



Fiscal Year 2016 Operating Budget

HOUSE EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

February 4, 2015

SENATE EDUCATION, BUSINESS & ADMINISTRATION SUBCOMMITTEE

February 6, 2015



Class of 2014

The Maryland School for the Deaf, a diverse, bilingual community, in partnership with families provides an equitable and exemplary education in a nurturing, engaging, and challenging environment to ensure our students achieve personal excellence and become responsible lifelong learners.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) provides educational and developmental services for the State's deaf and hard-of-hearing children and youth. The School, founded in 1867, serves this population through its two campuses located in Frederick and Columbia.

MSD is an independent State agency governed by its 19-member Board of Trustees, which is appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate. 90% of the School's operating budget is provided from State general funds, while the remaining 10% is provided through federal grants, various special funds (e.g. employee food sales, out of state tuition and County Participation fees) and reimbursable funds (Enhanced Program of Services) from the Maryland State Department of Education. Students who are residents of Maryland attend MSD at no cost. Students from outside Maryland may be admitted on a tuition basis.

MSD utilizes the Maryland State Curriculum and the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards offering its graduating high school seniors the Maryland State High School diploma. In November 2011, MSD went through the accreditation process for the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) and the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) and received full accreditation from both organizations through May 2019.

The School's instructional programs operate on a 180-day school year, from late August through mid-June. Extended School Year (ESY) programs and enrichment camps are offered at MSD during the summer months. Approximately 30% of the Frederick campus students and 24% of the Columbia Campus students reside at the School during the week, returning to their homes on weekends and during school breaks.

MSD's Frederick campus provides a comprehensive elementary/secondary school program, with separate departments for Elementary (pre-K through Grade 5), Middle (Grades 6-8), and High School (Grades 9-12). The Frederick Campus also offers a Career and Technology program, which provides students with career skills, including computer and technical courses. The Special Needs program is also offered at Frederick for students with additional learning and behavioral disabilities.

The Columbia Campus also provides a comprehensive elementary/secondary school program for Elementary and Middle School-age students that include Special Needs educational programs.

MSD's Family Education/Early Childhood Department (FE/EC) works with families of deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and toddlers to develop early language skills for their

children. Because the optimum time for language development is from birth to age three, children given early communication training have a much greater opportunity for social and academic development in later years. MSD's FE/EC teachers work with approximately 60 children and their families throughout Maryland, through in-home and group sessions, to help ensure that these children will be prepared to learn at grade-level when they enter school.

The Enhanced Program of Services serves deaf students with other moderate to severe disabilities. Generally, students in this program require educational and developmental services of a more extensive and individualized nature. There are currently 45 students receiving enhanced services in the current school year.

As of January 1, 2015, student enrollment (representing 21 of 23 counties, and Baltimore City) reached 513 students.

THE SCHOOL'S MISSION

The Maryland School for the Deaf, a diverse, bilingual community, in partnership with families provides an equitable and exemplary education in a nurturing, engaging, and challenging environment to ensure our students achieve personal excellence and become responsible lifelong learners.

MSD BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that

- Our students learn best in a bilingual environment in which American Sign Language and English are used.
- Each student is a valued individual with unique physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs.
- Students have a right to a safe, caring, and engaging learning environment.
- Early and ongoing language acquisition is vital.
- Students are challenged to achieve their highest academic and career potential.
- Quality education and open communication is a shared responsibility between the school, its students, their families, and the community.
- Ongoing parent education and access to resources and services are essential to student success.
- Students learn in a variety of ways and have opportunities to grow and access services that support their learning styles.
- Diversity is valued and increases students' understanding and respect of different people and cultures.
- Cross-curricular literacy instruction is essential to student success.
- Our students develop academic and social behaviors through systematic application of evidence-based strategies.
- Access to and competency with current technology is essential for student learning.
- Student life and extracurricular activities promote wellness and personal growth.

GOALS

I. Students achieve their developmental potential.

Maryland School for the Deaf provides an unsurpassed level of experience, expertise, and dedication in the education and personal development of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and youth. And while MSD already serves almost 6 out of 10 deaf students in the State, it is our goal to continue to develop programs and services that will best serve the needs of all deaf and hard-of hearing students in Maryland. The School has already implemented its Enhanced Program of Services for deaf students with additional moderate to severe disabilities. During the 2013-2014 School Year, MSD (in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education) established a pilot day program for elementary-age deaf students with autism spectrum disorder. MSD has also implemented Spoken English (as a language of instruction) classes for children who have cochlear implants as well as children who are hard of hearing. A Work-to-Learn program serves high school students who meet specific requirements for vocational rehabilitation services. Through this successful partnership between MSD and the MSDE Division of Rehabilitation Services, participating MSD Students receive training and support as they gain work experience.

With its convenient, centrally located two-campus configuration, MSD is well-positioned to pursue and achieve this goal by providing deaf students and their families with the best of both worlds—a progressive, enriching, state-of-the-art program dedicated to and focused on their special educational and developmental needs, and the proximity to allow most students to live at home and participate as members of their local community.

MSD offers two types of curriculum to its students. The first follows the Maryland State Curriculum and the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. Students following this program are eligible to receive the Maryland State High School diploma. The second is a Life-Based Education Curriculum, which allows options for students to receive the Maryland State Certificate of Program Completion. Students receiving Enhanced Program services may follow a High School diploma or a Life-Based Education path. Students with severe developmental disabilities receive services based on their individual needs. The implementation of these curriculum options follows the strategic plans developed for the School's MSA accreditation.

II. Establish communication for parents and their children in the Family Education/Early Childhood Department.

The Family Education/Early Childhood Department (FE/EC) serves deaf and hard of hearing students from birth until their fifth birthday. Family educators who have

skills necessary to deal effectively with the linguistic, social-emotional, and academic needs of this population provide services to parents of deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers. Emphasis is placed on establishing communication between children and their parents using a bilingual approach. This means that the languages of instruction are American Sign Language (ASL) and English. Concepts and language are taught as early as possible since the prime time for language acquisition is between birth and three years of age. Children and their families are encouraged to consider the use of amplification as appropriate as well as speech therapy in order to develop all communication opportunities for the child.

In addition to providing individual home visits on a regular basis throughout the state, the department also sponsors regional parent meetings. In order to facilitate communication between parent and child, ASL instruction is offered during home visits and on campus at no cost to the parent during the school year. FE/EC offers weekly parent meetings at both Frederick and Columbia during the school year. While the parent meeting occurs, the youngest children (ages birth to 24 months) may participate in infant/toddler playgroups with FE/EC staff. Two-year-old and three-year-old classes are offered at both campuses throughout the week. Speech teachers work with children in individual and group sessions as appropriate for the child's age and developmental level.

The three year old classes have been expanded to a full day for children with an MSD IEP. The children are immersed in language rich environments to ensure important gains in language acquisition are achieved. The program expansion allows for deeper daily instruction to prepare these young learners with solid school readiness skills in the areas of language, literacy, mathematical thinking, early science and social studies. These young learners will enter Pre-kindergarten and then Kindergarten ready for the rigors of the College and Career Ready Standards.

Family engagement is a key factor in student achievement. The full day program for three year olds includes many opportunities for families to engage and support their child's early learning via parent support meetings, home visits, conferences with teachers and daily communication.

III. Provide quality educational and developmental services.

MSD is licensed by the Department of Human Resources for residential services. The license requires that all student life staff receive training in CPR/First Aid, blood-borne pathogens, child development, identifying and reporting child neglect and abuse and other courses for a total of 40 hours each year. The School will continue to provide training to staff to enable a safe and nurturing environment for its students. Effective October 2015, all residential staff must be certified by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (COMAR 10.57.03). Residential Child and Youth Care Practitioners

(RCYCP) must take a training program and pass an examination to obtain initial certification. They will be required to complete 20 Continuing Education Units every two years to renew their certification.

MSD offers a tuition reimbursement program to assist teachers in obtaining their educational requirements for certification and to obtain highly qualified status. This program is being utilized to provide education to staff to fill administrative positions for forecasted vacancies. The School is being proactive in succession planning to meet the future needs as senior staff begins to retire.

MSD's Master Plan identifies capital projects needed to provide MSD's future students with state-of-the-art program facilities. The Fire Alarm and Emergency Notification System project at the Frederick Campus will begin construction soon. The Water Main Replacement at the Frederick Campus is ready to begin the design process. This upgrade will enable the School to install sprinkler systems throughout the Frederick Campus

MSD recognizes that the world is changing and to prepare students for the future, MSD curriculum includes innovative computer technology and media equipment. By becoming literate with computers, students leave MSD with skills that are valued in today's job market. In the current fiscal year, MSD is updating and replacing aging/failing network infrastructure to maintain quality and uninterrupted access to the internet for staff and students.

IV. Faculty Pay Plan

MSD develops and recommends a faculty pay plan every three years as required under COMAR 8-313 Uniform pay plan for teachers and personnel. The plan is based on the average salaries of public school teachers and other professional personnel in Frederick and Howard Counties. MSD submitted a plan for review and approval as required with the Fiscal Year 2014 submission.

The MSD faculty is required to have the same certification and education as any public school in the State of Maryland. MSD must remain competitive to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers.

The revised pay plan was implemented over a two-year period, Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015, in order to fund it within the school's minimum funding formula. The Faculty Pay Plan will next be reviewed in Fiscal Year 2017.

RESPONSE TO ANALYST QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

MSD should comment on how the transition to the MCCRS has been for students and teachers; any impact seen on student performance from the transition; and whether the school is prepared to offer Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exams in the current school year. The school should also be prepared to discuss what, if any, assistance or training it has received from the Maryland State Department of Education in transitioning to the MCCRS and PARCC assessments.

The transition has been a challenge for the school. With limited staffing resources to support the transition, the majority of teachers are reporting that they support the vision of where the school is going, but they are feeling and expressing the same kind of stress and discontent that is being reported in the media regarding Common Core. Students are reporting feeling stressed due to the increase in academic rigor. While they are making the transition now, it remains to be seen how they will be when PARCC is up and running this spring and the first round of results are in.

Many students who used to be at grade level are now below grade level because of the higher expectations/rigorousness with the Common Core; however the School expects these students to close the gap in a few years. The School does not expect to see the same gaps in the younger age group due to the fact that they started the Common Core in Kindergarten. It is premature to say that the School has made the transition.

The School will be conducting a school-wide PARCC test run next week. However, the test run will not include the opportunity to practice using the accommodations and ASL videos (developed by PARCC) as those accommodations will not be available until the PARCC testing period in March.

The School has received training and information regarding PARCC, as well as the accessibility and accommodations features. The PARCC state meetings focused on updating the schools regarding resources and training sites, as well as answering many questions from all participants. This is a heavy and fast-moving transition, especially in such a short amount of time, and it is quite a challenge keeping up with and adhering to MSDE's expectations.

As for MCCRS, as part of the Race to the Top grant, MSDE held Educator Effectiveness Academies (which MSD administrators attended) during the summer of 2011, 2012, and 2013 and a CCRC Conference in 2014 to provide professional development on the transition and how to effectively implement the MCCRS.

MSDE also created MSDE Blackboard Learn, an on-line professional development. It offers increasing resources related to MCCRS too.

MSD should comment on whether the school is pursuing professional development for instructional staff or any type of outreach to increase the early language opportunities for youth eligible to attend the Columbia Campus.

Psycholinguistic research shows that achievement gaps often appear early from lack of language opportunities during children's early years. A significant percentage of the student population arrives at the Columbia Campus without early language opportunities --- either from late referrals or homes that do not use American Sign Language.

The School's Family Education/Early Childhood Department (FE/EC) continues to work closely with local Infant and Toddlers Programs (LITP) in providing services to infants and toddlers and their families through home visits, regional meetings, and school-based programs. Emphasis is early language acquisition in both American Sign Language and English.

Ideological differences in pedagogy within certain counties may result in late referrals. Students who arrive at MSD at a later age may be delayed in language development in American Sign Language and English.

Professional development is ongoing for Columbia Campus faculty and professional staff:

- Workshop trainings will be scheduled for instructional staff to increase focus on the acquisition of language, scaffolding of skills for language expansion, creating language rich environments to address the needs of children with language delays.
- Training will be scheduled for instructional staff to address the expansion of academic language. The student population at the Columbia Campus requires teachers to address both the ability to use language to express wants and needs and social interactions. But teachers also must build academic language for children to be able to absorb the rigorous curriculum and concepts that education demands.
- Workshops will be scheduled for instructional staff providing Home Visits to families. This training will include strategies for working with parents to build communication skills and an understanding of language acquisition in order to support the language needs of their children. This training will include literacy development for parents as well.
- Support for continuous collaboration with Frederick Campus faculty and professional staff to assist Columbia's work with students that arrive without or with limited language skills on the following strategies: vocabulary building, academic readiness; book reading, scaffolding language in the classroom, interactive reading and other language-related strategies.

- Trainings will be scheduled to address the needs of acquiring two languages - ASL and English. Trainings will include strategies and instruction in the acquisition and use of both languages. Creating language rich environments for the growth of both languages.

Below are the School's outreach activities:

- Continued distribution of School publications including the updated Family Education/Early Childhood guide and brochures.
- Annual mailings to Maryland pediatricians, audiologists, speech and language pathologists, and Hearing Aid dealers.
- Marketing for the new statewide Diagnostic Center.
- Displays and handouts to use at exhibit booths at statewide and regional meetings and events.
- Continued representation and information sharing with the State Steering Committee for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing), Connections Beyond Sight and Sound Advisory Committee, and the Maryland EDHI Advisory Council.

MSD should comment on how the proposed contingent reduction will be implemented and the impact these reductions will have on education services provided to students.

As a Maryland State Public School, MSD is required to maintain compliance with state and federal regulations. Those regulations include a 180-day school year, provision of state curriculum and teacher and professional certifications, and compliance with the Free and Appropriate Public Education provision in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In recent years there has been an increase in student enrollment and an increased need to provide related services such as audiology, speech and occupational services. The School has made some changes in the instructional area to offset those additional costs. For example, team leaders who were assisting teachers navigate the changes in the curriculum have returned to the classroom. It is difficult to make substantive cuts in the instructional program. During prior years of flat funding, the facility and IT budgets were cut to maintain the educational programs.

With an aging infrastructure, deferring facility repairs and maintenance is not an on-going viable option. Emergency repairs are disruptive to the educational program and tend to be more expensive. In the current year the School has replaced a hot water heater, two unit ventilators, and repaired two broken water pipes.

The School would like to proactively address facility and IT issues but would require the funding to remain intact to continue with planned facility maintenance and replacements.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

MSD concurs with the recommendation to reduce funding. Although MSD understands the fiscal position of the State, quality education for all Maryland students should remain a top priority.