



March 7, 2012

| MSDE Home | Newsroom | MDReportcard.org | School Improvement |



**A few words
from Interim
State
Superintendent
of Schools
Bernard J.
Sadusky**

Maryland public education has been a leader in the school accountability movement from the very beginning. Educators understand the importance of school improvement, and the great need to turn around schools that are not making the grade for students.

But an accountability system must make sense, and No Child Left Behind has some serious issues. With that in mind, Maryland last week applied for flexibility from some of that law's more problematic aspects. This sets the stage for continuing progress by our number one ranked public schools.

Under the plan, Maryland will be able to focus on rewarding those schools making improvement and distribute resources to help all schools move forward. The flexibility plan runs parallel with Maryland's Race to the Top project, and its efforts to strengthen educator evaluation and incorporation of student growth measures into that process. The plan offers more tools in our long-running efforts to improve schools across the State, and allow us to target schools in most need of assistance.

Under the new plan, Maryland will reset the annual progress goals for the next six years on a trajectory toward 2017, at which time each individual school is expected to reduce its percentage of non-proficient students by half – for each subgroup as well as for all students. The flexibility proposal also will give the State leeway regarding how it recognizes those schools that are making progress, and how it focuses attention on those schools in need of intervention.

BOARD TAKES STEPS TO CURB SUSPENSIONS

The Maryland State Board of Education last week released a report on student discipline practices and their effect on learning, and indicated their interest in amending State regulations in this area.



State Board President James DeGraffenreid (right) discussed the school discipline report as board member Dr. Ivan Walks (left) looked on.

“A Safe School, Successful Students, and a Fair and Equitable Disciplinary Process Go Hand in Hand: A Study of School Discipline Practices and Proposed Regulatory Changes,” was

issued by the Board at its regular monthly meeting. It includes a draft of possible regulatory changes the Board will consider as it moves forward.

Board members said that feedback on the report will be accepted through March 30. The Board intends to review the report and the commentary at its April 24 meeting.

Board members have been studying the student discipline issue for two years, inviting dozens of educators and interested organizations to testify and provide input as part of that process. Board members have been concerned at the number and length of student suspensions, the impact that loss of class time has on academic success and the achievement gap, and the effect that suspensions have on certain student subgroups.

Interested parties may send their comments via email

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), currently known to most as No Child Left Behind, has had as its goal that every student reach proficiency levels in reading and mathematics by the 2013-14 school year. While Maryland schools have made remarkable progress since the law was enacted in 2002, the rigid parameters of the law were recognized by President Obama, Education Secretary Duncan, and other policymakers. Secretary Duncan announced the ESEA flexibility plan last June, with the first 12 waiver states announced earlier this month. Maryland is applying in the program's second round.

Maryland's application on behalf of the State, local school systems and schools, seeks to improve focus on student learning and quality instruction. State officials held more than 40 meetings with stakeholders as they developed the flexibility application.

The application covers the principles required by the federal government under the program, including the development of college- and career-ready expectations for all students; state-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support for schools; and support for effective instruction and leadership.

Maryland's entire application can be found here:

* * *

Read Across Maryland, our State's edition of the Read Across America campaign, got underway last week. Both Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown visited schools to read to children, and I'll be doing so this week.

The campaign is sponsored by the Maryland State Education Association, Maryland Library Association, and the Maryland Association of School Librarians, with support from MSDE. The goal is to encourage educators, parents, and children to read 30 minutes a day for the next 30 days.

It is a great campaign with a worthy goal. More on Read Across Maryland can be found here.

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to stateboard@msde.state.md.us or through conventional mail to the Maryland State Board of Education, 200 W. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.

The complete report can be found [here](#).

FIRST GIFTED/TALENTED REGULATION IS APPROVED

The Maryland State Board of Education last week approved regulations that would set in place for the first time minimum standards for Gifted and Talented education programs in school systems throughout the State.

The regulation supports the identification of a diverse gifted and talented student body, specifying that local school systems draw from a pool of candidates that encompasses all students and use multiple indicators of potential and achievement.

Maryland's new regulation bolsters local school systems as they seek to achieve equitable representation of gifted and talented students, English language learners, and students with special needs, by recommending early talent development for all students.

"Maryland schools must provide for the diverse learning needs of all of our students, if our education is to reach its full potential," said Interim State Superintendent of Schools Bernard J. Sadusky. "All students can learn, but students learn in different ways. Our job is to make certain that we have programs in place for every learning style and need."

State Board members made it clear they will be monitoring reports and data from local school systems to make certain the new policy acts as a catalyst for improved services for students. Local school systems provide information on gifted and talent programs through the annual Master Plan process required by the Bridge to Excellence Act legislation since 2005.

Some Board members expressed concern that the regulation could block some students from gifted and talented programs. "I do not disagree with the spirit of the regulation, but I do have some concerns," said Luisa Montero-Diaz. "Sometimes something that

Our department's Facebook page provides regular updates on state initiatives, MSDE videos, and links to education news throughout the State.

Calendar

March is Read Across Maryland Month

March 9 – Celebrating Read Across Maryland at Kent Island Elementary School

March 27, 2012 – State Board Meeting, Baltimore



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

Telepresence

January 30, 2012

Westlake High School in Charles County proudly demonstrates 'Telepresence' -- classrooms connected by high-tech 2-way digital television. They serve a variety of functions, and lead the way to a new type of learning.

In the News

State School Board Issues Discipline Proposal
Baltimore Sun

No Child Left Behind Waivers, Round Two
WBAL-TV

Maryland Right to Adopt New Gifted and Talented Regulations
Baltimore Sun

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looks very good has unintended consequences.”

In the end, however, the State Board voted overwhelmingly to support the measure, embracing the notion that it is designed to strengthen equity and program quality.

The new gifted and talented policy, in development since 2006, is flexible and does not dictate details for local systems. The State Board published the regulation in December, receiving and reviewing public comment prior to their discussion and approval.

The regulation as proposed can be found here.

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