



Carroll County Public Schools

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Stephen H. Guthrie
Superintendent

December 4, 2013

The Honorable Joseph Getty
James Senate Office Building, Room 401
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

Re: Education Reform

Dear Senator Getty:

This letter serves as a follow-up to our October 23, 2013 Joint Board of Education/Delegation meeting. Specifically, the Board of Education wishes to provide you with a clear statement on Maryland education reform that has been taking place since 2010 as it relates to Carroll County Public Schools.

First, we would like to clarify terms associated with the third phase of educational reform in Maryland. What has generally been referred to as “Common Core” is only one of three major components of the educational reform efforts taking place since 2010, but has been inaccurately generalized to encompass all reform efforts. While these components are interrelated, they are separate and distinct initiatives with different objectives, timelines, and constituents. A brief summary of the reform’s three major components follows:

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) – Adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010 and passed by the General Assembly in 2012. We have been incrementally aligning our math and English Language Arts curriculum over the last three years and are currently at full integration. The changes to our curriculum needed for full alignment only represent approximately 20% of new material in those subject areas. All curriculum revisions and changes to our Program of Studies to align with CCSS were approved in public with multiple opportunities for public input.

Teacher and Principal Evaluation – Revises the process of evaluating the effectiveness of teachers to include a significant component related to student growth. This significant measure has been interpreted by the State Board of Education to include 20% of standardized state assessments and 30% local student growth methods. This portion of education reform was adopted by the General Assembly by the passing of the Education Reform Act of 2010. We are currently working to waive the timeline associated with these new evaluation standards.

PARCC Assessments – New measures of assessing student mastery of core content in grades 3 - 12. These state assessments intended to measure student achievement of core contents in schools were passed by the General Assembly in 2012. It will be field tested this school year and is scheduled for full implementation next school year.

The General Assembly's direct tie-in to educational reform efforts across the state occurred with the passing of the following bills:

- 2010 Session – Education Reform Act of 2010 – Incorporated the RTTT Teacher and Principal Evaluation System into State Law.
<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?tab=subject3&ys=2010rs/billfile/hb1263.htm>
- 2012 Session – Adoption of Common Core and State Assessments (PARCC) –
<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?ys=2012rs/billfile/sb0293.htm>
- 2013 Session – College and Career Readiness.
<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?id=sb0740&stab=01&pid=billpage&tab=subject3&ys=2013RS>

Currently, the Board of Education finds itself in an environment of waning public support to implement the aforementioned reform efforts. To further complicate our efforts, there is significant misinformation regarding the reform's scope and the extent of local control we have implementing the reform efforts. The challenges that we continue to address include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Providing professional development to teachers on locally developed curricula that effectively addresses current and future common core standards;
- Quantifying and implementing the 20% student growth component for new evaluation standards with new, unreleased student assessments;
- Implementing associated curricula revisions with fidelity while continuing to administer Maryland School Assessments (MSA) that are not aligned with the new standards and have no tangible benefit;
- Communicating with our parents and other constituent groups as we attempt to help them understand why and how school systems are transforming with new curricula and new assessments;
- Providing accurate information to advocates opposed to the Common Core Standards;
- Working collaboratively with Boards of Education, County Government officials and Maryland elected leaders to advocate for and provide the human and fiscal resources required to successfully achieve the significant changes being made; and
- Continuing to instill community confidence in Carroll County Public Schools as direction from the Maryland State Department of Education changes.

However, we want to make it clear that the Board of Education is committed to moving ahead with our legal obligation for educational reform as we believe that once fully implemented all Maryland students and as a result, all Maryland citizens will benefit.

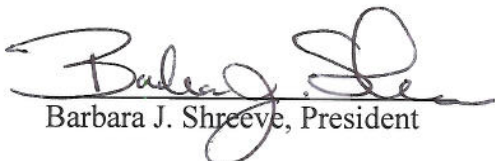
As legislators take up discussions with education reform during the 2014 legislative session, we ask that you support the following changes to the implementation timeline:

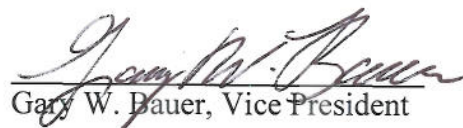
- Ensure that full public awareness and participation is embedded into the process prior to approving additional mandates for curricular changes.
- Expand the timeline for implementation of additional academic standards connected to science and social studies include sufficient time and resources to provide teachers with the professional development needed to learn best practices for instruction.
- Provide at least one additional year for field testing PARCC assessments. This additional time will allow schools to perfect the logistics associated with new testing protocols. Further, it will allow school systems additional time to test and expand wireless technology needed to administer the next assessments.
- Provide additional state financing to assist school systems with the purchase of computer devices and the installation of wireless infrastructure needed to support on-line testing required under the new PARCC assessments. Carroll County Public Schools estimates \$3 million of new capital revenue will be needed to fully implement a functional wireless network at each of our schools and the Central Office.
- Eliminate the Maryland State Assessment (MSA) program during this transitional period.

We appreciate your willingness to continue to hear our concerns and work collaboratively to address priorities with viable solutions.

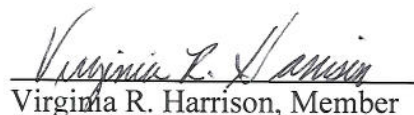
Sincerely,

Board of Education of Carroll County:

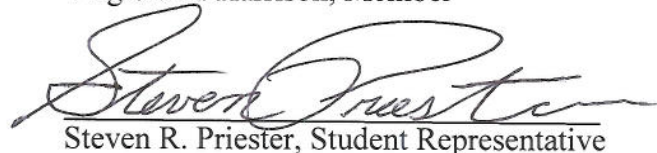

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