

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM | 2024

**Policy and Governance Committee
Millard House II , Superintendent**

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE SUPERINTENDENT



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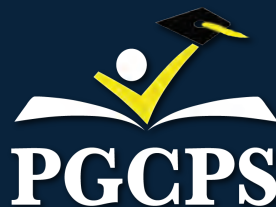
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Policy and Governance Committee Charge

The Policy & Governance Committee is charged with facilitating short and long-range strategic planning for the school system, providing oversight of Board policy, and legislative and government matters involving federal, state, county, and municipal governmental agencies and officials. The committee shall ensure that Board governing policies are current, and compliant with federal, state, and county laws, and consistent with best practices in public education. The committee, in collaboration with the Superintendent shall develop the legislative agenda for the year for the Board to consider.



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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October 17, 2023

Dear Prince George's County Public Schools Community:

I am excited to introduce our latest tool that will serve as a roadmap for how Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) engages with elected officials to enhance our ability to influence and shape legislation that directly impacts our community.

The 2024 Legislative Platform is an official position around legislative measures we support, oppose or consider essential for the betterment of our students, staff and families — a significant step towards improving communication and collaboration with lawmakers.

Through this platform, we hope to advocate for our interests while also forging stronger ties with state and local lawmakers to ensure they are well-informed about the unique needs of our school system. By proactively engaging in the legislative process, we hope to foster an environment where legislation can best support the evolving needs of PGCPS.

The creation of a formal avenue for expressing our school system's needs demonstrates my commitment to improving communication and positioning PGCPS to receive the support we need to deliver high quality education to all students.

I encourage you to review the platform and join us in this critical effort to strengthen our partnership with lawmakers, advocate for our students, and promote our school system's mission of excellence.

Sincerely,

Millard House II
Superintendent

INDEX

Prince George's County Public Schools Key Points

Government Relations

Legislative Priorities for 2024

Local School Board Authority	8
Staffing and Recruitment	9
Curriculum, Assessment, and Grading	10
Funding For Success	11
School and Community Safety	13
Student Welfare	14
Special Education	15
Charter Schools	16

Prince George's County Public Schools At A Glance

Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) is a prominent school district in the state of Maryland. PGCPS serves a diverse population of students in the suburban area surrounding Washington, D.C. It is one of the largest and most populous school districts in the state of Maryland, with a mission to provide high-quality education and prepare all students for success in the global community.

Here are some key points about Prince George's County Public Schools:

Diversity

PGCPS is known for its cultural and ethnic diversity, with students representing a wide range of backgrounds, languages, and cultures. This diversity is one of the district's strengths, as it fosters a rich learning environment and prepares students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

Academic Programs

The district offers a comprehensive range of academic programs, including Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways, English Language Development for multilingual learners (ELD) and special education services. These programs aim to meet the student population's diverse learning needs and interests.

Community Engagement

PGCPS places a strong emphasis on community engagement and involvement. The district collaborates with parents, community organizations, and local businesses to enhance the educational experience of its students. This partnership helps create a supportive and enriching learning environment.

Technology Integration

Like many modern school districts, PGCPS has made efforts to integrate technology into the learning process. This includes providing students and teachers with devices, access to digital resources, online learning platforms, and tools to enhance instruction and communication.

Innovative Initiatives

The district has implemented various innovative initiatives to improve educational outcomes. These may include personalized learning approaches, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs, and other strategies aimed at preparing students for the demands of the 21st century.

Professional Development

PGCPS strongly emphasizes providing professional development opportunities for its educators. This helps ensure that teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality instruction and support the diverse needs of their students.

Graduation Rates

The district's graduation rates have been an area of focus, with efforts to increase the percentage of students who graduate on time and are prepared for post-secondary education or the workforce.

While PGCPS has many strengths, it also faces challenges common to large urban/suburban school districts. These may include issues related to funding, infrastructure, teacher retention, and addressing the unique needs of a diverse student population.



Government Relations Key Components

Policy Advocacy: One of the primary objectives of government relations is to advocate for policies and administrative procedures that align with the interests of PGCPS. This involves conducting research, formulating positions, and effectively communicating these to policymakers.

Stakeholder Engagement: The Office of Government Relations, Compliance, and Procedures (OGRCP) works to identify and engage with key stakeholders, including elected officials, government agencies, regulators, and advocacy groups. Building and maintaining these relationships is crucial for influencing decisions and gaining support for initiatives.

Legislative Affairs: This component focuses on interacting with legislative bodies such as parliaments, congresses, and city councils. OGRCP will track and analyze proposed legislation, provide input, and advocate for or against bills that impact their organization's interests.

Regulatory Affairs: This aspect involves engaging with government agencies responsible for implementing and enforcing regulations. It includes activities such as commenting on proposed regulations, participating in rule-making processes, and seeking exemptions or waivers when necessary.

Issue Management: OGRCP will monitor and address emerging issues that could affect their organization. This proactive approach helps identify potential challenges and opportunities in a rapidly changing political and regulatory landscape.

Compliance and Ethics: Ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements is fundamental in government relations. This includes monitoring lobbying disclosure laws, campaign finance regulations, compliance with implementing passed legislation, and other compliance matters.

In conclusion, government relations are a dynamic and indispensable discipline that plays a critical role in the functioning of modern societies. It enables organizations to navigate the intricate web of government institutions, advocate for their interests, and contribute to the formulation of policies and administrative procedures that shape our collective future. By engaging with stakeholders, participating in the political process, and adhering to ethical principles, government relations professionals help bridge the divide between the public and private sectors, ultimately fostering a more informed, responsive, and accountable system of governance.



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC
SCHOOLS
SASSCER ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2024

Local School Board Authority

The Prince George's County Board of Education (Board) believes that it is essential for it to retain its decision-making authority in accordance with Section 4-101 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland which provides that educational matters that affect the counties shall be under the control of a county board of education. Additionally, Prince George's County Board of Education, as required by the Education Article, is responsible for determining the educational policies for the school system with the advice of the Superintendent.

The Board believes that state and local initiatives should not limit the Board's decision-making authority for the reason that these initiatives could weaken the bond between the Board and the local community. The relationship between the Board and the Community relies on participation by parents/guardians and other community members in the educational process to ensure that Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) provides its students with an education anchored in excellence and equity.

PGCPS supports:

- The Board of Education's (Board) control of educational policy, curriculum, budgets, and administration
- The Board's appointment authority for the Superintendent of Schools
- The Board's authority to govern its operation

PGCPS opposes:

- Legislation that reduces the authority of the Board and the Board's governance and budgetary authority
- Legislation that interferes with the Board's authority to negotiate a contract with its Superintendent
- Legislation that creates unfunded mandates

Staffing and Recruitment

PGCPS seeks to recruit and retain culturally diverse educators who embody excellence and inspire greatness in others. The Board recognizes that recruiting and retaining highly effective educators is one of the most important factors in cultivating world-class talent within our students and providing every PGCPS student with a premier education characterized by innovative, relevant, and accessible learning and development opportunities that build 21st-century competencies.

Second in the state for Nationally Board Certified Teachers (NBCT), PGCPS leads the industry! Mentorship, monthly professional development and a robust leadership pipeline support teachers seeking to advance their careers.

The Board acknowledges the need for legislation that creates incentives to assist in attracting and retaining highly-qualified teachers, related service providers, and support staff to ensure educational excellence in equity.

PGCPS supports:

- Uniform teacher career ladders so that all MD school systems have the same career ladders
- A waiver of standardized teacher testing requirements for those who cannot pass the required exams after multiple attempts and replace the required teacher testing requirement with local education agency (LEA) validation of the teacher's skills based on their evaluation status of Highly Effective for three (3) years
- Allowing teachers working in other states to come to Maryland without having to meet recertification requirements. **(68% of teachers are imported from out-of-state)**. Usually, these teachers have certifications from the state in which they came. Maryland, however, does not have reciprocity with the other states, requiring these teachers to meet additional certification requirements.)
- The development of a bus driver recruitment program
- Legislation to provide funding to supplement local funds for salaries that match private industry salaries in order to improve the recruitment of IT staff especially in the area administrative applications and cybersecurity



Curriculum, Assessments, and Grading

The State Board of Education is responsible for establishing curriculum standards and graduation requirements. The local board and the superintendent are entrusted with the authority to adopt curriculum, courses of study, and the selection of textbooks and instructional materials to ensure that State standards are met, and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements. The Board believes that it is critical that the Board and the Superintendent maintain this authority to allow for PGCPS' own highly-qualified staff to develop curriculum and assessments relevant to the needs of students attending PGCPS.

COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations) 13A.03.02.08 states that each local school system shall develop a written policy on grading and reporting. Each local school system will file its grading and reporting policies with the State Superintendent of Schools. The regulation provides local school systems with the flexibility for establishing the grading scale, calculation of a final grade for a course, attendance factors and grade-changing procedures. Procedures have been developed according to COMAR regulations. (Administrative Procedures 5121.1, 5121.2 and 5121.3)

The Board believes that all students can learn and achieve at high levels, that rigorous performance standards and achievement standards are essential components of developing and delivering quality instruction, and that regular assessment is an critical component of an effective teaching and learning environment and an important tool in measuring students' learning. (Board Policy 5121)

PGCPS supports:

- Legislation that would require only one Blueprint plan to be submitted to MSDE and a singular set of requirements
- Flexibility in the options for delivery of virtual instructional programs
- Legislation that allows for continued flexibility with grading

PGCPS opposes:

- Any increase in state assessment requiring an increase in testing time for any given student
- Any legislation that mandates or prescribes curriculum and related unfunded mandates
- Statewide controls over Student Information Systems

Funding for Success

Funding PGCPS is not merely an expenditure; it is an investment in the future of our children and community. Adequate funding ensures that public schools can fulfill their vital role in providing equitable access to quality education for all students. It empowers educators, modernizes infrastructure, expands enrichment opportunities, supports diverse learners, and promotes innovation. By prioritizing the funding of public schools, we lay the foundation for a prosperous, knowledgeable, and inclusive society, where every individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

As expectations, standards, and challenges increase, improving student performance and well-being, and ensuring every student, in every grade, receives rigorous, engaging and relevant instruction that prepares students to be college-prepared, career-ready, and life-engaged is dependent on adequate, sustainable and equitable funding .

The Board recognizes that PGCPSS is a tax supported entity and recognizes its responsibility for ensuring a high level of integrity and commitment to responsible stewardship of resources. Acceptance of local, State and federal funds requires the proper disposition and use of such funds, Board property and resources by all employees. The Board expects all employees, members of the Board, and others doing business with the Board and/or providing services to PGCPSS to conduct themselves with high ethical and moral standards. (Policy 0109)

PGCPS supports:

- Increased State funding to offset the ESSER funding drop off
- Full funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

Food and Nutrition

- A mandated universal free lunch program only if the State funds this mandate
- A mandate requiring that all families attending a CEP school must complete an alternative income form in place of the FARMS form.

Technology

- Increased State funding for converting a virtual program into a virtual school and for virtual instructional programs
- Funding for professional development opportunities for staff in the area of cybersecurity

Construction/Facilities

- A mandate for sufficient P3 funding and a larger State contribution without a requirement for PGCPSS to match any increase in State funding for the two additional schools mandated under Education Article §4-126.1
- A revision in the Build to Learn Act that will require the State to begin making payments to PGCPSS through the Prince George's County P3 Fund in FY25, not FY26 as currently written
- The continuation of the Aging School Program and increased funding from the Aging Schools program
- A mandate for an allocation of State capital improvement funds in addition to the Built to Learn program funding that allows for the expansion of pre-kindergarten and CTE education facilities

PGCPS supports:

- Increased State funding for school construction and renovation projects that is commensurate with the modern-day costs of designing, building, renovating, operating, and maintaining high-quality learning environments
- Continued funding of current school construction programs including the Built to Learn Act while simultaneously opposing any legislation that would limit local authority over school facility design, construction, procurement, maintenance, and operations
- A special grant to assist with the funding of the Suitland High School Campus modernization of at least \$100M
- An exemption to uncommonly rigorous stormwater management requirements, including during the construction period

Transportation/Sustainability

- Funding for electric buses and the charging infrastructure
- Funding to support strengthening and expanding transportation options for local school systems

PGCPS Opposes:

- Repealing State law requiring the County to fully dedicate Telecommunications and Energy Tax revenue towards funding PGCPS operating expenses



Budget Highlights

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2023 Estimated	FY 2024 Requested
REVENUE				
Board Sources	11,436,489	12,931,442	12,931,441	11,356,052
County Sources	817,161,641	846,997,300	846,997,300	931,609,354
Federal Sources	230,976,260	315,921,071	315,921,071	231,738,135
State Sources	1,273,521,075	1,366,810,606	1,366,810,607	1,543,631,214
Fund Balance - Prior Year	-	117,028,351	117,028,351	70,000,000
Total Revenue:	\$ 2,333,095,465	\$ 2,659,688,770	\$ 2,659,688,770	\$ 2,788,334,755
EXPENDITURES				
Restricted and Unrestricted				
Unrestricted Programs	2,053,607,570	2,239,810,461	2,239,810,461	2,463,993,735
Restricted Programs	307,482,035	419,878,309	419,878,309	324,341,022
Total Expenditures:	\$ 2,361,089,605	\$ 2,659,688,770	\$ 2,659,688,770	\$ 2,788,334,757
Category				
Administration	82,513,031	86,582,782	86,582,782	89,194,418
Mid-Level Administration	145,310,194	159,747,641	159,747,641	168,551,709
Instructional Salaries	775,768,169	867,678,434	867,678,434	943,140,155
Textbooks and Instructional Materials	32,553,632	62,934,167	62,934,167	42,483,119
Other Instructional Costs	174,720,228	169,167,706	169,167,706	160,680,889
Special Education	300,783,267	331,953,458	331,953,458	354,703,044
Student Personnel Services	29,686,044	64,972,924	64,972,924	63,912,161
Student Health Services	37,551,040	25,280,240	25,280,240	29,760,386
Student Transportation Services	103,557,033	115,513,933	115,513,933	141,755,735
Operation of Plant	147,176,141	164,394,263	164,394,263	157,568,932
Maintenance of Plant	53,471,277	59,591,999	59,591,999	65,543,152
Fixed Charges	456,125,718	512,545,808	512,545,808	529,207,075
Food Service Subsidy	4,709,000	6,568,360	6,568,360	8,644,862
Community Services	1,977,553	5,582,055	5,582,055	6,014,120
Capital Outlay	15,187,278	27,175,000	27,175,000	27,175,000
Total Expenditures:	\$ 2,361,089,606	\$ 2,659,688,770	\$ 2,659,688,770	\$ 2,788,334,757

School and Community Safety

A safe school environment is essential for fostering an atmosphere of trust and security. When students feel safe, they are more likely to be engaged and attentive in their studies. Conversely, in an environment where fear or insecurity persists, the focus shifts from learning to survival instincts, hindering educational progress. Students should be able to concentrate on their studies without the burden of worrying about their personal safety. The role of school safety extends far beyond the classroom walls. It acts as a foundation for building better communities.

Community safety is the cornerstone of a thriving and harmonious society. It encompasses a collective responsibility to ensure the well-being and security of all its members. This involves not only the prevention of crime but also the creation of an environment where individuals feel secure in their homes, workplaces, and public spaces. PGCPS is committed to fostering open communication and trust between law enforcement agencies, local government, and residents.

In recent years, the prevalence of school-related violence and crises has underscored the urgency of implementing effective safety measures. Tragic incidents have prompted a collective call to action to fortify the security of educational institutions. By prioritizing school safety, we demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding the future generation and promoting a culture of empathy, respect, and mutual support.

PGCPS desires to prioritize safety and serve as a model for responsible citizenship and societal values. Students should learn invaluable life skills such as conflict resolution, empathy, and responsibility by observing how their educators and administrators handle safety concerns. A safe school environment cultivates trust, emotional well-being, and responsible citizenship. By prioritizing school safety, we invest in the future, ensuring that the next generation is prepared to face the challenges of the world with confidence, empathy, and resilience. It is a collective responsibility that requires the concerted efforts of educators, parents, communities, and policymakers to create safe, nurturing spaces for all students to thrive.

PGCPS supports:

- Legislation mandating the safe storage of firearms to prevent accessibility by students
- Funding to support programming and advocacy for the reduction of gun violence
- Funding for crime prevention programs for younger students
- Increased funding for wrap-around services and behavior support services for students and families
- Continuation of the Maryland Safe to Learn Act grant funding for school building security measures, such as: updating camera equipment - analog to digital for certain designated schools, metal detectors, etc.

Student Welfare

Public school student wellness encompasses a broad spectrum of physical, mental, and emotional well-being factors that contribute to a student's overall health and academic success. It is a crucial aspect of education, as it directly impacts a student's ability to learn, engage, and thrive in a classroom environment.

Physical wellness in public schools involves ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals, regular physical activity, and proper healthcare. They can also provide resources and education on topics like nutrition, sexual health, and substance abuse prevention. Furthermore, fostering a sense of belonging and community within the school setting is crucial for student wellness. By prioritizing physical, mental, and emotional wellness, our programs will contribute to healthier individuals but also to a more conducive learning environment that sets students up for success.

PGCPS supports:

- Additional funding for more professional school counselors, school psychologists, and addiction counselors to improve the student to staff ratios
- Funding for the training of parents and students on prevention of drug addiction and drug treatment centers to be provided and funded by the State
- Budget enhancements for the provision of professional development outside of the school day for teachers, counselors, and for resources regarding behavioral health issues, positive behavior intervention systems (PBIS), restorative practices, de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed interventions, etc.
- Legislation mandating the provision of community crisis services
- Legislation that supports school systems that employ school nurses (not managed by the Health Department) to become Vaccine for Children (VFC) providers and supports school systems that employ school nurses (not managed by the Health Department) to become Vaccine for Children (VFC) providers
- Legislation that supports funding for the expansion of four (4) existing wellness clinics to ten (10) (supporting operations of six (6) new Wellness Clinics) in PGCPS.
- Funding for strategically located full-time, year-round, full-service immunization clinics that will serve as a resource for the uninsured and underinsured. These clinics will assist PGCPS in its ability to adhere to COMAR regulations for school-age, school required immunization. This funding would include supplies, staffing, advertising costs, and vaccinations.
- Legislation that reduces barriers for students to access home and hospital programs
- Legislation allowing for the provision of virtual instruction for home and hospital programs

PGCPS opposes:

- Mandates that are not coupled with funding



Special Education

Special education programs play a crucial role in public schools, ensuring that every child, regardless of their abilities, will receive a quality education tailored to their unique needs. These programs are designed to address the diverse range of learning styles, abilities, and challenges that students may face, fostering an inclusive and equitable educational environment.

PGCPS special education programs promote inclusivity and diversity within the school community. By providing specialized support and resources to students with disabilities, these programs break down barriers that may otherwise impede their learning and socialization. Inclusive education not only benefits students with disabilities but also enriches the educational experience for their typically developing peers, fostering an environment of acceptance, empathy, and understanding.

PGCPS places a high priority on providing special education programs that are instrumental in unlocking the potential of each student. Every child possesses unique strengths and talents, and special education programs are designed to identify and nurture these abilities. Through individualized education plans (IEPs), teachers and specialists work collaboratively to tailor instruction, accommodations, and interventions to suit the specific needs of each student. This personalized approach empowers students to thrive academically and reach their full potential.

PGCPS supports:

- Significant increases in funding to support high-quality special education services
- Increasing the State's share of the total costs of non-public placements of students with disabilities
- Incentives to attract highly qualified special education teachers, related service providers, and support personnel to ensure the provision of appropriate services

PGCPS opposes:

- Unfunded mandates to provide special education services



Charter Schools

The Maryland Public Charter School Act of 2003, 2011 legislation, and the Public Charter School Improvement Act of 2015 established an alternative means within the existing public school system to provide innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve student education.

PGCPS offers a wide variety of specialty schools and programs that concentrate on providing instruction to students on a particular subject area utilizing specialized instructional methodologies. The Board acknowledges that public charter schools may provide opportunities for students beyond what PGCPS offers and that the Board is the legal authority over charter schools and the sole public charting entity for granting a charter.

PGCPS Supports:

- High academic accountability for all charter schools
- Continuation of local board authority over charter schools and to grant charters
- Requirement for Charter Schools to comply with federal and State laws governing public schools, including fiscal accountability
- Employees of charter schools must be employees of the school system, including compensation and certification requirements consistent with other public schools
- Legislation that allows local school systems to set a due date for charter school applications in order to allow school districts adequate planning time to address financial, staffing, transportation, and scheduling needs
- Legislation to clarify ownership of charter school assets that have been purchased with public funds

PGCPS opposes:

- Legislation that would limit the Board's primary chartering authority and weaken requirements for academic and fiscal accountability to the Board
- Legislation that creates blanket waivers for charter schools that releases charter schools from State law and the local board policies and the system's administrative procedures
- Legislation allowing virtual charter schools that promotes home instruction programs
- Legislation that would allow charter schools to employ individuals who are not public school employees
- Legislation that would not require the same certification requirements that are required of public school employees



**PGCPS
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