDE Annual Staff Data Collection.

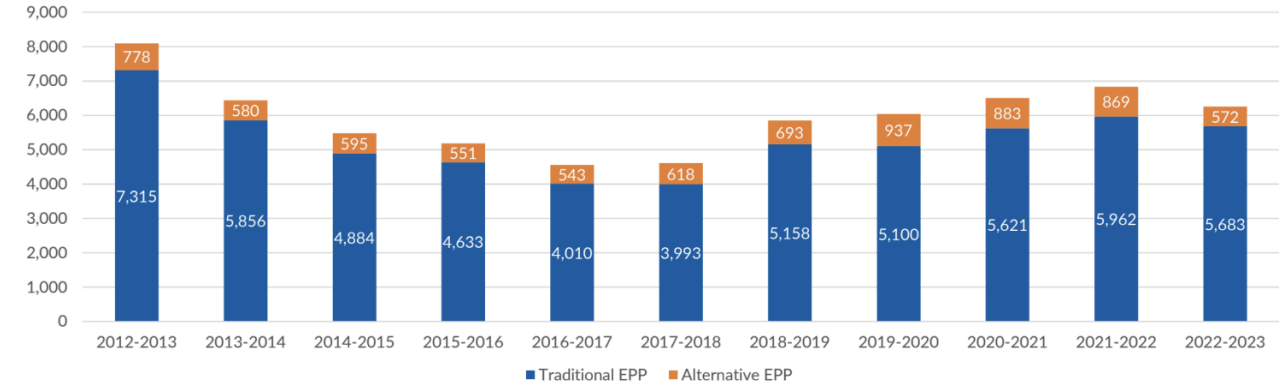
Figure 3: Maryland Conditional Licensure Demographic Trends



For many years, conditional licensure was predominantly limited to a subset of hard-to-staff districts and to specialized licensure areas such as CTE instructors and certain STEM disciplines. Today, conditional licensure has proliferated across the state. As the number of imported teachers has declined due to the expanding national teacher shortage, over 60% of our conditionally licensed teachers are Black and Brown educators and are more often from the community of the students they serve. These community leaders have answered the call to serve in our public schools.

Enrollment in Maryland educator preparation programs has increased since 2016-2017, reversing a trend, but our programs are not yet producing more graduates (Figure 4). To date, no more than 1 in 5 of our teacher vacancies is filled with graduates from one of Maryland's traditional educator preparation programs. We continue to be a net importer of teachers from other states, but we are importing fewer licensed educators than in past years.

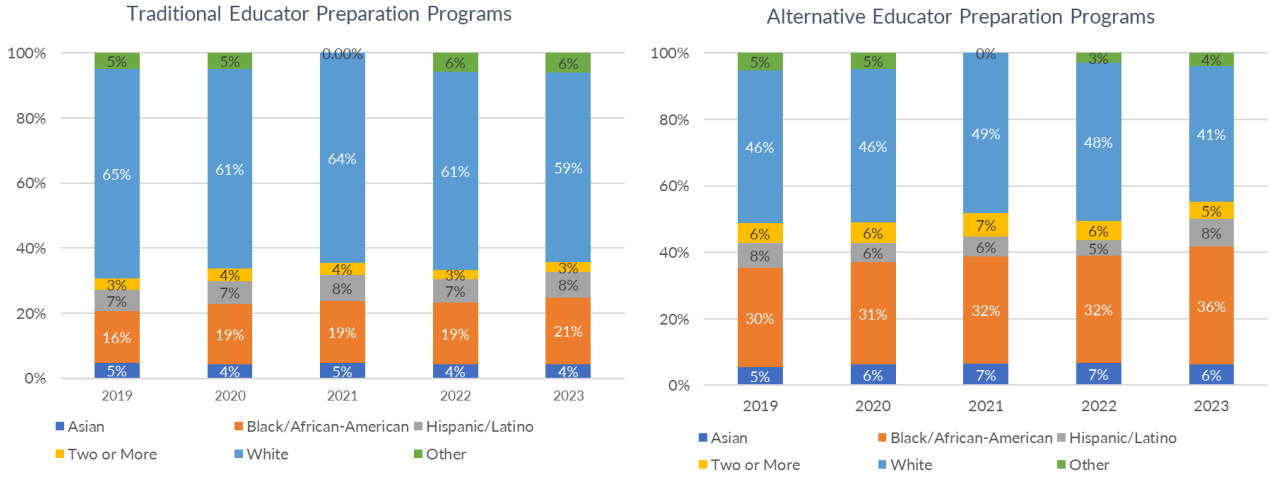
Figure 4: Teacher Preparation Enrollment Trends



Source: Title II Reports (title2.ed.gov)

While Maryland's student population is diverse, the Maryland traditional educator preparation program pipeline and overall teacher workforce is predominantly white and female. Research shows that teachers of color contribute to better outcomes for all students, including improved social-emotional, behavioral, and academic results. One randomized control trial found that teachers of color positively impact 4th and 5th grade students in these areas[5].

Figure 5: Maryland Teacher Preparation Enrollment Demographics[6]



In Maryland, enrollment in alternative Resident Teacher preparation programs is more diverse than in traditional educator preparation programs (Figure 5). Resident Teachers spend a minimum of one year in the classroom employed on a Resident Teacher License while they receive on-the-job training, support, and mentorship from the educator preparation provider. These differ from traditional programs in that alternative preparation leads to teacher licensure, but not necessarily to a degree. Resident Teacher programs allow an individual to begin teaching and receive a salary much earlier in the program, and they usually cost much less than traditional routes. While Resident Teacher programs are a cost-effective way to diversify the teacher workforce, there are currently only 13 programs - all located within the central corridor of the State. The percentage of completers from Resident Teacher programs is relatively small. For example, during the 2022-2023 school year, only 199 of the 1,768 teacher graduates were from Resident Teacher programs (see Figure 6).

As we work to achieve the Blueprint's vision for high-quality and diverse teachers in every school, we must prepare our conditionally licensed teachers to become fully licensed.

We also need to provide opportunities for others who are dedicated to serving students, including our educational support professionals (ESPs). In 2024, MSDE partnered with LEAs, the Maryland

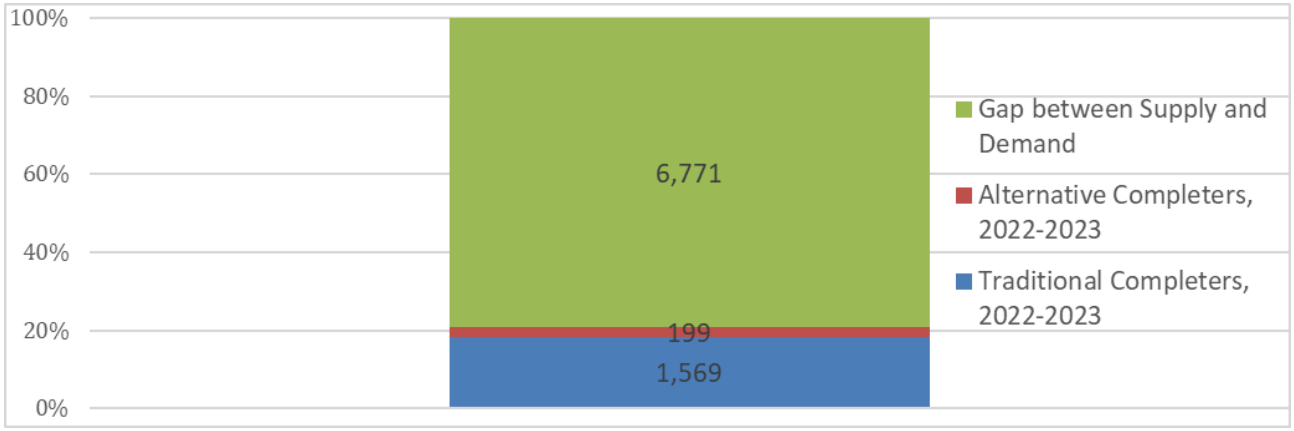
[5] Blazar, D. (2021). Teachers of Color, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Student Outcomes: Experimental Evidence from the Random Assignment of Teachers to Classes. EdWorkingPaper No. 21-501. Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

[6] Title II Annual Teacher Preparation State Report

State Education Association (MSEA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM) to distribute and encourage the completion of a survey for ESPs across Maryland. When asked the question, "Would you like to pursue a career in teaching or another certificated role in your local school system," 3,576 ESPs responded "yes" and an additional 2,256 were unsure[7]. Paraprofessionals (teaching aides, library/media center aides, and other aides) make up 13,423 of the ESP population in Maryland. Their average salary is $36,139.93, and their median salary is $34,207[8]. Although paraprofessionals are primed for recruitment into the teaching profession, most are not able to take a leave of absence from their job to complete a student teaching experience.

While enrollment in teacher preparation programs has increased since 2017, Maryland programs are not producing enough graduates to meet teacher demand. Maryland programs produced 1,768 teacher candidates in 2023[9]; however, at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, there were 8,539 teaching positions left unfilled or filled with unqualified individuals[10]. Assuming every 2023 Maryland graduate chose to work in Maryland public schools the following year, the state would still have a gap of 6,771 qualified teachers.

Figure 6: Maryland Supply of Teachers vs. Demand for Teachers



[7] Noncertificated Education Support Professionals Joint Chairman's Report pg. 182, December 2024
[8] Noncertificated Education Support Professionals Joint Chairman's Report pg. 182, December 2024
[9] 2022-2023 Title II Teacher Preparation Report
[10] 2023-2024 MSDE Vacancy Collection; 2023-2024 MSDE Staff Data Collection

Collaborative Time

The Blueprint emphasizes the need for more time for educators to focus on instructional planning, coaching, and student engagement outside of the classroom through a policy provision referred to as "collaborative time". Also known as the “60/40 rule”, the policy seeks to alter the typical ratio of 80% a teacher’s time classroom teaching and other 20% professional responsibilities.This approach provides educators with more dedicated time to collaborate, enhance their skills, and more effectively support students by creating additional opportunities for professional development, small group instruction, co-teaching, and family involvement.

We believe more collaborative time and professional learning is critical to improving the working conditions for the educators we hope to attract into teaching and retain. Evidence shows effective, job-embedded professional development is a critical strategy for improving teacher effectiveness.[11]

Yet, the teacher shortage makes the implementation of collaborative time, as first envisioned by the Blueprint, impossible to implement without sacrificing instruction for students and risking negative impacts on student achievement. The Blueprint calls for hiring over 2,000 new teachers this coming year and 13,000 more teachers across the state over the 8 year phase-in of the policy provision. Absent a legislative remedy this year, LEAs must begin negotiating terms to adjust teacher workload for the upcoming school year.

We must ensure that the collaborative time policy does not unintentionally decrease instructional time for students or negatively impact academic performance. To reduce teacher instructional time to 60% from 80%, while holding constant the number of teachers in Maryland, can only be achieved by covering more classes with unlicensed teachers or increasing class size. Additionally, as the demand for teachers rises, we must be cautious that efforts to fill vacancies do not unfairly pull educators from districts and schools who serve students living in poverty. Lower-income schools already experience higher teacher turnover than more affluent schools, and increased competition for teachers could exacerbate this disparity. While some districts have expressed readiness to implement collaborative time, these districts are our highest-income communities.

Reversing the teacher shortage is a national problem that could take years, and we cannot wait to improve collaborative time for teachers. Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 includes grants for schools to develop their own models for collaborative time, such as more paid teacher collaborative time after school. This type of approach could be implemented now with the teachers we have. Therefore, we support the implementation of pilot programs enabling schools to develop innovative collaborative time models while we invest in Grow Your Own programs and expand state and local professional development for teachers.

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[11] Taylor, J. A., Getty, S. R., Kowalski, S. M., Wilson, C. D., Carlson, J., & Van Scotter, P. (2015). An Efficacy Trial of Research-Based Curriculum Materials With Curriculum-Based Professional Development. American Educational Research Journal, 52(5), 984-1017. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831215585962

Teacher Recruitment and Grow Your Own Programs

Grow Your Own (GYO) programs are focused on recruiting and preparing community-based candidates to teach in their local schools. These programs increase retention and promote strong connections between teachers and the students and families they serve. This involves recruiting teacher candidates from nontraditional populations who are more likely to reflect the diversity of students in the district. Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 expands and fully funds the existing Grow Your Own Grant Program at a scale that we believe will have a sizable impact on the teacher shortage in the next five to ten years.

The amendments to the existing program allow for more flexibility and prioritize programs that emphasize paid, on-the-job training such as teacher apprenticeships and teacher residencies. A registered teacher apprenticeship is an "earn and learn" model that provides structured, paid, on-the-job learning experiences combined with related instruction. Teacher residency programs integrate teacher preparation coursework with training in the classroom as part of their curriculum. Both models require a partnership between the local education agency and the educator preparation program and emphasize clinical experience under the guidance of a mentor teacher.

Maryland must invest in teacher recruitment initiatives and flexible GYO teacher preparation programs that allow local education agencies to develop recruitment pathways for nontraditional populations like ESPs, career changers, and community members to ensure Maryland students have access to diverse and highly qualified teachers. Having GYO programs that leverage flexible models of teacher preparation is critical to the success of recruiting ESPs into the teaching profession.

MSDE supports the expansion of GYO teacher preparation programs that allow individuals who are committed to Maryland’s children and families to earn an income while they prepare for teacher licensure.

In addition to expanding GYO programs, MSDE believes that a national marketing campaign can help Maryland to meet the moment, recruiting a diverse pool of highly qualified teachers who are passionate about working in a state that supports public education. Identifying individuals interested in teaching through digital marketing, public service announcements, and direct outreach is a beginning; however, to ensure a return on investment, prospective teachers must be cultivated with one-on-one mentoring, inspirational multi-media, informational guides, events, and experiences. Prospective teachers need assistance and support as they navigate the process of being trained, licensed, and hired. Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 supports this by allocating funding for a teacher recruitment campaign. Partnering with a national education nonprofit with experience in guiding state education agencies is critical to the success of the initiative.

While Maryland has historically been dependent on educators prepared out of state to staff its classrooms, the number of licenses issued to applicants from other states peaked at 63% in 2022[12]. Bringing teachers from other states into Maryland is likely to continue to be key to our teacher workforce. Given this, we need to consider policy options that streamline the process of highly-qualified, experienced teachers obtaining their Maryland teaching license.

The Council of State Governments (CSG), in partnership with the Department of Defense (DoD) and the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) developed an interstate occupational licensure compact called the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact (ITMC). Interstate compacts are constitutionally authorized, legislatively enacted, legally binding agreements among states.[13] The ITMC allows teachers to use an eligible license held in a compact member state to be granted an equivalent license in another compact member state.

The ITMC utilizes a model different from that of other interstate teacher licensure compacts. Compact Member states submit licenses that are eligible for the compact and meet a set of criteria outlined in the legislation. To be eligible, a license must require a bachelor's degree and completion of a state-approved program for teacher licensure like a teacher preparation program at a college or university. Furthermore, for a license to be eligible under the compact it must be unencumbered (i.e., not restricted, probationary, provisional, substitute, or temporary). Teachers holding a compact-eligible license can apply for licensure in another member state and receive the closest equivalent license without submitting additional materials, taking state-specific exams, or completing additional coursework.

The compact does not alter member states' ability to regulate the teaching profession or teacher licensure; however, member states do take on the responsibility of granting licenses to out-of-state teachers who hold an eligible license. While reciprocity is granted for initial certification requirements, Maryland's standards apply upon application of renewal requirements and the educator career ladder.

The ITMC is governed by an intergovernmental agency known as the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact Commission (The Commission). The Commission is composed of one commissioner from each member state who is the principal administrative officer of the state licensing authority or their designee. The Commission holds regular, public meetings and has the ability to create rules and bylaws to effectuate the compact. Maryland would be the 13th state to join. Several other states are considering legislation to join the Compact. It is critical for Maryland to not be left behind.

[12] Maryland Educator Certification Systems
[13] National Center for Interstate Compacts: https://compacts.csg.org/our-work/ics/

Eligibility to participate in the ITMC requires enacting the model legislation[14] developed by the Council for State Governments National Center for Interstate Compacts. Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 paves the way for Maryland to enter the ITMC by codifying the model legislation and amending the laws that would prevent Maryland from participating in the compact.

[14] Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact Model Legislation, National Center for Interstate Compacts.

Community Schools

A community school is a public school that serves as a hub for students, families, and the broader community by integrating academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement. These schools adopt a whole-child approach to education, ensuring that students receive comprehensive support to succeed both inside and outside the classroom[15]. Wraparound services - including extended learning time, healthcare, mental health support, and family engagement - address barriers to learning and create environments where students thrive. Through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Maryland has emerged as a national leader in implementing community schools.
Maryland is beginning to show academic progress; 4th grade reading scores now rank 20th in the nation, up from 40th just two years prior. However, we must ensure our efforts to support students living in poverty improve outcomes; our economically disadvantaged students rank 42nd in 4th grade reading when compared to like peers nationally. We believe the policy provisions pertaining to community schools in Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 will further efforts to ensure efficacy of this initiative.

Nationally, research consistently indicates that community schools contribute to improved student achievement, attendance, graduation rates, and family engagement while reducing disciplinary issues and addressing chronic absenteeism. A synthesis of 143 studies confirmed that community schools showed statistically significant improvements in test scores, GPA, and high school graduation rates.[16]

A RAND Corporation study on the New York City Community Schools Initiative found that community schools reduced chronic absenteeism by 5.6 percentage points in the first year, leading later to measurable gains in math and ELA scores.[17] Research conducted by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University confirmed that attendance improvements in community schools often precede and predict long-term academic gains, underscoring the importance of holistic interventions.[18]
Community schools may help close opportunity gaps for marginalized students. Some models, such as City Connects in Boston, have successfully reduced disparities for low-income families, dual-language learners, and students with disabilities.[19]

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[15] Coalition for Community Schools. (2021). *What is a Community School?* Institute for Educational Leadership. Retrieved from https://www.communityschools.org.
[16] Goldman, B., Gracie, J., & Porter, S. R. (2023, October). *Can individualized student supports improve economic outcomes for children in high-poverty schools?* Harvard University.
[17] Johnston, W. R., Engberg, J., Opper, I. M., Sontag-Padilla, L., & Xenakis, L. (2020). *Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative.* RAND Corporation.
[18] Covelli, L., Engberg, J., & Opper, I. M. (2022). *Leading Indicators of Long-Term Success in Community Schools: Evidence from New York City.* EdWorkingPaper No. 22-669. Annenberg Institute at Brown University.
[19] Bohannon, A., Owusu, I., Ilamaran, A., & Hernandez, M. (2025). *Community Schools: An Overview of the Evidence*. NORC at the University of Chicago.

Community schools provide a strong return on investment, with estimates suggesting a $3 to $15 social return for every dollar invested.[20] These benefits extend beyond students to their families and communities, improving economic stability, access to healthcare, and overall well-being. Community schools have demonstrated positive economic returns by increasing student earnings in adulthood, as found in studies conducted by Harvard University.[21]

In Maryland, we are beginning to see positive impacts of the community school model. Analysis indicates that community schools operating for five or more years have statistically significantly higher attendance rates than non-community schools.[22]Surveys conducted by the Maryland Center for Community Schools at Towson University shows that students in community schools feel more engaged, supported, and safe; have stronger staff-student relationships; receive more academic and behavioral supports; and show greater respect for diversity - when compared to non-community schools.[23]

A recent analysis of Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) data shows that schools with a poverty level greater than 80%, which have been implementing the community school strategy for a longer period of time, experienced an increase of 6 percentage points in literacy performance between 2022 and 2024. In contrast, schools with a poverty level below 40% saw an increase of only 3 percentage points.

Table 2: MCAP Literacy Proficiency by School Poverty Level

School Poverty Level	ELA 2022	ELA 2023	ELA 2024	Change (in percentage points)
Low (0-39%)	60.3%	62.5%	63.1%	**+2.8**
Modest (40-59%)	37.3%	39.1%	39.2%	**+2.0**
Concentrated Poverty (60-79%)	25.0%	27.5%	27.9%	**+2.9**
Highly Concentrated Poverty (80-100%)	13.0%	16.6%	19.4%	**+6.4**

School poverty categories are defined using 2024 data with the same schools included in each category in all three years. Low poverty schools are defined as 0-40% economically disadvantaged students, Modest schools are 40-<60%, Concentration of Poverty schools are 60-80%, and High Concentration of Poverty schools are 80-100%.

[20] Goldman, B., Gracie, J., & Porter, S. R. (2023, October). *Can individualized student supports improve economic outcomes for children in high-poverty schools?* Harvard University.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Durham, R., & Connolly, F. *Baltimore Community Schools Evaluation Report.* (2017).
[23] Durham, R., Shiller, J., & McDowell, J. (2024). *Building Better Learning Environments: The Positive Impact of Community Schools on School Climate.* Maryland Coalition for Community Schools. Winter 2024-25 Research Brief.

One community school that started implementing the community school strategy over the past four years had a chronic absenteeism rate of 51.4% at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. By the end of the 2023-2024 school year, this percentage decreased to 20.8%. Another community school recorded a chronic absenteeism rate of 52.8% in the 2020-2021 school year, which fell to 22.5% by the end of the 2023-2024 school year. During the 2023-2024 school year, 10 community schools in Wicomico County provided over 54,000 pounds of food to students and families through food pantries.

The Office of Community Schools at MSDE plays a pivotal role in advancing this work by:

- Developing tools and resources for community school leaders to ensure consistency and effectiveness in implementation;
- Providing continuous technical assistance and professional learning opportunities for community school coordinators;
- Partnering with national experts and leveraging partnerships with local leaders to facilitate capacity-building opportunities and offer level-setting meetings that align stakeholders' understanding of the strategy; and
- Working alongside the Governor's Office of Children to identify opportunities to strengthen community schools by connecting them with state agency resources.

Partnerships with the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) and the National Education Association (NEA) provide structured support through the *Virtual Community School Implementation Institute* and other professional learning programs tailored to the needs of community school coordinators and stakeholders.

Since the inception of the Concentration of Poverty Grants in Fiscal Year 2020, the number of eligible schools has dramatically increased from 193 to 617 community schools across 23 out of 24 LEAs statewide, now representing over 45% of Maryland's public schools. By fiscal year 2026, 715 schools are projected to be designated as community schools, with now more than half of Maryland's public schools receiving this designation.

Table 3: New Community Schools by School Year

School Year	Number of New Community Schools
2019-2020	207
2020-2021	40
2021-2022	45
2022-2023	54
2023-2024	101
2024-2025	170

The expansion of community schools by LEA can be found in the Appendix C. The number of community schools at each poverty level, by LEA, can be found in Appendix D (Fiscal Year 2025) and Appendix E (Fiscal Year 2026). Appendix F outlines the level of funding allocated for community schools each year, broken down by grant type (personnel grant and per-pupil grant).

Maryland's ambitious expansion of the community schools strategy has outpaced the infrastructure needed for full and effective implementation. We have seen uneven implementation across the state. A 2023 review of Maryland's community schools conducted by the National Center for Community Schools[24] found that school and district staff lacked sufficient knowledge of the community school model and the State's vision for implementation.

Some community schools were not able to spend down all of their CPG funds. An audit[25] involving eight LEAs by the Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education revealed that clear policies were not provided and that there was insufficient training on the management of CPG funds. According to the audit report, this resulted in $12.3 million in unused funds from Fiscal Year 2020 to Fiscal Year 2022, with LEAs facing challenges in determining allowable expenditures.

A 2024 Community Schools Legislative Report[26] recommends additional support to establish school steering committees, target interventions for absenteeism, and leverage data collection tools for improved accountability and impact analysis starting in August 2025.

[24] Maryland Community Schools Technical Assistance Assets and Needs Assessment (2024), National Center for Community Schools.
[25] Investigative Audit 23-0001-A: Management and Oversight of the Concentration of Poverty Grant (2024), Office of the Inspector General for Education.
[26] Community Schools Legislative Report (2024), Maryland State Department of Education.

Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 makes amendments that address implementation challenges, further develop and promote evidence-based practices amongst community school leaders, and ensure funding is used effectively and strategically to meet community needs.

Additional funding alone will not drive effective implementation. As proposed, Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 includes policies that would strengthen our community schools program:

- **Evaluation**: Invests in conducting a multi-year process of evaluating the outcomes of implementing the community schools model across the state.
- **Technical Assistance**: Provide community school practitioners with robust learning opportunities and on-the-ground implementation support. Builds on existing partnerships with Maryland institutions of higher education and brings on national partners to provide tiered support in implementing best practices.
- **Expanded Ability for District-Level Coordination**: Enables LEAs with at least two community schools to utilize a portion of their funding for district-level coordination in collaboration with the eligible schools while simultaneously increasing accountability through MSDE approval of CPG budgets.
- **Broadened Funds Usage**: Grants MSDE the authority to adjust the kinds of expenditures that are allowable based on evidence-based practices and demonstrated needs.
- **Additional Staffing**: Expands beyond the current two-person MSDE Community Schools team to enable differentiated support across districts.

The Blueprint's expansion of the community school model is evidence-based and being implemented with intention across the State.A program evaluation will improve the efficacy of implementation, assessing where the model is being used effectively and where implementation adjustments are needed. While much of the existing research on Maryland's community school strategy has focused on Baltimore City, a statewide evaluation is essential to understand its impact across diverse geographic and demographic contexts fully. Maryland's LEAs are implementing community schools in urban settings like Baltimore City, suburban communities like Howard County, and rural areas like Caroline County, each with unique challenges and opportunities.

A comprehensive evaluation will provide critical insights into how the community school model operates in these distinct settings, ensuring that policies and funding strategies are tailored to the specific needs of each region. By assessing implementation across urban, suburban, and rural districts, Maryland can develop data-driven solutions that maximize impact, enhance best practices, and ensure equitable access to resources for all students, regardless of where they live. A statewide approach will position Maryland as a national leader in evidence-based, adaptable community school implementation, demonstrating how this strategy can thrive in any setting when adequately supported.

Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 calls for a statewide evaluation and the launch of a technical assistance network that would enhance the ability of schools to track progress, refine their

approaches, and continuously improve outcomes for students and families. These measures would help Maryland fully capitalize on the substantial investments already being made into community schools, maximizing their impact on student achievement, attendance, and family engagement.

Another challenge that LEAs have is under current law, only LEAs with 40 or more community schools are permitted to coordinate services and pool resources at the district level. This allows these LEAs to negotiate better service agreements, streamline implementation, and drive sustainable improvement in student outcomes. Some examples of district-wide uses of CPG funding from Baltimore City Public Schools include:

- Ensuring that all traditional schools have at least one full-time social worker;
- Funding one of two staff positions at the pre-kindergarten Judy Centers;
- Supporting attendance and positive school climates by funding district-level attendance positions, school-based wholeness specialists, and vendors providing mentoring support; and
- Supporting community schools with filling teacher vacancies by funding the Teach for America and Baltimore City Teacher Residency programs.

Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 extends this same ability to offer district-level community school support to LEAs with between 2 and 39 eligible schools. Senate Bill 429/House Bill 504 allows these LEAs to use Concentration of Poverty Grant (CPG) funding for contracted services and providing resources and supports more efficiently.

Furthermore, Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 requires MSDE to collaborate with LEAs to develop, review, and approve comprehensive implementation plans, reinforcing the use of a clear and sound strategy across the state. Community schools would establish annual measurable goals aligned with the priorities identified in their assets and needs assessments. This accountability measure ensures that each school remains focused on targeted improvements that address student and community needs. Additionally, community school coordinators and principals would be responsible for monitoring progress and utilizing data-driven approaches to continuously refine their strategies. This will ensure greater accountability, stronger oversight, and long-term sustainability while maintaining flexibility to address local needs.

Additionally, Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 expands the allowable use of CPG funds to include early literacy and numeracy tutoring, incentives for experienced teachers, and initiatives to address chronic absenteeism - providing targeted interventions that directly impact student success.

By expanding MSDE's capacity to support community schools through additional staffing and regulatory authority, the state will be well-positioned to implement best practices, tailor strategies to the unique needs of each community, and provide national leadership in this transformative educational model. With these enhancements, Maryland is poised to set the gold standard for community schools nationwide, demonstrating how a well-resourced, data-driven, and

equity-focused strategy can drive meaningful improvements in education and community well-being.

Maryland's diverse educational landscape also necessitates expanded staffing beyond the current two-person team at the MSDE Office of Community Schools. Increased personnel within MSDE would enhance the agency's ability to provide differentiated support tailored to the varying needs of community schools across different districts.

The community school provisions outlined in Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 will strengthen Maryland's commitment to equitable education by fostering deep, systemic collaboration between schools, families, and communities. By increasing support for this proven strategy, MSDE will be better positioned to cultivate relationships with community partners, facilitate resource-sharing, and ensure the continued success of students in Maryland's community schools.

Educator Development and Retention

Pillar 3 of the Blueprint, focused on College and Career Readiness, is built on an aligned PreK-12 instructional system, starting with a strong foundation in early literacy and numeracy. Similarly, Pillar 2 calls for High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders including systemic professional development that helps teachers improve the performance of their students. We support policy proposals embedded within Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 that accelerate progress within these key pillars of the Blueprint.

Academic Excellence Program

Academic outcomes in Maryland reveal substantial gaps in literacy and mathematics proficiency, especially for students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. The 2023-24 school year data on the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) highlight these disparities:

- **Literacy:** Elementary school students had an English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency rate of only 47.2%, with stark gaps between student groups. Students with disabilities had a proficiency rate of 12.7%, multilingual learners showed 23.8% proficiency, and economically disadvantaged students had a 29.5% proficiency rate.
- **Mathematics:** Elementary students displayed a 34.8% proficiency rate. Middle school proficiency was lower, with only 21% of students demonstrating proficiency. The gaps were even more pronounced for multilingual learners (6.3% proficiency), students with disabilities (6.8% proficiency), and economically disadvantaged students (10.9% proficiency).

Another important measure of student achievement is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), better known as the Nation's Report Card. NAEP is a congressionally mandated assessment of fourth and eighth grade reading and math performance given every two years. NAEP is the only test administered nationwide that allows direct comparison of student achievement across states because all students take the same test. Maryland NAEP scores have dropped dramatically over the last decade. In 2013, Maryland was among the top two highest-performing states on NAEP. By 2022, our ranking had fallen to 40th. From 2022 to 2024, Maryland students demonstrated real progress in reading and modest improvement in math. Our 4th grade reading scores now rank 20th in the nation, up from 40th just two years prior. This is a promising indicator of improvement in early literacy.

Table 4: NAEP State Rankings, 2013-2024

Maryland	Rank (out of 50 states)					
	2013	2015	2017	2019	2022	2024
Grade 4 Reading	2	26	12	25	40	20
Grade 8 Reading	6	18	22	17	25	21
Grade 4 Math	16	29	23	33	42	39
Grade 8 Math	20	25	31	29	42	38
Grade 4 Reading	2	26	12	25	40	20

Figure 7 shows proficiency has declined in all grades and subject areas from 2013 to 2024, and proficiency rates in 2024 are still well below historical performance levels.

Figure 7: NAEP Proficiency Rates, 2013-2024

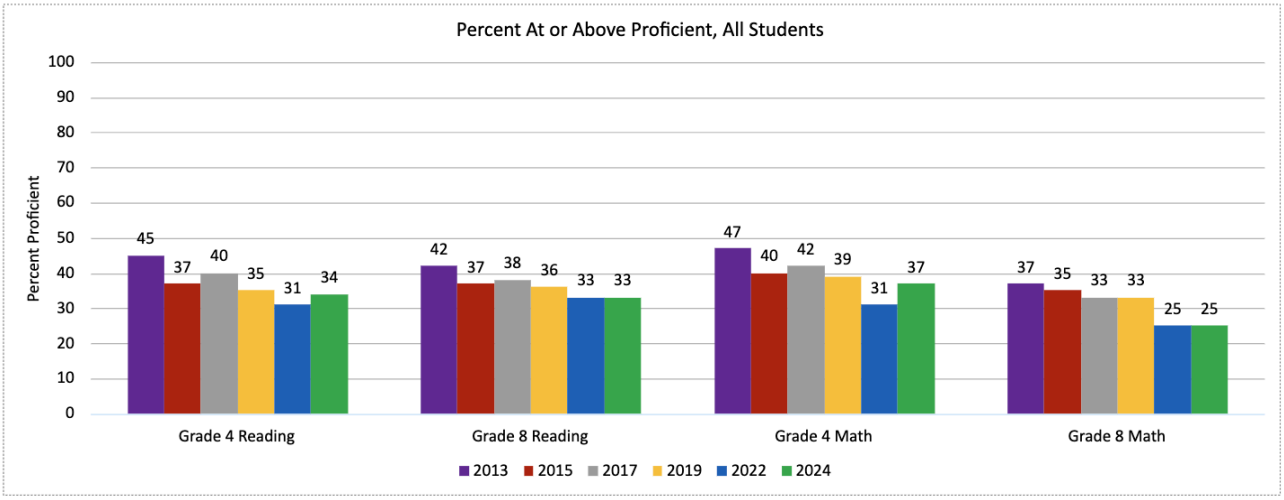
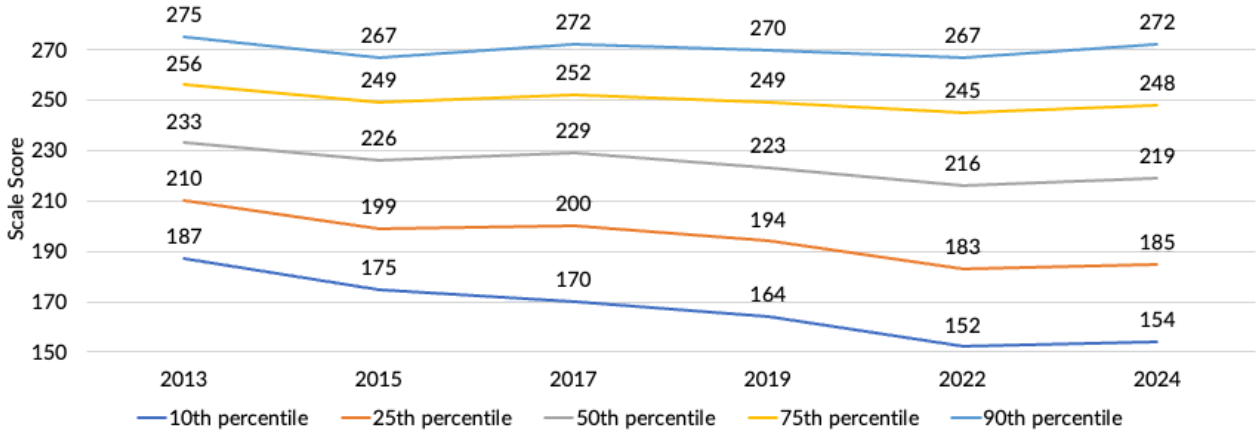


Figure 8 shows the scale score for NAEP in 4th grade reading at each of the benchmark percentile rankings. Each line represents the scale score for the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentile in terms of their performance. From 2013 to 2024, the gap between our highest- and lowest-performing students has widened over time. The scale score for our lowest-performing students (at the 10th percentile) has decreased over time. The same is true in 8th grade reading, 4th grade math, and 8th grade math. It will be important for us to monitor this and ensure that we are supporting our teachers to ensure they are prepared to deliver the high-quality core instruction and additional interventions needed to cultivate academic excellence among all learners.

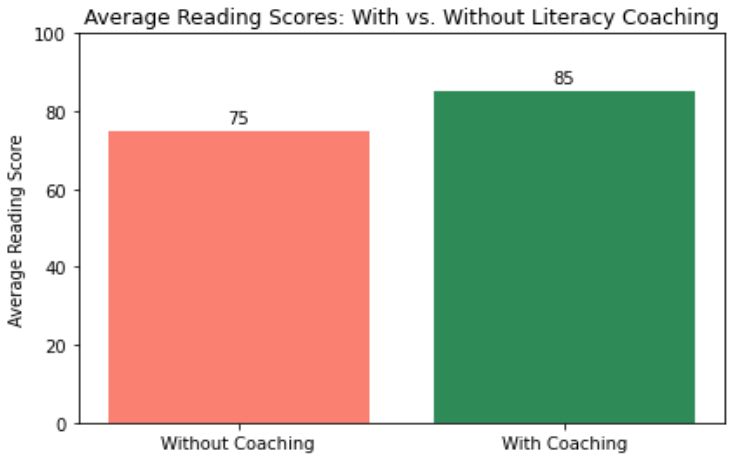
Figure 8: Average Maryland NAEP Scores by Percentile Grouping for Grade 4 Reading



These gaps underscore the need for additional support to improve student outcomes in both literacy and mathematics, particularly for underserved communities. The rising number of teachers on conditional licenses presents a challenge to ensuring high-quality instruction in our classrooms. Many teachers are underqualified or assigned to teach subjects outside their area of expertise. Local school systems need instructional coaches to support these teachers and their students.

In models such as Mississippi's structured literacy coaching initiative, research has indicated that students in schools with literacy coaches achieved higher reading scores than those without such support. For example, one might see an approximate increase from an average score of 75 (without coaching) to 85 (with coaching).[27]

Figure 9: Average Reading Scores in Mississippi's Literacy Coaching Model[28]

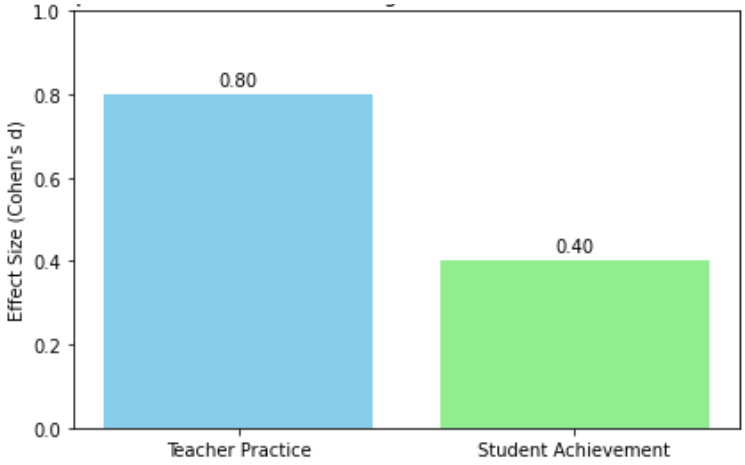


[27]Folsom, J., Smith, K., Burk, K., & Oakley, N. (2016). Educator outcomes associated with implementation of Mississippi's K–3 early literacy professional development initiative (NCEE 2016 0018). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

[28] Folsom, J., Smith, K., Burk, K., & Oakley, N. (2016). Educator outcomes associated with implementation of Mississippi's K–3 early literacy professional development initiative (NCEE 2016 0018). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

In addition, a meta-analysis by Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan (2018) found that instructional coaching has a *large positive effect* on teacher practices (often reflected as a higher effect size) and a *moderate positive effect* on student achievement.[29]

Figure 10: Impact of Instructional Coaching on Teacher Practices and Student Achievement



Folsom, et al. (2016) found that literacy coaching, when based on a strong model (such as the Science of Reading), leads to improvements in teacher instructional strategies and increased student literacy outcomes because it provides ongoing, professional development that is deeply embedded in teachers' classroom work with students, specific to grade levels or academic content, and focused on research-based practices.

Jim Knight, a leading expert in instructional coaching, emphasizes that effective coaching is built on partnership, active listening, and evidence-based practices. His research highlights the importance of collaborative goal setting, where coaches and educators work as equals to identify areas for growth. Knight advocates for an approach grounded in principles such as equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, and reciprocity. This approach ensures that coaching is not top-down but rather a collaborative process that values teacher expertise and fosters mutual learning. Knight stresses that coaching should be non-evaluative, creating a safe and supportive environment where teachers feel empowered to take risks, reflect honestly, and make meaningful improvements to their practice. By prioritizing teacher autonomy, trust, and continuous dialogue, effective coaching empowers educators to refine their practice and enhance student learning.[30]

Traditional one-time workshops often fail to drive long-term instructional improvements. Research has consistently shown that professional development initiatives must be sustained and integrated into classroom practices to have lasting effects. Coaching, particularly when embedded in professional learning, has proven to be an effective method for ensuring continuous improvement among educators.

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[29] Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018). *The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the coaching literature. Review of Educational Research, 88*(4), 547–588.DOI: 10.3102/0034654318774303

[30] Knight, J. (2007). Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction. Corwin Press.

High-quality professional development is an investment in both student achievement and in our teacher workforce. It enhances teacher working conditions by fostering a sense of support, collaboration, and professional growth. Research from the Learning Policy Institute highlights that effective professional development improves instructional practices, leading to greater job satisfaction and lower attrition rates. Sustained learning opportunities allow teachers to refine their skills, adapt to evolving educational demands, and feel more confident in their roles. A study by Kraft & Papay (2014) found that teachers working in schools with strong professional learning environments showed greater long-term improvement in effectiveness and were more likely to remain in the profession.[31] By prioritizing meaningful professional learning, schools can create a culture of continuous growth, reducing burnout and turnover while improving student outcomes.

Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning provides a strong framework for instructional coaching.[32] A meta-analysis conducted by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institutes for Research found that nearly all 2022 Standards had substantial positive effects on teacher instruction. Among the significant findings, improvements in instruction ranged from 0.42 standard deviations for Equity Foundations to 0.98 standard deviations for Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction. Similar trends were observed in student achievement, with positive average effects across all standards, as shown in the charts below.

[31] Kraft, M. A., & Papay, J. P. (2014). Can Professional Environments in Schools Promote Teacher Development? Explaining Heterogeneity in Returns to Teaching Experience. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 36(4), 476–500. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373713519496

[32] Garrett, R., Zhang, Q., Citkowicz, M., & Burr, L. (2021). How Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning Are Associated With Teacher Instruction and Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Learning-Forward-Standards-for-Professional-Learning-Meta-Analysis-Report-December-2021_0.pdf

Figure 11: Average Effect Sizes of Teacher Instruction for Each 2022 Learning Forward Professional Learning Standard

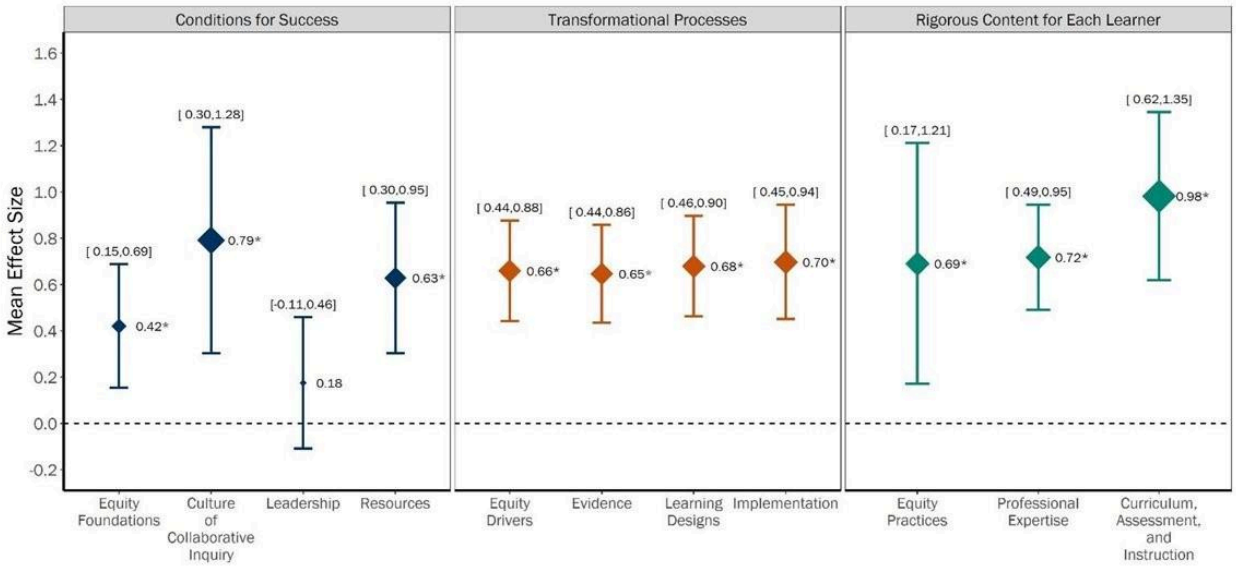
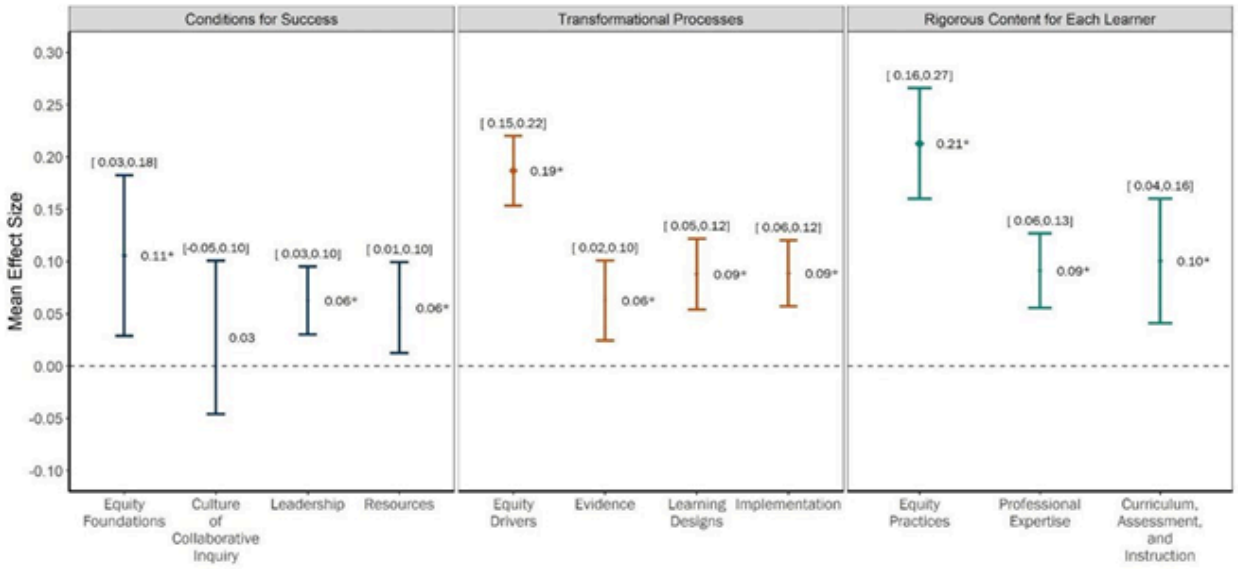


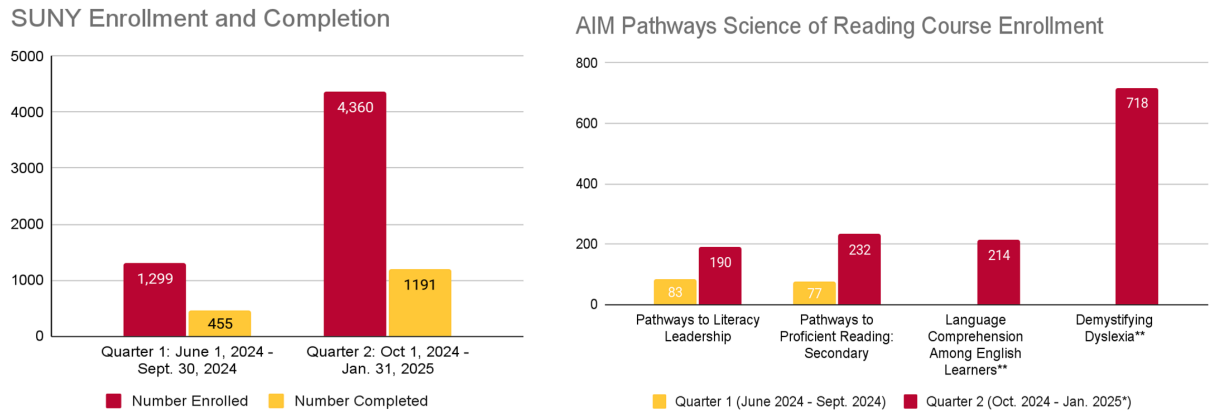
Figure 12: Average Effect Sizes of Student Achievement for Each 2022 Learning Forward Professional Learning Standard



MSDE has already begun addressing these challenges through strategic initiatives such as mentoring programs for conditionally licensed teachers and targeted professional learning for paraprofessionals seeking certification. These initiatives are designed to directly address the teacher shortage and ensure that all educators, especially those serving historically underserved student groups, receive the support needed to improve their practices and student outcomes.

MSDE is not only ready for this kind of investment, but we have already made significant strides in laying the foundation for success. Through the Science of Reading (SoR) micro-credentials, funded by a $6.8 million grant from the IBIS Group, we are seeing positive feedback from teachers and LEAs, confirming that our efforts are already yielding results. As of January 2025, 4,360 Maryland educators have enrolled in the SoR coursework from SUNY, 1,354 educators have enrolled in the SoR coursework from the AIM Institute, and 90 participants from Maryland Institutes of Higher Learning have engaged in this offering. These courses are expanding due to strong demand. One teacher shared: "I loved this course and feel it is very meaningful to the work I do. I have taken many aspects of this course and applied them to my classroom and lessons." This feedback underscores the real-world value and application of our professional development.

Figure 13: Science of Reading Course Enrollment and Completion



Historically, there has been a perception that MSDE does not deliver effective professional development. As such, the Department has made a clear shift in our approach, and results are promising. MSDE's offerings, such as the Pathways to Literacy Leadership course, are fostering leadership development at the district level, and professional learning opportunities for literacy coaches continue to see growing participation and high levels of engagement. With a 3.87 out of 4.0 rating on key effectiveness indicators from participants, our professional development is resonating with educators. These efforts reflect our commitment to transforming professional learning for educators in Maryland, and the positive outcomes in early literacy and teacher development demonstrate that MSDE is poised for continued success in driving improvements in educational outcomes.

Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 proposes the creation of the Academic Excellence Program (AEP) to deploy instructional coaches and coordinators of professional learning (CPL) to schools that need them. Similar programs in other states have driven significant increases in student achievement[33].

[33] Slungaard Mumma, K., & Winters, M. A. (2023). The effect of retention under Mississippi's test-based promotion policy.

The program's goals include:

1. **Student Outcomes:** Improving proficiency rates in literacy and mathematics, especially among historically underserved student groups.
2. **Educator Efficacy:** Building teacher confidence and competence in delivering high-quality, evidence-based instruction.
3. **Systemic Sustainability:** Creating coaching and professional learning structures that will continue to operate even after initial funding phases out.

Through the Academic Excellence Program, state instructional coaches will be hired and deployed to ensure that literacy and mathematics instruction improves across the state. Key components include:

- **Coaches for Literacy and Mathematics:** Coaches will support teachers in both core subjects, ensuring that educators have the tools and support to provide effective instruction aligned with the Science of Reading and mathematics standards.
- **Regional Project Managers:** Funded by philanthropy, these managers will hire and train the coaches and ensure fidelity to the research-based coaching mode. Through a regional structure, these managers will ensure alignment with local needs and provide guidance based on the unique needs of each LEA's literacy and mathematics programs.

Coaches will work directly with teachers, facilitating collaborative learning communities and providing personalized feedback. Coaches will focus on strengthening Tier 1 instruction and embedding research-based practices into daily instruction. The coaching cadre may include:

- Literacy coaches
- Mathematics coaches (hired through an RFP process)
- Data coaches
- Early childhood coaches
- Special education coaches

Coordinators of Professional Learning (CPLs) will be hired to lead targeted professional development in schools. The key responsibilities of CPLs will include:

- **Access to Professional Learning:** Ensuring that all educators, from paraprofessionals to principals, have access to high-quality professional development, including free services to build capacity in critical areas like literacy, mathematics, special education, and other content areas.
- **Learning Walks and Data Use:** CPLs will conduct learning walks in collaboration with school leaders, collecting data to inform professional learning plans tailored to the needs of individual schools.
- **Tailored Support:** Schools will be able to request specific professional learning sessions from CPLs to address their unique needs. CPLs will also provide asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities for educators at all levels.

The Educators in Residence (EIR) model that is used in other states will be utilized to hire new coaches and coordinators, ensuring that schools have access to high-quality expertise while minimizing the need for additional state-allocated positions. This approach ensures that MSDE is not expanding its own staff but rather leveraging external support to build educator capacity within LEAs. The EIR model focuses on:

- **Building Educator Capacity:** Instead of adding more staff to MSDE, this initiative enhances the capacity of educators selected to serve as coaches by providing them with world-class training, a strong community of practice, and opportunities to hone and sharpen their content-specific coaching skills. This model emphasizes the development of educators who are not only equipped to coach but also to lead and innovate within their schools and districts.
- **Identification of High-Performing Educators:** Through collaboration with LEAs, high-performing educators with strong leadership and coaching potential will be selected to serve as Educators in Residence.
- **Tailored Support:** EIRs will collaborate with coaches and CPLs to implement evidence-based practices aligned with state and local priorities.

Some superintendents have noted that they already have instructional coaches at the LEA level. In fact, a survey conducted last summer confirmed that many LEAs do employ coaches. However, no school district has a coach in every school, and some have only a handful. The Academic Excellence Program (AEP) is designed to supplement and enhance the existing efforts of LEAs, not replace them.

By deploying a statewide cadre of instructional coaches, we can ensure that coaching is grounded in consistent, high-quality training aligned with research-based best practices. Currently, instructional coaching varies widely across districts, despite clear research on what makes coaching effective. This initiative allows us to set a statewide standard for excellence in instructional coaching.
State coaches will work collaboratively with LEA coaches, providing resources, professional learning, and structured support that strengthens local capacity. Additionally, many state coaches will eventually return to their home districts, bringing with them enhanced expertise and leadership skills that will further elevate instructional coaching at the LEA level. A key component of this initiative is joint training—LEA coaches will have the opportunity to participate in the same professional learning as state coaches. In fact, LEA coach training has already begun, ensuring alignment and coherence across districts.

Ultimately, this program is about long-term, systemic improvement—supporting teachers, building sustainable coaching models within LEAs, and ensuring that literacy and math instruction statewide is aligned to rigorous, evidence-based standards.

By creating an EIR model, MSDE provides a unique opportunity to strengthen pre-existing structures in LEAs. The Academic Excellence Program is designed to enhance and supplement

existing structures in LEAs, by deploying a cadre of coaches from the state to provide support and ensure consistency in coaching experiences. Although several LEAs have reported having coaches already staffed, instructional coaching from district to district varies, despite clear research on what effective coaching looks like. The deployment of state coaches allows MSDE to set high standards and norm expectations for LEA coaches by providing training and resources for all instructional coaches in Maryland. By streamlining training at the state level using an EIR model, many state coaches will, after a few years, return to their districts and serve as LEA coaches or in other key leadership roles within LEAs. The Academic Excellence Program is as much about the positive impacts on LEAs in the long run as it is about the positive impacts on the individual teachers who will work with the state coaches.

To ensure accountability and continuous improvement, the Academic Excellence Program will incorporate a robust evaluation framework. The evaluation will focus on:

1. **Student Outcomes:** Tracking literacy and mathematics proficiency gains, with an emphasis on closing achievement gaps.
2. **Implementation Fidelity:** Monitoring the execution of the program across schools and LEAs.
3. **Data Analysis:** Collecting and analyzing data on teacher practices, student outcomes, and program fidelity to inform decisions.
4. **Stakeholder Input:** Incorporating feedback from educators, school leaders, and families to refine program strategies.

The Academic Excellence Program proposed by Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 represents a comprehensive approach to addressing the critical needs in literacy and mathematics education in Maryland's schools. By investing in the professional development of educators, the program is well-positioned to bridge performance gaps and ensure all students have access to high-quality, evidence-based instruction.

Maryland School Leadership Academy

Research shows that effective school leadership has a significant impact on both teacher retention and student achievement. According to a study by the Wallace Foundation, schools led by strong leaders experience higher teacher satisfaction, increased teacher retention rates, and improved student performance. In fact, school leadership is one of the most significant in-school factors influencing teacher retention. Teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they feel supported by their leaders, with leadership providing clear expectations, professional development opportunities, and a culture of trust and collaboration[34]. Leadership development is integral to the school improvement process.

[34]Wallace Foundation, The Role of School Leadership in Improving Student Achievement, (2013). Available at: https://www.wallacefoundation.org.

It is critical that we not only develop strong school leadership, but we retain those leaders for a positive impact on teachers and students. Maryland school districts experience a 78% retention rate of school leaders in districts, losing nearly 1 in 5 administrators each year. This level of turnover causes instability in school systems, negatively impacting teachers and students. Research notes that inadequate preparation and professional development is a leading reason cited in principals' decisions to leave their jobs. The same study shows that better-prepared principals, including those who have had mentors, are less stressed and stay longer, even if they are in high-need schools. By providing appropriate support, principals feel more efficacious, and better about their work, making them more likely to stay. These findings suggest the importance of supporting principals in building their capacity to do the complex work required in their schools[35].

Since we know effective school leadership drives teacher retention and student outcomes, one of the highest-leverage investments Maryland can make is providing training and mentoring for our existing and future school leaders. Senate Bill 429 / House Bill 504 proposes the creation of a Maryland School Leader Academy designed to cultivate both sitting and aspiring school administrators' skills in two essential areas:

- **Instructional Leadership and Professional Learning**: Build teacher capacity through lesson observations, instructional coaching, and effective collaborative planning teams focused on internalizing academic standards and curriculum and using academic data from formative assessments to inform instruction.
- **Teacher Recruitment and Retention**: Use proven strategies for recruiting and retaining a high-quality and diverse teaching team, distribute leadership among administrators and teacher leaders, and prepare teachers who want to become school leaders in the future through training and on-the-job learning.

Drawing on the principles of the Strategic Education Research Partnership (SERP) Coherence Framework[36], this Academy would focus on aligning school leadership actions with broader educational goals. Strong, coherent leadership fosters a unified approach across all levels, from administrators to teachers, driving improvements in instructional practice and student outcomes.

The Maryland School Leader Academy, as proposed, would charge MSDE with offering a tuition-free, cohort-based training program designed to equip leaders with the tools to create such supportive school environments. This approach aligns with the SERP Coherence Framework's emphasis on building leadership capacity, fostering shared responsibility, and creating organizational structures that support continuous improvement in teaching, learning, and teacher retention.

[35] Levin, S. & Bradley, K. (2019). Understanding and Addressing Principal Turnover: A Review of the Research. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.
[36] Forman, M. L., Stosich, E. L., & Bocala, C. (2017). The internal coherence framework: Creating the conditions for continuous improvement in schools. Harvard Education Press.

Building upon the initial success of the 2024-2025 Blueprint Leadership Training program, the proposed Maryland Leadership Academy extends and improves upon the current training model. In January 2025, 892 school leaders representing all 24 local education agencies (LEAs) participated in the Blueprint Leadership Training across five regions. The training refreshed instrumental skills for instructional leaders, while leveraging a rare opportunity for principals and assistant principals to collaborate with other school leaders from across the state. Survey data from the Blueprint Leadership Training indicated positive results in all categories assessed. Participants rated the professional development at an average of 3.7 out of 4, including the relevance to their role and coherence with the larger vision and priorities of MSDE. Additional feedback from the training shared a sentiment of gratitude for a collaborative experience and a feeling of empowerment when returning to their respective schools. This Blueprint Leadership Training program is a strong start for growing the capacity of school leaders.

The creation of the Maryland Leadership Academy would allow the state to sustain this progress and build on it. An essential component of the Academy is the inclusion of mentorship for principals. Similar to other professions, research shows the benefits of providing school leaders with mentors[37]. Research indicates that mentoring programs for school leaders can significantly enhance their effectiveness and positively impact school performance. A study published in the School Leadership Review highlights that mentoring is one of the most effective strategies to develop leadership skills in new principals. The study emphasizes the importance of effective mentoring strategies and the mentor-mentee relationship in fostering principals' growth, particularly in improving teacher quality and student achievement.[38] Additionally, a report by the Wallace Foundation titled "Good Principals Aren't Born — They're Mentored" discusses the critical role of mentoring in the development of effective school principals. The report provides insights into how structured mentoring programs can prepare principals to lead schools successfully, ultimately benefiting student outcomes.

The Maryland School Leader Academy's proposed activities include pairing participants with experienced mentors who have demonstrated success as school principals. MSDE, in collaboration with LEAs, would identify these mentors, who may receive stipends for supporting the development of Maryland's future school leaders.

As proposed, the Maryland School Leader Academy would play a critical role in strengthening leadership within Maryland's community schools and low-performing schools. To maximize its impact, the Academy would prioritize the selection of participants who are either currently serving in these schools or are committed to transitioning into them. By focusing on these high-need areas,

[37] The Wallace Foundation. (2007). Good principals aren't born—they're mentored: How leadership coaching can build stronger school leaders. The Wallace Foundation. Retrieved from https://wallacefoundation.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Good-Principals-Arent-Born-Theyre-Mentored.pdf

[38] Bertrand, Lisa A.; Stader, David; and Copeland, Sherry (2018) "Supporting New School Leaders Through Mentoring," School Leadership Review: Vol. 13 : Iss. 2 , Article 7. Available at: https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/slr/vol13/iss2/7

the program aims to cultivate a pipeline of highly skilled, equity-driven leaders who can address the unique challenges faced by these schools.

Through targeted professional development, mentorship from experienced principals, and access to research-based leadership strategies, Academy participants would be equipped to foster school cultures that promote academic excellence, student well-being, and community engagement. This policy-driven approach ensures that resources are strategically allocated to the schools where strong, effective leadership is most needed, ultimately driving sustainable improvements in student outcomes and school performance.

To ensure long-term sustainability and impact, the Academy would leverage existing funds from the Blueprint Leadership Academy along with new state commitments. The Blueprint laid the groundwork by allocating funds to provide training for superintendents, local school board leadership, and principals. This policy builds on this idea of aligning across components of the educational ecosystem - school leadership, district leadership, school board leadership, MSDE, and AIB - to ensure best practices are shared across all parts of our public school system.

Summary

We remain deeply committed to realizing the promise and vision of the Blueprint, building a world-class public education system for all of Maryland's students, and doing what it takes to get it right. The stakes are high – the Blueprint is truly a once-in-a-generation opportunity and represents our nation's biggest bet on public education.

We understand that achieving the goals of the Blueprint requires thoughtful, deliberate implementation focused on student outcomes. Our mission remains clear: deliver a world-class education for every child in Maryland. We look forward to partnering with the Maryland General Assembly and stakeholders across the state to ensure every child in Maryland receives the world-class education they deserve.

<u>Appendix A:</u> Teacher Vacancies and Conditional Licensure by LEA (FY 2025)

Local Education Agency	Fully Licensed Teachers	Conditionally Licensed Teachers	Vacancies	Total Teacher Positions	Percentage of Fully Licensed Teachers	Percentage of Conditionally Licensed Teachers	Vacancy Rate
Allegany	632	1	7	640	99%	0%	1%
Anne Arundel	5,498	714	67	6,279	88%	11%	1%
Baltimore City	4,416	917	188	5,521	80%	17%	3%
Baltimore	6,550	877	74	7,501	87%	12%	1%
Calvert	940	37	10	987	95%	4%	1%
Caroline	399	32	0	431	93%	7%	0%
Carroll	1,728	90	5	1,823	95%	5%	0%
Cecil	1,016	50	0	1,066	95%	5%	0%
Charles	1,624	334	62	2,020	80%	17%	3%
Dorchester	299	54	12	365	82%	15%	3%
Frederick	2,873	215	38	3,126	92%	7%	1%
Garrett	281	6	1	288	98%	2%	0%
Harford	2,479	176	2	2,657	93%	7%	0%
Howard	4,123	155	52	4,330	95%	4%	1%
Kent	141	17	4	162	87%	11%	2%
Montgomery	11,145	666	157	11,968	93%	6%	1%
Prince George's	7,795	1,582	901	10,278	76%	17%	9%
Queen Anne's	537	15	0	552	97%	3%	0%
Somerset	1,013	73	8	1,094	93%	7%	1%
St. Mary's	214	17	15	246	87%	7%	6%
Talbot	328	17	5	350	94%	5%	1%
Washington	1,534	42	3	1,579	97%	3%	0%
Wicomico	1,160	69	5	1,234	94%	6%	0%
Worcester	593	6	4	603	98%	1%	1%
Totals	**57,318**	**6,162**	**1,620**	**65,100**	**88%**	**10%**	**2%**

Appendix B: Teacher Vacancies and Conditional Licensure by Licensure Area (FY 2025)

Licensure Area	Fully Licensed Teachers	Conditionally Licensed Teachers	Vacancies	Total Teacher Positions	Percentage of Fully Licensed Teachers	Percentage of Conditionally Licensed Teachers	Vacancy Rate	Percentage of Positions Filled without a Fully Licensed Teacher
Arts	4,214	491	96	4,801	88%	10%	2%	12%
Career / Technology Education (7-12)	1,376	301	53	1,730	80%	18%	3%	20%
Computer Science	163	50	5	218	75%	23%	2%	25%
Early Childhood (PreK-3)	11,447	689	124	12,260	93%	6%	1%	7%
Elementary Education (1-6)	15,117	1,095	392	16,604	91%	7%	2%	9%
Environmental Education (PreK-12)	20	20	0	40	50%	50%	0%	50%
English (7-12)	3,868	420	39	4,327	89%	10%	1%	11%
ESOL (PreK-12)	1,273	190	104	1,567	81%	13%	7%	19%
Health (PreK-12)	1,015	48	14	1,077	94%	5%	1%	6%
Mathematics (7-12)	2,926	291	33	3,250	90%	9%	1%	10%
Middle School Areas (4-9)	533	55	139	727	73%	9%	19%	27%
Physical Education (PreK-12)	1,904	235	29	2,168	88%	11%	1%	12%
Science (7-12)	3,070	337	35	3,442	89%	10%	1%	11%
Social Studies (7-12)	3,387	306	24	3,717	91%	8%	1%	9%
Special Education	4,937	1,385	459	6,781	73%	22%	7%	27%
World Language (PreK-12)	1,370	231	69	1,670	82%	14%	4%	18%
Other Teaching Areas	698	18	5	721	97%	3%	1%	3%
Total	**57,318**	**6,162**	**1620**	**65,100**	**88%**	**10%**	**2%**	**12%**

<u>Appendix C:</u> Number of Community Schools by Local Education Agency by Year

Local Education Agency	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Allegany	1	4	4	4	6	14	17
Anne Arundel	2	9	12	15	23	38	47
Baltimore City	126	112	117	117	148	150	150
Baltimore County	4	10	22	38	55	91	110
Calvert	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Caroline	0	1	1	2	3	8	9
Carroll	0	0	0	0	1	2	4
Cecil	1	3	3	4	4	9	11
Charles	0	0	1	2	5	10	14
Dorchester	5	5	5	5	6	11	10
Frederick	2	3	2	4	5	9	10
Garrett	0	0	0	0	1	5	5
Harford	3	3	7	7	10	16	17
Howard	0	0	0	0	1	8	12
Kent	0	0	2	2	2	3	5
Montgomery	8	16	19	26	34	53	77
Prince George's	45	63	75	92	107	129	148
Queen Anne's	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
St. Mary's	0	1	1	1	2	3	5
Somerset	4	4	4	5	6	7	7
Talbot	0	0	0	1	1	2	5
Washington	0	5	7	8	12	18	24
Wicomico	5	7	9	9	10	23	16
Worcester	0	0	0	3	4	6	7
SEED School	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Totals	**207**	**247**	**292**	**346**	**447**	**617**	**715**

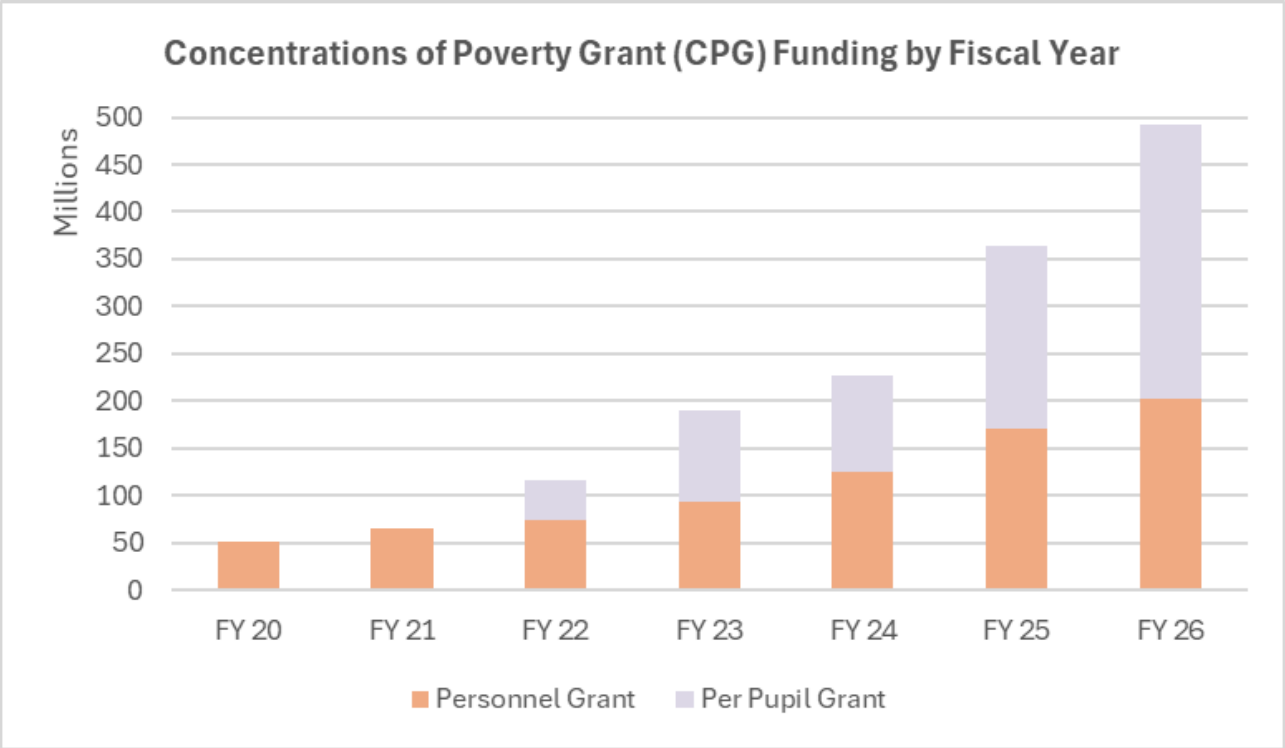
Appendix D: Fiscal Year 2025 Distribution of Community Schools by Poverty Level

Local Education Agency	55-59.4%	60-64.4%	65-69.4%	70-79.4%	>=80%	# Schools	% of State Total
Allegany	5	2	3	3	1	14	**2%**
Anne Arundel	10	4	6	8	10	38	**6%**
Baltimore City				1	149	150	**24%**
Baltimore County	17	27	21	20	6	91	**15%**
Calvert							**0.0%**
Caroline	1	4	1		2	8	**1%**
Carroll		1			1	2	**0.3%**
Cecil	1	4	2	2		9	**1%**
Charles	4	1	2	2	1	10	**2%**
Dorchester	1	1	2	5	2	11	**2%**
Frederick	3	1	1	1	3	9	**1%**
Garrett	1	3	1			5	**0.8%**
Harford	4	1	3	5	3	16	**3%**
Howard	4	4				8	**1%**
Kent	1			2		3	**0.5%**
Montgomery	5	12	15	16	5	53	**9%**
Prince George's	13	8	14	36	58	129	**21%**
Queen Anne's			1			1	**0.2%**
St. Mary's	1			2		3	**0.5%**
Somerset			1	6		7	**1%**
Talbot	1			1		2	**0.3%**
Washington	3	3	4	3	5	18	**3%**
Wicomico	12	5	6			23	**4%**
Worcester	2		1	3		6	**1%**
SEED School					1	1	**0.2%**
Grand Total	**90**	**81**	**84**	**116**	**247**	**617**	
Percent of Total	**15%**	**13%**	**14%**	**19%**	**40%**		

Appendix E: Fiscal Year 2026 Distribution of Community Schools by Poverty Level

Local Education Agency	55-59.4%	60-64.4%	65-69.4%	70-79.4%	>=80%	# Schools	% of State Total
Allegany	8	2	3	3	1	17	**2%**
Anne Arundel	17	6	6	8	10	47	**6%**
Baltimore City				1	149	150	**21%**
Baltimore County	31	33	21	20	6	111	**15%**
Calvert	1	1				2	**0.4%**
Caroline	2	4	1		2	9	**1%**
Carroll	2	1			1	4	**1%**
Cecil	1	6	2	2		11	**2%**
Charles	8	1	2	2	1	14	**2%**
Dorchester	1	1	2	5	2	11	**2%**
Frederick	3	2	1	1	3	10	**1%**
Garrett	1	3	1			5	**1%**
Harford	4	2	3	5	3	17	**2%**
Howard	7	5				12	**2%**
Kent	2	1		2		5	**1%**
Montgomery	16	24	16	16	5	77	**11%**
Prince George's	21	19	14	36	58	148	**20%**
Queen Anne's	1		1			2	**0.3%**
St. Mary's	2	1		2		5	**1%**
Somerset			1	6		7	**1%**
Talbot	3	1		1		5	**1%**
Washington	7	5	4	3	5	24	**3%**
Wicomico	12	5	6			23	**3%**
Worcester	3		1	3		7	**1%**
SEED School					1	1	**0.1%**
Grand Total	**154**	**123**	**85**	**116**	**247**	**724**	
Percent of Total	**21%**	**17%**	**12%**	**16%**	**34%**		

<u>Appendix F</u>: Concentrations of Poverty Grant (CPG) Funding by Fiscal Year



	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26
Number of Community Schools	207	247	292	346	447	617	715
80-100% Schools	Personnel	Personnel	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil
75-79% Schools		Personnel	Personnel	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil
70-74% Schools			Personnel	Personnel	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil
65-69% Schools				Personnel	Personnel	Personnel Per-Pupil	Personnel Per-Pupil
60-64% Schools					Personnel	Personnel	Personnel Per-Pupil
55-59% Schools						Personnel	Personnel