



MSDE BULLETIN

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MSDE COMPLETES DRAFT PLAN FOR NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACTIONS

MSDE this week will send to the U.S. Department of Education its plans for complying with the accountability measures included in No Child Left Behind.

The application will be reviewed by federal officials and returned to MSDE sometime in the next month. Department officials then will have the opportunity to finalize the application. The process should be complete early this spring.

MSDE officials provided State Board members with a preview of the plan at this week's meeting. A primary part of the application is Maryland's proposal on how it will assess Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Under No Child Left Behind, schools, school districts and the state will be judged on how well students are moving toward meeting state standards in reading and math, as well as on attendance and graduation rates.

No Child Left Behind requires that state educational systems be assessed on how well certain subgroups do on the measures, by five different racial categories (American Indian/ Alaskan native, Asian/Pacific Islander, African-American, White [non-Hispanic], and Hispanic. Three special services categories – limited English proficient (LEP), special education, and economically disadvantaged – also will be reviewed.

Maryland's plan for measuring AYP attempts to simplify the process, while maintaining the intent of No Child Left Behind, according to Mark Moody, the former Assistant State Superintendent who helped develop the plan. ■

NEW POLICY PROPOSED THAT WOULD ALLOW TRANSFERS FROM UNSAFE SCHOOLS

Among the many provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act is one that will allow parents to transfer their children from schools designated as "persistently dangerous." The MSDE Board this week approved a draft policy defining what is meant by persistently dangerous.

Under the draft definition, "persistently dangerous schools" would be those in which each year for a period of three consecutive school years, the total number of student suspensions for more than 10 days for unsafe behavior – or expulsions – equals 2 ½ percent or more of the student population. The draft regulation defines unsafe behavior as arson or fire; drugs; explosives; firearms; other guns; other weapons; physical attack on a student; physical attack on a school system employee or other adult; and sexual assault.

Schools under probationary status are those where that amount of unsafe activity has taken place for two consecutive school years. Safe schools are defined as those that have not been placed on probationary or persistently dangerous status.

No Child Left Behind includes the transfer option for persistently dangerous schools, much as it includes such an option for "failing" schools. However, while the law allows Title I funds to be spent for transportation of students from failing schools, it provides no funding for dangerous schools.

Lynn Linde, branch chief of Student Services for MSDE, reviewed the draft regulation with the State Board at this week's meeting. She noted that early analysis of information from the state's districts indicates that few schools would be considered "persistently dangerous" under the proposed definition.

The draft regulation will be published in *Maryland Register* on March 21, and the public will be allowed to comment on the regulation through April 22. Final regulations are scheduled to be considered by the State Board at its May meeting. ■

PAUL REED SMITH HONORED BY BOARD FOR HIS COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

Maryland guitar maker Paul Reed Smith brought a \$12,000 guitar out of its case at this week's State Board meeting.

"Don't ask me to play it," Smith told the Board. "I didn't bring along any amp."

What Smith did bring along was an abiding love for education and the state's students, which is the real reason Board members invited him to Baltimore. Smith, founder of PRS Guitars, was honored by the Board for his commitment to education – which last year included a donation of a PRS guitar to every public high school in the state.

But Smith is more than a philanthropist. He often speaks to high school students about their hopes and dreams, helping them to set a course that will make their dreams come true. A graduate of Bowie High School, Smith said he did much the same thing before starting his own business in his mother's

(more)

PAUL REED SMITH HONORED BY BOARD FOR HIS COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION (Cont.)

house. Today, PRS Guitars ranks among the nation's leading high-end guitar companies, making electric guitars for such artists as Carlos Santana and other members of the rock-and-roll elite.

The support Smith had from his teachers growing up played a role in his success, he said, leading to his unique involvement in education. "I'm driven to do it, because those kind of mentors in my life changed my life," he explained. Working with kids, Smith added, "is an absolute hoot."

Board members thanked Smith for his on going work, presenting him with a plaque. "If we are going to build a world-class education system, we need public-private partnerships like this," noted Reginald Dunn, vice president of the State Board. ■

SCHOOL READINESS PLAN PREPARED FOR PRESENTATION TO THE LEGISLATURE

A comprehensive plan for pre-school education has been prepared by the Leadership in Action Program (LAP) for presentation to the Maryland General Assembly this year. Representatives of LAP met with the State Board this week to brief them on the goals of the plan.

Rolf Grafwallner, section chief of MSDE's Early Learning Programs branch, and Heather Weston of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, outlined "Achieving School Readiness" for Board members. The five-year plan was originally requested by the Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families.

Six broad goals have been identified to improve preschool readiness: all children will have access to adequate child care; parents will succeed in their role as their child's first teacher; preschool children will receive the necessary income support and health benefits to ensure they arrive at school healthy; All early care/pre-school teachers will be appropriately trained; all Maryland citizens will understand the value of quality care; and the state will provide the infrastructure, resources and oversight to ensure success.

"Our intent is to make a long-term difference, but also to see some immediate results," noted Weston. ■

BOARD REVIEWS BALTIMORE CITY, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY BUDGET SITUATIONS

Budget woes that have plagued both the Baltimore City and Prince George's County school systems were given a review by the State Board at this week's meeting.

Carmen Russo, chief executive of the Baltimore city schools, and Iris Metts, who holds a similar position with Prince Georges County, addressed the board, answering questions about budget shortfalls that have caused concern throughout their districts.

Russo said her staff is working quickly to close a \$31.2 million budget gap discovered late last fall, using such methods as elimination of unfilled positions, furloughs of some district office staff, and other measures. "We are all very concerned and upset," she noted, but added, "We really believe this is fixable."

Student State Board member Caroline Gifford from Wilde Lake High School in Howard County said the budget deficit hurts students in the city. "The schools weren't built so that teachers could have jobs; they were built for students to get an education," she said.

Prince George's Public School officials believe they have turned the corner on their budget problems. However, Metts said that the system will need additional money from Prince George's county in order to close the achievement gap.

State Board members urged county education officials to accelerate academic improvement, and added that they expected test scores to begin improving. ■

MSDE-TV TO FEATURE HIGHLIGHTS FROM EACH STATE BOARD MEETING

There is a new way to learn more about the news and information coming from the Maryland State Board of Education. MSDE-TV, a service of MSDE's Communications and Strategic Planning Office, will provide "News From The Board," a monthly program you can download onto your personal computer.

Simply go to the MSDE Web site, www.marylandpublicschools.org, and click on the MSDE-TV icon to access programming. A two- to three-minute capsule of each meeting will be provided, beginning with the January 2003 meeting held this week. ■

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