



LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION





VALUES

*Learning
Respect
Relationships
Excellence
Equity*

VISION

Future Ready

All students will graduate ready to thrive in a changing world—with the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to lead, adapt, and make a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

MISSION

To Unleash Potential

All students will receive a solid academic foundation, grounded in strong critical thinking skills, with opportunities to enhance and enrich their learning. All students will develop resilience, be adaptable, and have a lifelong passion for learning. All students will become effective communicators and collaborators predicated on meaningful relationships. All students will make a positive impact in their community and be ready for success in their personal and professional life.

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Montgomery County Public Schools

Thomas W. Taylor, Ed.D., M.B.A.
Superintendent of Schools

15 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

AS THE LEADERS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, we are proud to present our 2027 Legislative Agenda at a pivotal juncture. Our core commitment, to deliver a high-quality education to every child, remains unchanged. However, fulfilling that promise today demands an unprecedented focus on fiscal responsibility and a clear-eyed defense of the public education system.

Our agenda directly aligns with our strategic plan, *Future Ready: A Bold Vision for Every Student's Success*. But a vision is only viable with resources behind it. Strong public schools are the economic engine and civic heart of Montgomery County, yet that foundation is being tested by severe financial headwinds and systemic pressures across the state and nation.

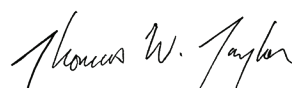
In an era of tightening budgets, rising inflation, and escalating operational costs, we recognize that every tax dollar must yield a clear, measurable return for our students. Our legislative platform demands rigorous financial accountability and strategic resource management: maximizing return on investment, protecting local budgetary autonomy, and focusing on long-term capital and cost sustainability.

Public education across the nation is facing challenges that threaten its core mission. Our 2027 Legislative Agenda takes a firm, proactive stand against the forces that could weaken our public schools: defending against funding shortfalls and unfunded mandates, resisting the erosion of local authority, and countering resource diversion. Fiscal discipline and educational excellence are not mutually exclusive; they are interdependent. By demanding financial transparency and resisting efforts to weaken public education, we ensure that MCPS remains a vibrant, resilient system where every student can thrive.

We deeply appreciate your partnership, vigilance, and continued advocacy. Together we will protect the integrity of our public schools, uphold fiscal integrity, and secure a bright future for all Montgomery County students.



Grace Rivera-Oven
President, Board of Education



Thomas W. Taylor, Ed.D. M.B.A.
Superintendent of Schools

2027 Legislative Focus Areas

STATE LAW REQUIRES that local boards of education “seek in every way to promote the interests of the schools under its jurisdiction.” Education Article, Section 4-101. In presenting this legislative platform, the Montgomery County Board of Education does just that. Ensuring that a quality education is available to all the students under our charge is paramount, but not the only matter of importance. Staff retention and satisfaction, the health and safety of students and staff, and fiscal sustainability are all equally critical to our mission.

In recent years, budgetary restraints have made these goals harder to achieve. During the FY27 budget development process, the Montgomery County Council approved an operating budget for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) of \$3.72 billion. This left a substantial funding gap between what was approved and MCPS’s original budget request. To partially close this gap, the County Council transferred \$36 million out of the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) into the operating budget, still leaving a \$36 million shortfall between required budget and approved levels.

This underfunding forced MCPS to eliminate 415 positions for FY27—255 of which were existing positions—resulting in layoffs and reassignments that directly impact services available to students and families. Furthermore, the one-time \$36 million CIP transfer creates both a deficit in the FY28 operating budget and an unsustainable capital gap that must be addressed in future budget cycles. The Montgomery County Board of Education’s 2027 Legislative Platform is designed to help address these severe fiscal challenges facing MCPS—challenges that are also affecting many school systems across the country—to ensure the school system has the resources necessary to support high-quality instruction, promote student success, and advance academic achievement.

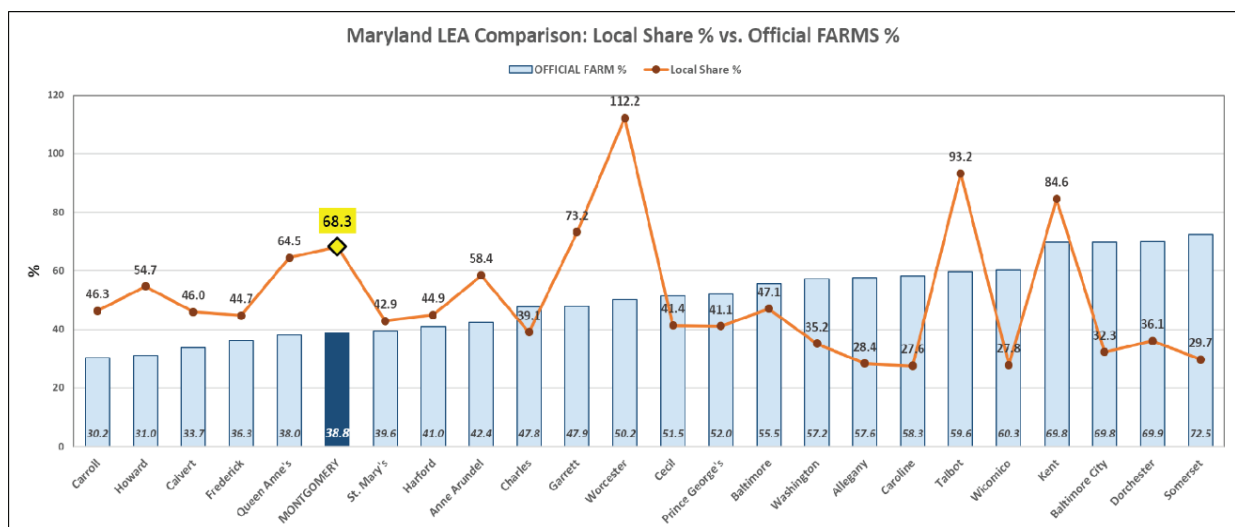


Adequate Educational Funding

IN 2021, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENACTED the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint), which is a comprehensive legislative framework designed to establish a world-class public education system in the state. Its primary purpose is to eliminate achievement gaps and ensure equitable, high-quality educational opportunities for all students. The Montgomery County Board of Education supports the goals outlined in the Blueprint and believes that investing in MCPS is essential for robust business growth, which leads to a thriving economy. This investment will also prepare students to succeed in a competitive, high-tech global workforce. As the state looks to right-size its budget, shifting costs to local jurisdictions is a common strategy. Doing so can have significant unintended consequences, including forcing school systems to redirect funds away from student learning and add significant workload burdens on staff—often without additional compensation. To fully and effectively implement the Blueprint, local school systems must receive adequate funding. The law mandates significant state investments, and any decrease in state funding will undermine the Blueprint's goals.

Local Share Calculation

The Blueprint is designed to ensure every student has the resources and support needed to thrive. In order to achieve equity across the state, a wealth equalization formula is used to determine the state share and local share of each Local Education Agency's (LEA) education funding, with counties having greater wealth contributing a higher local share. In FY27, MCPS's local share is 68.3% of the total amount allocated under the foundation formula. By comparison, the median local share for all Maryland LEAs is 44.8%. While substantial on its face, this disparity is even greater when you consider the local contribution requirement for the concentration of poverty per-pupil grant. For that program, MCPS must fund more than \$23 million of its entire \$32 million allotment, while 16 LEAs contribute nothing.



To determine local share based only on county wealth without accounting for the overall level of need creates an incomplete fiscal picture. MCPS ranks second in the state with regard to the number of enrolled FARMS-eligible students, and the needs of our students are reflected in our community at large. Our county must contribute substantial funds to the school system to support this population, and also fund social services for community members who require assistance. To alleviate this funding disparity, the Montgomery County Board of Education is interested in revisiting the manner in which local wealth is calculated to meaningfully account for the demographics and needs of both the school community and community at large.



Special Education Funding

Special education students in Maryland are entitled to dedicated additional funding allocations under the Blueprint to ensure they receive essential accommodations and support services. Unfortunately, the actual funding provided through existing state and federal formulas continues to fall drastically short of the true costs required to deliver these mandatory educational services. Historical spending data from FY21 through FY25 demonstrate that local government funding has been forced to cover, on average, approximately 80% of the total costs associated with serving special education students in MCPS. While state funding appears to have increased from FY23 through FY25, that growth was largely driven by state reimbursements for nonpublic tuition placements, which is a critical revenue stream that is now being systematically scaled back.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING FY 2021–2025					
Fund Source/Fiscal Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Federal Funding	\$40,940,788	\$40,940,788	\$41,190,057	\$45,683,015	\$46,116,074
State Funding	72,837,830	63,420,239	77,447,408	88,597,108	101,110,324
Local Funding	424,979,905	458,810,094	480,912,354	533,847,092	553,376,280
Annual Expenditures	538,758,523	563,171,121	599,549,819	668,109,215	700,602,678
Local Funding %	78.9%	81.5%	80.2%	79.9%	79.0%

These statutory cost-sharing adjustments shift a massive, compounding financial burden directly onto local taxpayers. This fiscal strain is exacerbated by broader inflationary pressures, Blueprint-mandated instructional requirements, and statutorily required increases to teachers’ minimum salaries. Although overall enrollment is declining, MCPS’s special education population continues to expand rapidly, with a growing number of students identified as requiring specialized, resource-intensive services. Expanding special education enrollment and rising operational costs, alongside declining state reimbursement percentages, create an untenable fiscal situation. The Montgomery County Board of Education asks the General Assembly to stabilize nonpublic reimbursement rates and adjust special education funding formulas to better align state investments with the actual costs of supporting high-needs students.



The Blueprint for Maryland's Future

THE BUDGET DIFFICULTIES described above are real and will continue for the foreseeable future. One of the driving factors creating these budget shortfalls is the Blueprint. The goal of this law is to transform the PreK-12 education system in Maryland so all students, regardless of where they live or their family income, get a world-class education. This is extraordinarily important, and extraordinarily expensive. One way to ease the budget burden is to build flexibility into the current Blueprint requirements so LEAs can choose how and where to spend money for the greatest impact and academic achievement in their county. This may look like delaying upcoming implementation deadlines, or allowing LEAs to prioritize Blueprint initiatives that are working while de-emphasizing those that are not. For the Blueprint to be sustainable long-term, adjustments are needed now to preserve the intent of the law while adjusting the letter of the law to match the realities faced by those responsible for implementation.

Relief from AP and IB Exam Funding Mandates

The Blueprint requires LEAs to cover the costs of Advanced Placement® (AP) and International Baccalaureate® (IB) courses and end-of-year exams for students who achieve the College and Career Ready (CCR) designation. In FY26, MCPS spent nearly \$4.8 million on AP and IB exams, which ranged from \$99 to \$124 per exam. Only approximately 25% of the exams were taken by students who are eligible for FARMS. There is currently no limit on the number of exams a CCR student may take and no eligibility requirements for families to receive exam fee assistance. The Montgomery County Board of Education is interested in exploring ways to curtail costs associated with AP/IB exams by utilizing a needs-based sliding scale for exam fee coverage. This would result in MCPS paying the full cost of exams for low-income families while requiring higher-income families to pay all or some of the fee.



Workforce Development Board Collaboration Adjustment

The Blueprint requires LEAs to distribute a set amount to local workforce development boards in order to support a career counseling program for middle and high school students. In FY27, the amount is \$65.17 per pupil, requiring MCPS to set aside more than \$9.8 million for WorkSource Montgomery (WSM) so their employees can provide career counseling services to MCPS students. A small portion of the funds are reallocated back to MCPS to allow school staff to coordinate services between and within school clusters. The program helps students choose one or more post-college and career readiness pathways provided through the Blueprint. These services are important, and at least some can be provided by school system employees.

Although the program provides services only to middle and high school students, the distribution to WSM is determined by multiplying the per-pupil amount by the total enrollment in MCPS. Elementary students do not benefit from this program; still, MCPS must divert funds to WSM on behalf of that cohort of students. Recapturing the per-pupil allotment for elementary school students would allow MCPS to retain more of its funding that could be used to advance the educational interests of all students in MCPS.



Teacher Planning Time (Funding Protection During Collaborative Time Delay)

During the 2025 legislative session, the General Assembly passed the *Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act*, which adjusted some provisions of the Blueprint. Through this legislation, the implementation of one provision—collaborative time for educators—was paused for four years (from FY26 to FY30). This adjustment resulted in a reduction of the foundation formula—the base funding LEAs receive to educate every public school student in Maryland.

The Montgomery County Board of Education agrees with delaying the implementation of this provision; however, the resulting decrease in per-pupil funding was, and still is, untenable. In 2025, the General Assembly applied a hold harmless provision to the funding associated with at-promise students. The same should apply to the foundation formula. This is core to what LEAs have been asking for since the Blueprint was enacted: slow down the implementation of portions of the law so we can have flexibility to focus on the areas that are working. This only works if funding is available. Our students' needs, and the associated costs, are not dependent on increased collaborative time for teachers. The amount of funding available to LEAs to educate students shouldn't be either.



Degree Requirement for Prekindergarten Paraprofessionals

Starting in 2027–2028, all Pre-K paraprofessionals must hold an associate degree or Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. It is imperative that individuals working in our classrooms, with our students, meet a minimum level of proficiency. However, requiring low-wage employees to complete costly (\$1,000+) and time-intensive coursework creates severe hiring barriers during a workforce shortage.

A more effective option may be to require paraeducators who are subject to the new credential requirement to complete asynchronous early learning modules, free to the employee and provided by MSDE, that include critical early childhood pedagogy and other imperative topics. Experienced staff would also have an annual professional development requirement as a way to ensure that all staff are highly qualified to provide the best care to students in their charge.

School Facilities & Capital Funding

ADEQUATE CAPITAL FUNDS ENSURE LEAs can maintain existing facilities, complete necessary renovations, and construct new buildings when needed. These activities are necessary to allow MCPS to provide safe and secure learning and working environments for students and staff. Current available funding for construction projects is inadequate, resulting in schools suffering from deferred maintenance and other mounting issues. Additionally, because capital funding is not included in the Blueprint formula, meeting the law's prekindergarten expansion goals may create additional capital funding gaps that would need to be addressed to prepare facilities to house the programs.

Built to Learn 2.0

The Built to Learn Act of 2020 represented one of the most significant investments in Maryland's public school infrastructure in state history. Recognizing that traditional capital funding alone could not keep pace with the growing demand for new schools, renovations, and critical building systems, the General Assembly authorized the Maryland Stadium Authority to issue up to \$2.2 billion in revenue bonds to accelerate public school construction statewide. The program supplemented the state's traditional Capital Improvement Program, providing local school systems with an additional funding source to address aging facilities, overcrowding, and modernization needs while advancing the goals of the Blueprint.

The original Built to Learn program has been transformational. Unfortunately, the need it was designed to address has only intensified. A Built to Learn 2.0 program would provide Maryland with an opportunity to build on the success of the original initiative while addressing today's fiscal realities—inflation, labor shortages, supply chain pressures, and increasingly stringent building performance and sustainability requirements. By establishing a new dedicated source of state investment in school construction, the General Assembly would help local school systems accelerate the replacement and modernization of aging facilities, improve building infrastructure, expand capacity where needed, and create learning environments that support student achievement for decades to come.



Special Funding Designation for Historic Buildings

MCPS, like other LEAs across the state, has extensive infrastructure needs related to school facilities. These facility challenges are significantly exacerbated when rehabilitating, renovating, or maintaining school buildings officially designated as historic landmarks. Construction and maintenance work on these specialized sites is often more challenging, time-consuming, and expensive than traditional school facility projects because of preservation mandates and architectural requirements.

At the same time, it is imperative that public buildings with historic significance are properly protected and preserved so they remain functional and available to future generations. In order to ensure that these unique properties are given the proper care and attention they need and deserve, Maryland should create a dedicated state capital fund accessible to LEAs that carry the financial responsibility of caring for these aging, historic properties. This specialized funding stream would allow school systems to maintain historical structures without diverting core capital funds away from standard school modernizations and capacity projects.



Foundational Principles

Preserving Local Autonomy

The Maryland State Board of Education sets broad statewide policies, but local boards are best equipped to address their communities' distinct needs. Maintaining local decision-making authority enables the Montgomery County Board of Education to allocate resources efficiently, integrate community input, and adapt operational strategies for its students and families.

The Montgomery County Board of Education Supports

- ▶ Preserving the full authority of local school boards over policy, administration, curriculum, graduation requirements, assessments, school calendars, school start times, testing, procurement, and operational decisions.
- ▶ Reaffirming that local boards hold sole authority to establish public charter schools, supported by a fair local appeals process.

The Montgomery County Board of Education Opposes

- ▶ Any state legislative efforts to mandate curriculum, dictate assessments, or reduce board authority, as well as executive or agency proposals that impose unfunded mandates.
- ▶ Efforts to bypass local school board authority to expand charter school governance or weaken academic and fiscal accountability standards.

Adequate School Funding and Capital Investments

Sustained, equitable state funding is essential to deliver high-quality academic programming and modern school facilities. State financial commitments must keep pace with inflation, support the whole child, and provide dedicated resources for high-need student populations without shifting cost burdens onto local taxpayers.

The Montgomery County Board of Education Supports

- ▶ Full commitment to funding the Blueprint, backed by annual inflation adjustments and the retention of all public funds exclusively for public education.
- ▶ Increased flexibility for LEAs with regard to the use of Blueprint funds.
- ▶ A robust state investment in Early Childhood Education/Pre-K, including transportation.
- ▶ Availability of adequate funds to support special education, English Language Learners, career and technical education, computer science, advanced academics, instructional technology, and nutritional programs.
- ▶ A comprehensive statewide school construction and renovation funding plan, featuring targeted legislative funding increases and green, energy efficient incentives to address critical facility needs like HVAC upgrades.

The Montgomery County Board of Education Opposes

- ▶ Any use of public funds for private or parochial education, including vouchers, tuition tax credits, or direct aid.
- ▶ Reductions in the state cost-share percentage, increased local funding shares for nonpublic special education placements, state cuts to English Language Learner funds, or state mandates lacking dedicated revenue allocations.



Recruitment and Retention

Attracting and retaining high-quality educators and staff is critical to the success of our public schools. A resilient workforce depends on competitive compensation, equitable entry pathways, affordable living conditions, and ongoing, culturally responsive professional growth.

The Montgomery County Board of Education Supports

- ▶ “Grow Your Own” programs and flexible alternative certification routes to build a strong, diverse talent pipeline reflecting the student body.
- ▶ Competitive compensation, salary increases, and targeted financial incentives, including local workforce housing affordability programs, to make educational careers sustainable.
- ▶ Dedicated resources for tailored professional development focused on cultural responsiveness, implicit bias, and equitable instructional practices.

Safe and Secure Learning and Working Environments for All

Safe schools require a multi-faceted approach that balances physical security with robust mental health and social-emotional support. Fostering safe, welcoming learning environments requires proactive intervention, trauma-informed practices, and local flexibility to address safety challenges effectively. By fostering environments where all students develop skills to make positive, healthy decisions, MCPS upholds its core values of learning, relationships, respect, excellence, and equity.

The Montgomery County Board of Education Supports

- ▶ Expanded funding and community partner access for school-based mental health services, suicide awareness and prevention programs, and holistic staff training on trauma-informed care.
- ▶ Resources for restorative justice models to reduce disproportionate discipline rates among Black, Hispanic/Latino, and special education students, while fostering an inclusive, nondiscriminatory environment.
- ▶ Dedicated funding for gang prevention and targeted intervention strategies, integrated universal emergency response systems, and cross-agency information-sharing partnerships.

The Montgomery County Board of Education Opposes

- ▶ Statewide approaches or rigid mandates that limit a local school system's ability to adapt and respond to unique, local safety and security circumstances.



For more information about this document, please contact:
Patricia Ursprung, Coordinator, Legislative Affairs,
patricia_a_ursprung@mcpsmd.org



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