

# Blueprint for Maryland's Future:

## First Implementation Plan, Phase Two



### Garrett County Public Schools *May 2024 Submission*

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## Systemwide Blueprint Implementation

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future will improve the quality and equity of Maryland's education system so that ALL Maryland students, regardless of where they live, their household income, race, ethnicity, gender, language spoken at home, disability, and any other unique characteristic, can leave high school globally competitive and prepared for success in postsecondary education, work, and life.

To reach this outcome, Maryland public schools must transform by rethinking and redesigning existing policies and practices to create a system that equitably serves all students and prepares them for success. This is your opportunity to share how your district has been approaching this change and its plans for the future.

Be sure to include or address the following points in your response:

- How are your district's vision, goals, strategic plan, and other system and school-level plans aligned to the Blueprint? Consider the connections across pillars and how the expected outcomes of the Blueprint intersect with and align to district programming
- How your district is communicating its goals and plans with those implementing the Blueprint in the district, including principals and educators; soliciting feedback; and adapting its communication strategies to improve stakeholder understanding of the Blueprint's purpose
- How your district is making systemic changes to support ongoing Blueprint implementation; consider the strategies that have and have not been successful in your approach to reaching the Blueprint's expected outcomes
- Your district's three greatest challenges to Blueprint implementation, including the rationale for selecting them, the specific initiatives/programs/strategies the district will implement to address them, and how your district will transform to implement these strategies effectively
- How the district will monitor progress towards addressing its three greatest challenges to reaching the Blueprint's expected outcome

Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) is committed to achieving the outcomes outlined in the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future (Blueprint) as we work collectively with staff, students, parents, and community for a brighter tomorrow for all students. To achieve this, GCPS continues to transform systems and structures as outlined in our Blueprint Implementation Plan to equitably serve all students. To elevate this work as a priority for the school system, the Blueprint Implementation Plan acts as the system’s strategic plan for how we will realize the expected outcomes of the Blueprint. As such, the Blueprint priorities are embedded throughout district-wide initiatives and integrated into various system plans such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, draft Literacy Plan, as well as school improvement plans. Furthermore, as the district further develops the Math Comprehensive Plan and MTSS Support Framework, alignment with Blueprint outcomes will be a priority.

**District Alignment with the Blueprint**

How are your district’s vision, goals, strategic plan, and other system and school-level plans aligned to the Blueprint? Consider the connections across pillars and how the expected outcomes of the Blueprint intersect with and align to district programming.

Garrett County Public School’s mission, vision, and goals have been in place for many years. During the 2023-2024 school year, GCPS’s Chief Academic Officer led a process to tune and adjust its current mission, vision, and goals to reflect a closer alignment with the Blueprint. This process has engaged each of the five pillar leaders in addition to leaders from key community partners and administrators throughout the county. The work has primarily occurred during the monthly Executive Blueprint Committee meetings although engagement from other groups such as the Administrator and Supervisors team and Pillar I Steering Committee have also informed adjustments.

As a part of this work, leaders have engaged in visioning protocols which required imagining the future state of GCPS after 10 years of Blueprint implementation. With this vision in mind, the system has cross walked the priorities outlined in the current mission/vision and found strong alignment with the Blueprint. The GCPS’s vision elevates three cross-cutting areas of focus aligned with the Blueprint that will help the system engage in the types of transformation called for by the Blueprint. These areas of focus include:

- **Staffing:** Recruit and retain high quality staff (Pillars 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- **High Quality Instruction:** Ensure all students have access to quality instruction and appropriate support (Pillars 1, 2, 3, 4)
- **Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between schools, community, and families (Pillars 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)



A draft copy of the mission and vision work can be found at the following link: [GCPS Draft Mission, Vision, and Priorities](#). The next phase of this work will be to solicit feedback and approval from the Superintendent and Board of Education.

A similar process as described above was also undertaken by the Executive Blueprint Committee to build on GCPS’s current goals and make explicit the connections to the Blueprint. The Executive Committee developed cross-cutting goals for school year 24-25 through school year 26-27, aligned to the three focus areas that if accomplished would represent substantive progress towards fulfilling the GCPS Vision/Mission as well as the goals outlined in the Blueprint. This work will eventually turn into a 3-year strategic plan for GCPS and will function in concert with the system’s Blueprint Implementation Plans.

First, Pillar Leaders were asked to carefully study the data and progress monitoring requirements in the 2024 Blueprint submission guidance. The committee considered the updated draft mission/vision as well as what we learned from a landscape analysis about the district’s assets and pain points. In doing so, the team identified three cross-cutting areas of focus listed above. With these areas of focus in mind and leveraging tools from Strategy in Action and the 5Es framework, pillar leads were able to name how their work connected to these focus areas and began to draft measurable targets in each area. Lastly, we used consensus building protocols to identify 3 to 4 high leverage targets for each of the three priority areas. This enabled the team to begin to map out the key actions in our 3-year plan.

A draft summary of our three year targets and actions can be found here: [Three Year Strategic Plan Summary](#). Once the strategic plan is finalized it will serve as a roadmap for district leaders to implement the Blueprint. The work above captures a strategic shift towards inter-departmental collaboration by focusing on the natural connections between the pillars and setting shared goals. Our belief is that by de-siloing this work we will be better equipped to accomplish the Blueprint’s goals.

<b>Communication and Engagement</b>
How your district is communicating its goals and plans with those implementing the Blueprint in the district, including principals and educators; soliciting feedback; and adapting its communication strategies to improve stakeholder understanding of the Blueprint’s purpose.

The Executive Blueprint Team has worked together to develop a two-pronged plan for communication that outlines opportunities to “inform and educate” stakeholders as well as to “collaborate and solicit” feedback. Additionally, the plan details how cross-cutting structures such as the GCPS website, steering committees, board meetings, social media, and monthly Administrative & Supervisor (A & S) meetings will be leveraged. The team has prioritized two-way communication and feedback to support the transformations needed to effectively implement its Blueprint plan.

To make the most of the monthly A & S meeting with building leaders, GCPS is sharing key messages that support the ‘why’ behind each pillar including specifics of the legislation as well as concrete headlines about what will change at the school-level next year and what will stay the same. After each A & S meeting, school leaders are asked to redeliver this content to their staff during an upcoming staff meeting and use a simple google survey to capture stakeholder feedback. Additionally, A & S is being leveraged to help building level administrators understand what makes an effective sticky message to equip them to effectively communicate with their staff about the Blueprint.

The chart below shows topics covered as well as topics planned for future A & S meetings:

A & S Meeting Schedule and Topics					
Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April
Topic: Blueprint Visioning /North Star Discussion & Feedback	Topic: Comprehensive Literacy Plan (Goals & Strategies) Feedback	Topic: Building Understanding of the Career Ladder: Inform and Educate	Topic: GCPS Blueprint Draft Priorities and Action Steps Discussion and Feedback	Topic: Elementary: Early Childhood Opportunities & Next Step Discussion and Feedback	Topic: Review of Final Submission and Gather Feedback
Connection: All Pillars	Connection: Pillar 3	Connection: Pillar 2	Connection: All Pillars	Secondary: MTSS Framework Discussion	Connection: All Pillars
				Connection: Pillar 1 and 3	

GCPS has also prioritized providing monthly Board Blueprint Updates at regular scheduled public meetings. Topics have included highlights and information about the following Blueprint Initiatives: Early Childhood Education, Post CCR Pathways, Career Counseling, Newly Adopted CCR Standard, Community Schools, and the Blueprint Implementation Plan Process.

Below is a list of additional communication strategies across all 5 pillars:

- Two community [CCR nights](#) (one at both high schools) were held to share opportunities specific to post CCR pathways including CTE programs, Dual Enrollment, Apprenticeship, and AP pathways. These were heavily attended and successful.
- A meeting with local businesses was also conducted to recruit and support the implementation of apprenticeship pathways.
- Early childhood staff have provided 1:1 collaborative opportunities to support movement towards increasing the quality of eligible private providers. A detailed list of these touchpoints is documented in the GCPS private provider outreach log.

- Blueprint leaders have reflected and adjusted membership on many steering committees to expand stakeholder involvement and ensure a wide variety of participation (added community partners, numbers of teachers/building level administrators, parents, etc.).
- The first GCPS Blueprint Bulletin: Implementing the Next Phase of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future was published for all stakeholders in March 2024 and highlighted Pillars 1 and 2. The next Bulletin will include Blueprint priorities and targets as well as the information about the New CCR Standard. This is a shift away from infographics highlighting a single pillar to a Bulletin highlighting content and connections across pillars.
- The Blueprint Coordinator provided a presentation to the Rotary Club highlighting Blueprint initiatives with plans to present at the Civic club later this spring.

Additionally, pillar leaders are prioritizing focus groups this year as a key strategy to capture feedback from stakeholders. They are also synthesizing themes in the feedback they hear during listening sessions, committee meetings, and focus groups using a simple consistent feedback protocol. To date:

- The Pillar 1 Steering Committee has leveraged surveys and a focus group to understand how GCPS parents were experiencing Pre-K enrollment and programming. These efforts helped the Pillar 1 committee identify barriers and opportunities for improvement that they were able to apply this spring. For example, parents shared that they were hungry for more details about how a school was structured for 3-year-olds. As a result, sample school-day schedules will be provided for parents, during in person registration days.
- The Pillar 2 committee has conducted focus groups with NBC teachers and non- NBC teachers to understand their perspectives on barriers and incentives to pursuing this credential. One-on-one meetings were also conducted with members of the Pillar 2 Advisory Group to collect qualitative data around the career ladder and next steps forward.

### Systematic Change to Support Blueprint Implementation

How your district is making **systemic changes** to support ongoing Blueprint implementation; consider the strategies that have and have not been successful in your approach to reaching the Blueprint’s expected outcomes

There have been many successes in GCPS’s implementation of the Blueprint during the last school year. These successes have led to large scale systemic changes as evidenced below.

#### 1. Establishing New Pre-K 3 Classrooms (Pillar 1)

GCPS offers universal Pre-K 4 opportunities to all students who desire to attend GCPS. As such, GCPS has focused on expanding three-year-old public Pre-K by standing up three regional Pre-K 3 collaborative classrooms with Head Start. This has allowed the system to increase enrollment of eligible three-year-olds in high quality early childhood programming. While these classrooms are successful with the enrolled students, there is an opportunity to reach more eligible students. GCPS has collected parent feedback and analyzed enrollment

trends to determine gaps in its existing approach. Through this qualitative and quantitative data analysis, a need for more diverse models has emerged. By focusing on achieving a mixed delivery system, we hope to provide parents with quality options that are as close to home as possible in addition to our quality regional programs. Access to nearby quality options is especially needed in the more geographically spread out areas.

**2. High Quality Staffing: Grow Your Own (Pillar 2)**

Over the last two years our “Grow Your Own” initiative has focused on building a pipeline of educators by providing opportunities for staff to pursue additional educational credentials. As a result, our staff has acquired the advanced degrees and certifications shown in the table to the right.

<b>Degree/Certification</b>	<b># of Staff</b>
Masters of Arts in Teaching	<b>2</b>
Bachelor’s Degree	<b>1</b>
Associate’s Degree	<b>2</b>
Registered Behavior Technician Certificate	<b>3 earned, 9 pursuing</b>
Child Development Associates	<b>5</b>
Board Certified Behavior Analyst	<b>5 pursuing</b>

Moving forward we will shift resources to incentivizing our current staff to pursue and ultimately attain National Board Certification in Pre-K through grade 12, while we continue to build our bench by developing an Associate’s Degree path, in education, for GCPS students who are interested in careers in the field of education.

**3. Aligning Instruction in ELA Classrooms to the Science of Reading (Pillar 1, 3, 4)**

Over the last year, GCPS has made tremendous progress in shifting instructional practices in classrooms towards evidence-based literacy practices. By the end of this school year, we will have fully trained all Pre-K3, Pre-K4, Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade teachers as well as all intervention and special education teachers in the Science of Reading. All elementary administrators will also be trained by the end of the school year. Many PK-2 teachers and administrators have also received volume 1 of LETRS training as evidenced by the chart to the right.

<b>LETRS Training</b>	<b># of Staff Trained</b>
Volume 1 complete	<b>52</b>
Volume 2 (partially complete)	<b>15</b>
Volume 2 complete	<b>23</b>
Early Childhood	<b>23</b>
Administrators	<b>9</b>

Elementary schools have launched new high quality ELA materials. While high schools are piloting materials for struggling readers, district and school instructional leaders have developed and piloted a classroom walk-through tool that focuses on whether instructional practices

aligned to the Science of Reading are in place and plan to tweak it for stronger alignment to LETRS in school year 2024-2025.

While we are well on our way to building the knowledge and skill of our staff and shifting behaviors and mindsets system-wide, we did encounter some challenges early on in our efforts to get our staff trained in LETRS. We learned that a one-size-fits-all approach and providing teachers with only one way to participate in LETRS would not work. Ultimately, we needed to provide options and flexibility for teachers so they could fit LETRS coursework into their busy schedules. One popular option was providing release time during the school day. Building on our past successes and lessons learned, we are continuing to look at ways to provide LETRS training for those who are interested in completing both volumes.

#### **4. Increasing Post CCR Pathways (Pillar 3)**

Over the last couple years, our district leadership team has worked collaboratively with Frostburg University, West Virginia University, Allegany Community College, and Garrett College in order to increase access for our high school students to complete dual enrollment courses, apprenticeships, and CTE programs. In a small county, we needed streamlined and coherent solutions to implement elements of the Blueprint. Redesigning our secondary master schedule, reconfiguring grade bands, and implementing a northern campus model have been effective strategies in our context.

In SY 23-24, we launched the Bobcat Academy. Our goal was to provide GCPS students with the opportunity to earn their first full year of college credits from Frostburg State University (FSU). Our initial vision was to provide enrolled students with coursework aligned to five specific pathways. However, we quickly learned from stakeholder feedback that students, parents, and school administrators needed more flexibility and that students wanted the opportunity to take courses of their choice. We also encountered scheduling conflicts that could only be solved with a more flexible approach. Moving towards fall of 2025, GCPS will be rolling out a more flexible model of the Bobcat Academy, that allows students more freedom to choose their FSU coursework provided that they take at least one English and one Math course in order to satisfy graduation requirements.

While establishing robust post-CCR pathways has resulted in positive systemic change for our students, we need to shift efforts to building and implementing a more robust secondary Multi-Tiered System of Support framework. By having MTSS in place, our schools will be better equipped to identify students who may not be on track to college and career readiness and provide them with adequate support.

#### **5. Systemic Structures that Support Cross Pillar Work (All Pillars)**

GCPS has been intentional about developing opportunities for coherence across pillars in the areas of Blueprint plan development, vision/mission and strategic planning, resource allocation specific to instructional materials, and communication. GCPS recognizes the interconnectedness of all the pillars which requires an integrated approach to realize the system

priorities. As a small county, communicating across departments is a routine occurrence and has lent itself well to supporting cross pillar work through the Executive Blueprint Committee.

Challenges and Strategies
Your district’s three greatest challenges to Blueprint implementation, including the <b>rationale</b> for selecting them, the <b>specific initiatives/programs/strategies</b> the district will implement to address them, and <b>how your district will transform</b> to implement these strategies effectively.

### 1. Establishing a Mixed Delivery System for Early Childhood

**Rationale:** GCPS has made great progress with public early childhood programming by providing universal Pre-K 4 opportunities and adding three 3-year old GCPS/Head Start collaborative classrooms. However, Garrett County still has zero eligible private providers offering Pre-K slots. In order to attain Blueprint outcomes, a mixed delivery system is required. Following a parent focus group, an increased need was identified for additional enrollment slots within the local school area. Identifying or expanding private/public enrollment slots through a mixed delivery system will meet this need.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Enrollment (September 30, 2023)	
Eligible Private Provider Enrollment	<b>0</b>
Tier 1 Student Enrollment in GCPS Public 3-year old programs	<b>42</b>
Enrollment in GCPS 4- year old programs (Universal)	<b>159</b>
Student Enrollment in Kindergarten	<b>247</b>

**Initiatives to address challenge:**

GCPS has identified the following strategies to support the implementation of a mixed delivery system:

- Increase private provider outreach as documented in a cohesive Provider Communication Outreach Log
- Provide professional development to private providers
- Provide funding to support requirements for Maryland EXCELS and accreditation for Judy Center partners and provide support for the MSDE accreditation scholarship
- Ensure expansion grant and eligibility support as well as technical assistance within the next two years for two private daycares, in addition to three Head Start sites
- Partner with MSDE specific to private provider qualifications and the process towards private provider eligibility FY25 and beyond
- Refer providers to supportive child care agencies like APPLES for Children and Child Care Choices as well as provide SEL assistance to support EXCELS ratings of a 5.
- Build on our strong collaboration with Head Start with the goal of having all three year old Head Start classes qualify as eligible providers within the next three years
- Continue to build on the partnership with the Early Childhood Advisory Council to support private provider eligibility
- Expand the universal enrollment process to reflect a unified approach for parents as private providers become eligible

### Two-way communication strategies

- Provide one on one support to private providers
- Facilitate parent focus groups to identify areas of need for expansion opportunities and address mitigating barriers negatively impacting enrollment
- Provide support and educational opportunities to private providers to assist in the process of becoming an eligible provider
- Engage with private providers to support pursuit of accreditation
- Inform families about eligibility criteria and public/private options as private providers become available

### Transformations needed

- Structures and systems that further support private providers to become eligible
- Increase awareness of parents specific to high quality staffing in private providers

## 2. Incentivizing Teachers to Opt into the Career Ladder

### Rationale:

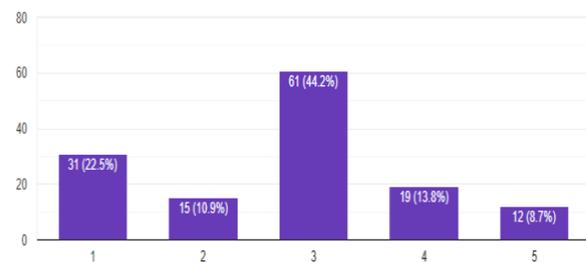
Focus groups have indicated that many teachers do not see themselves on the career ladder and that many instructional leaders are unaware of how their roles will be impacted. Current data suggests teachers are unsure if the career ladder suits them. Only a small percentage of teachers in GCPS (3%) have obtained National Board Certification (NBC) status and (21%) of teachers are in pursuit of a NBC. Moreover, the funding and budget implications related to staffing, resource allocation, and use of time are significant and many times are impacted by negotiations. The quantitative and qualitative data indicate that additional focus

is needed for teachers to opt into the Career Ladder. The data results have shown teachers have concerns about the sustainability of the career ladder and the ability to maintain the new compensation structure long term. This fear will have to be addressed in order to resolve this identified challenge.

4) How likely are you to opt into the Career Ladder during the 24-25 school year?

[Copy](#)

138 responses



### Initiatives to Address Challenge:

- Develop and clearly communicate the salary scale for all levels of the career ladder so staff can see the financial incentives for opting in
- Launch a Career Ladder Work Group in addition to the Advisory Committee in order to broaden stakeholder engagement
- Launch NBC recruitment and information events during the spring semester in addition to the fall per stakeholder feedback
- Leverage existing NBC candidates to recruit colleagues and encourage their participation
- Launch FSU micro-credential on NBC and encourage enrollment specifically for Frostburg M.A.T. candidates
- Continue ongoing communication efforts to educate and inform staff about the incentives offered to teachers across the four levels in the career ladder throughout the development process to provide clarity to staff on all aspects of the career ladder

Examples to date include:

- Focus groups with teachers who have NBC and those who elected not to pursue NBC
- Engagement of school leaders through A&S to spread key messages about the career ladder throughout the county and to capture feedback from staff
- Development of Blueprint Bulletin to help reinforce messages about the career ladder
- The Career Ladder Working Group is developing a professional development plan and specific job descriptions to help illustrate for teachers concretely what the role of a teacher will look like at various levels on the ladder

### **Transformations Needed:**

There are four categories of transformations that are needed as evidenced below.

#### **Develop needed systems and structures:**

- Define salary scale to reflect the mandated salary enhancements that also signal GCPS context and values
- Continue to research and explore requirements, duties, responsibilities, and model position descriptions for Lead Teacher, Distinguished Teacher, and Professor Distinguished Teacher. Also, explore the administrative track for job duties.

#### **Outline the pace of change needed:**

- Continue to research and explore the percentage of time for classroom requirements (60/40 models)
- Redefine the use of time for teachers using a phased-in approach
- Support a shift in mindset around how teachers spend their time to support student learning

#### **Recruitment:**

- Support a shift in mindset specific to teacher buy-in relative to NBC over pursuing additional Masters or a Ph.D
- Explore strategies that increase the number of male teachers and specifically target male teachers to pursue their NBC to support a more representative teaching staff
- Explore strategies to encourage NBC at the secondary level

#### **Re-envision professional learning:**

- Research and explore evaluation and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) requirements, models, etc.
- Develop and build the teacher evaluation to ensure alignment with Blueprint requirements ensuring a PAR model for the local career ladder
- Continue to explore professional learning and peer collaboration requirements and models

### **3. Meaningfully Engaging Stakeholders**

GCPS recognizes the importance of ensuring all stakeholders are informed about the Blueprint and system initiatives. It is equally important for stakeholders to have opportunities to shape Blueprint implementation in Garrett County. Leveraging existing structures and creating new ones that allow for increased balance of informing/educating and collaborating/soliciting feedback is essential to forward progress.

#### **Rationale:**

GCPS engaged with stakeholders utilizing a variety of strategies to develop the 2023 Blueprint Implementation Plan with varying results. Consequently, GCPS continues to be committed to strengthening efforts around two-way communication while increasing stakeholder involvement

and understanding of Blueprint Implementation. The Accountability and Implementation Board encouraged this as an area of continued focus as well.

**Initiatives to Address Challenge:**

- Development of a communication plan (prioritizing two-way communication) for each pillar that includes cross-cutting structures
- Use of feedback protocol by Pillar Leaders to capture/synthesize feedback
- Steering committee structures that bring key stakeholders and partners into conversations about the Blueprint (expanded and or redesigned several groups)
- Prioritization of focus groups with key stakeholders around a problems of practice
- Increased use of subcommittee work groups to broaden stakeholder involvement and understanding
- Increase opportunities to strategically use monthly A & S structure to capture feedback and also re-deliver important content to all staff across the county
- Provide monthly public updates to the Elected Board on Blueprint Implementation
- Develop the GCPS Blueprint Bulletin to share information with the broader community
- Hold community nights for families at both high schools focused on Post CCR pathways

**Transformations Needed:**

The development of work structures that support the inclusion of two-way communication strategies and the integration of feedback into the plan while also enhancing opportunities to share information with broader groups of stakeholders.

**Monitoring Progress**

How the district will monitor progress towards addressing its three greatest challenges to reaching the Blueprint’s expected outcome

**1. Establishing a Mixed Delivery System for Early Childhood**

- Increase the number of eligible private providers and private provider student slots
- Increase the number of public and private early childhood programs that demonstrate increased quality through the accreditation process
- Increase the number of private and public early childhood programs that demonstrate progress towards Level 5 Excel Rating

**2. Incentivizing Teachers to Opt into the Career Ladder**

- Measure the #/% of teachers who opt into the Career Ladder
- Measure #/% of teachers pursuing National Board Certification
  - Including specifically increasing # of male NBC candidates and # of secondary candidates
- Measure #/% of Level 1,2 and 3 staff with schedules that support a 60/40 split in responsibilities
- Develop 5 new higher education partnerships to expand and diversify teacher pipeline

**3. Meaningfully Engaging Stakeholders**

- Evidence that Pillar Leaders are using the feedback protocol to synthesize feedback from stakeholders
- Evidence of bulletins, presentations, committee work, surveys, focus groups etc.
- Evidence that feedback has been integrated into plan development

# Pillar 1: Early Childhood Education

## 01. Access to High Quality, Full Day Pre-K

### ***Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 1 - 5, 11 - 16***

In March 2023, the LEA described how it would **increase access to high-quality, full-day Pre-K** for Tier 1 and 2 students, including students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, and English learners.

Responses discussed considerations related to facilities, including expansion to new facilities, transformation of existing facilities, opportunities for shared spaces with private providers, strategic communication and outreach, and the development of a common and unified enrollment system to support racially and socioeconomically diverse learning environments.

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint Outcome to serve all Tier 1 4-year-old children who wish to enroll in Pre-K by SY 2025-2026.**

GCPS continues to offer universal Pre-K4 to all students in Garrett County. All students that are four-years-old by September 1, 2024 will have access to a Pre-K4 seat in the public setting. Families will have the opportunity to utilize a mixed delivery method by accessing additional seats available in the private provider setting as available to provide families with choices for high quality child care.

GCPS continues to increase enrollment in Pre-K3 programming. Two public Pre-K3 classrooms were established in 2022-2023, another public Pre-K3 classroom was added in 2023-2024, and in 2024-2025, GCPS is projecting five Pre-K classrooms that will serve eligible Tier 1 three-year-old students. This is being accomplished by implementing innovative collaborative models with Head Start, while also utilizing creative scheduling and staffing models that allow for Pre-K classrooms to serve both three-year-old and four-year-old children. Additionally, GCPS is currently working closely with six local private providers (four Head Start programs and two in-home childcare programs) to increase eligible private Pre-K3 classrooms.

As evidenced in [Tab 1 of the Data Appendix](#), GCPS has increased public Pre-K slots from 180 to 250, an increase of 70 slots from 2021-2024. The intention is to maintain those 250 public slots moving into the 2024-2025 school and expand to 260 total slots. This will allow GCPS to continue providing universal Pre-K to all four-year old students including those with special needs and multilingual learners, while also increasing the number of eligible three-year-old children served based on our projected enrollment.

Pre-K 4 Enrollment Trends			
Year	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
# of Students	148	167	159

GCPS has relatively stable Pre-K 4 enrollment as evidenced in the chart to the right. Based on current registration data, we are estimating approximately 160 pre-K 4 students in the 2024-25 school year. Pre-K 3 enrollment data shown to the right, shows an increase of 39 students over the last three years. Based on current registration data, GCPS is estimating serving approximately 65 students in the 2024-2025 school year. In total, our estimated enrollment for 2024-2025 will be 225 students with 260 slots available. This data shows that we have ample space to serve any pre-K four-year old who desires to attend GCPS, while also serving interested and eligible three-year old students as we continue the registration process throughout the summer months.

Pre-K 3 Enrollment Trends			
Year	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
# of Students	3	36	42

The data shown on [Tab 1 of the Data Appendix](#), also clearly demonstrates the challenge that Garrett County has faced in establishing eligible private providers. To date, there are zero eligible private providers identified. This has prompted GCPS to prioritize work around identifying and supporting private providers over the next three years. As such, we anticipate four Head Start programs and two day care providers to become eligible between fiscal years 25-27, allowing for at least 98 private provider slots. In order to accomplish the growth above, GCPS has employed several strategies that have proven to be effective.

**Strategy 1: Collaborative Classrooms**

GCPS has partnered with Garrett County Head Start to provide a collaborative Pre-K3 model, whenever possible. Four of the five classrooms projected for 2024-2025 will be collaborative classrooms where students will be dually enrolled in GCPS and Head Start based on eligibility. This model provides a collaborative approach to serving three-year old children with three adults in each classroom of up to 20 students including a licensed teacher employed by GCPS and a qualified assistant as well as a teacher from Head Start. This model allows for students to have the support of both GCPS resources and Head Start resources. GCPS first implemented this strategy with several of the Pre-K 4-year-old classrooms on the northern end of the county. These classrooms have historically had the highest KRA scores as the students matriculate up into kindergarten. As such, GCPS will continue to the greatest extent possible the collaborative classroom model.

**Strategy 2: Locations of Pre-K3 & 4 Opportunities**

Through a parent focus group and survey, parents lifted up the concern of sending their three-year old children to regional programs outside their home school district. As such, GCPS has made it a priority to plan and staff pre-K classrooms with the goal of serving as many students

as possible in their home district rather than regional programs, whenever possible. In order to accomplish this, moving into next year, GCPS will have several pre-K classrooms that serve both three-year old and four-year old students due to the rural nature of our school system and small schools. The vast majority of these mixed age group classrooms will be collaborative classrooms with Head Start with one classroom being a standard GCPS pre-K classroom. We anticipate this transformation will increase the number of three-year old children we serve from 42 to 65. This transformation also benefits four-year old students and allows GCPS to place as many four-year-olds as possible in their home school. Additionally, to accomplish this goal, GCPS is also considering creative classroom models that serve 10 students with one licensed teacher, when possible and when funding is available.

### **Strategy 3: Facilities Development**

As GCPS embarked on increasing Pre-K3 year old opportunities, it became clear that Pre-K3 students would be most successful in a closed classroom rather than open space classrooms. Consequently, based on student needs at Broad Ford Elementary School, GCPS enclosed two classrooms to support the two pre-K 3 classrooms at that site. This has made a substantial difference in the quality of programming and experience for students. GCPS also has a major renovation project to transform the current Southern Middle School into the new Broad Ford Elementary school. Through the planning process, district leaders have continued to work closely with Head Start and the appropriate GCPS departments to establish an early childhood wing in the new school that will support Head Start classrooms, collaborative Pre-K 3 classrooms, and Pre-K4 classrooms as well as dedicated Judy Center space. Construction begins on this project this summer. Currently, GCPS has two schools that are unable to serve Pre-K including Crellin and Swan Meadow. To support strategy 2 listed above, GCPS is conducting a feasibility study for Crellin elementary that will explore the possibility of adding a pre-K and Judy Center space to that school. Swan Meadow was just approved to convert to Swan Meadow Heritage Charter School and the intention of the community is to serve students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

### **Strategy 4: Enhanced Partnerships**

GCPS has worked extensively to promote strong partnerships and communication in the area of Early Childhood Education. GCPS is aware of the need to increase communication and support with private providers throughout the county, especially considering that Garrett County has seen slow growth in establishing eligible private providers. GCPS and partners have joined together to optimize communication and support with private providers to increase awareness of expansion opportunities. The GCPS Director of Early Childhood and Elementary Education and the Garrett County Judy Center staff have established and will continue to implement and track communication utilizing the [Providers Outreach Log](#). Judy Center staff conduct bi-monthly site visits to partnering providers to support Maryland EXCELS and accreditation, offer enrichment activities, curriculum implementation, and refer to community partnerships that will enhance programming. The GCPS Director of Early Childhood and Elementary Education will conduct site visits at private providers to support curriculum implementation, grant updates, and other needs. Maryland EXCELS and accreditation support, curriculum implementation, professional development opportunities, programmatic questions, partnership connections, and enrichment activities are tracked in the outreach log. Through partnerships, GCPS will continue to identify and support additional private providers who may be interested in becoming eligible private providers as defined by the Blueprint. The work has shown great promise as shown in [Tab 1 of the Data Appendix](#) specific to anticipated eligible private provider growth in the next three years.

## **Strategy 5: Communication and Enrollment**

Per feedback from the Accountability and Implementation Board on the GCPS 2023 submission, we have sought opportunities to increase stakeholder involvement in the development of our plans. To that end, we conducted parent focus groups and a survey to increase community awareness of Pre-K 3 & 4 opportunities and determine barriers and challenges for enrollment. This also provided an opportunity for GCPS to elevate why high quality early childhood experiences are important. Following the parent focus group, GCPS identified that transportation is a barrier for some parents and has caused some eligible families to decline enrollment. Though transportation is provided for Pre-K 3 & 4, parents indicated that riding the bus with K-12 peers is an area of concern for them. As such, GCPS is exploring a stand-alone Pre-K bus with a bus aide where possible. Additionally, GCPS is attempting to limit bus ride times by placing students at their home district school whenever possible.

Parents also elevated the need for clearer communication around universal programming and what that means for students and parents. Following the focus group, a more thorough definition of universal programming was delivered to the community, enrollment signage was produced and distributed to all schools and highly-frequented community areas, and flyers were distributed to community partners, schools, and emailed through school communication platforms. Parent feedback indicated the need for a more direct delivery of the income eligibility requirements. Tables were created and added to the media releases and included on the registration application. In addition, registration information was shared on all GCPS and Judy Center social media platforms. Registration information was also shared at Title I parent meetings, PTO meetings, Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC), and Yough Glades Community School's Steering Committee.

GCPS has also taken a proactive approach in simplifying the registration process for all families. A Judy Center liaison is designated at each school to support families with disabilities and hardships through the enrollment process. For the 2023-2024 enrollment year, GCPS added a Spanish version of the application to support Multilingual families. Mobile registrations were offered in low-income areas and highly frequented events (i.e. Judy Center School Readiness Fair, Learning Beyond the Classroom Mobile Outreach summer events, Garrett County Health Department Wellness Fair, and Judy Center programming). Garrett Cares drop down box was added to the registration form to provide an area where families could request additional services to meet specific needs (Learning Beyond the Classroom, Garrett County Health Department, Garrett County Community Action, Garrett County Department of Human Services). Moving forward as private providers become eligible, a dropdown box will be added to the registration application for families to view all options and select their Pre-K 3 & 4 preferred location and provider. This will be done in collaboration with eligible private providers as the county moves towards a unified enrollment process.

To establish enrollment diversity, GCPS collects family diversity demographics through a variety of forms and documentation (Race/Ethnicity Form, Maryland Home Language Survey, Free and Reduced Meals Applications, family income documentation, and IEP/IFSP documentation). After gathering demographic information, consideration for student placement is reviewed to establish classrooms that reflect diverse student groups. An early childhood team meets to designate appropriate placement of all students to ensure classrooms reflect diverse student groups, wherever possible.

Through creating avenues for and encouraging significant collaboration with Infants & Toddlers, Healthy Families, Early Head Start, Head Start, Judy Center, and private providers, GCPS will

continue to support early identification of Tier I students (income eligible, multilingual students, students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness) through the enrollment process.

**GCPS will collaborate with eligible private providers once identified to serve all Multilingual Learners in the following ways:**

- Utilize the Coordinator of Special Programs to oversee services provided to multilingual learners in the private provider setting
- Establish early identification of multilingual learners' procedures by partnering with community agencies: GCPS Infant and Toddler Program, GCCAC Early Head Start & Head Start, Garrett County Health Department (GCHD) Early Care Programs, Garrett County Judy Center, and local pediatricians
- Implement a curriculum with extensive Multilingual Learner accommodations
- Make family engagement events, parent communication, and family supports available in the family's native language utilizing a translator program or staff as appropriate.

This support will continue as private providers become eligible according to Blueprint regulations.

Continued utilization of the Child Find process will support early identification of students with disabilities. Students are able to be referred for services through the Child Find process. Any local agency, service provider, community program, parent, or family member is able to make a referral to Special Education if they feel the child may have a delay and may qualify for Special Education and related services. The Child Find process and information about making referrals to Special Education is made available through our social media outlets (Facebook, etc.) on the GCPS website, through Child Find brochures, and through public relations events such as participation in Judy Center events, Head Start events, GCHD events, etc. Services are provided in the natural environment for infant and toddler programs as well as preschool Special Education services which may be at the service provider location, the home, or community programs such as Head Start or daycare centers. In a few special circumstances preschool Special Education services may be provided in the home setting.

Training about relevant topics, programs or initiatives are offered to community partners such as Judy Center staff, Head Start staff and teachers, and private providers. The Infant and Toddler Program participates in joint training with Head Start and Judy Center staff as well. Infant and Toddler staff and the Birth to Five Coordinator also conduct professional development with community agencies and providers about the Infant and Toddler Program and Preschool Special Education Program including the referral process, the eligibility process, and service delivery.

Infant and toddler services and Preschool Special Education services are provided in the classroom setting for children that are attending a public Pre-K or community program such as Head Start. The teachers are provided colleague-to-colleague coaching on strategies to use with children to assist with narrowing any developmental gaps identified through the IEP or IFSP or extended IFSP. For infants and toddlers that are attending a public Pre-K or private provider, such as Head Start, the provider is included in the routines-based interview that is completed with parents to determine priorities and IFSP and extended IFSP outcomes and the IFSP meeting is held at the school setting to include parents and providers in the IFSP and extended IFSP development. The services are provided in the classroom with the child and the teacher/provider. For Preschool Special Education services, the IEP is developed with the

parent and providers if the child is in a community-based program such as Head Start or a public Pre-K program. The meeting is held at the child's school and the services are provided at the child's school in the general education classroom setting.

In conclusion, GCPS is making necessary adjustments as detailed in the strategies above in order to meet the needs of our students and local communities. There is substantial evidence of a strong early childhood program within Garrett County as demonstrated by the universal pre-K4 opportunities and expansion of Pre-K3 options. Moving forward, GCPS is committed to supporting local providers to make substantial gains in identifying eligible private provider slots.

## 02. A High-Quality, Mixed -Delivery (Public and Private) Pre-K System

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 6 - 10 and 18*

In March 2023, the LEA described how it would collaborate with private providers to **implement a mixed-delivery Pre-K system and ensure every student has access to a high-quality Pre-K program.**

Responses included considerations for increasing access as discussed in the previous question as well as sharing data and information, providing comprehensive services, and leveraging shared resources.

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

GCPS has made great progress in providing universal PreK-4 opportunities to all four-year-old students wishing to enroll with the school system. In addition, GCPS has leveraged the strong partnership with Head Start to establish multiple three-year-old collaborative classrooms as discussed in question one. However, as shown on [Tab 1 of the Data Appendix](#) and referenced earlier, Garrett County still has zero eligible private providers offering Pre-K slots. In order to attain Blueprint Outcomes, a mixed delivery system is required. In response to AIB feedback from the 2023 GCPS Blueprint submission, GCPS held parent focus groups and a survey to better understand the community needs. Following the parent focus group, an increased need was identified for additional enrollment slots within the local school area. Identifying and expanding private/public enrollment slots through a mixed delivery system will meet this need.

MSDE is working to provide more clear guidance around eligible private providers. The recent changes in legislation specific to certifications has supported a move in a positive direction as well. As a result, GCPS, Head Start, and MSDE recently met to develop a stronger understanding of eligible private providers to plan forward for FY25-27. These important factors have allowed Garrett County to envision a path forward specific to a mixed delivery system.

GCPS has identified two primary strategies that have been effective in moving the county towards the implementation of a mixed delivery system that we will continue. Additionally, strategy three will be implemented upon the identification of an eligible private provider.

### **Strategy 1: Enhancing Partnerships and Partnership Communication**

First, our partnership with Head Start is key to ensuring a robust mixed delivery system in Garrett County. As GCPS and Head Start have established collaborative Pre-K classrooms, there has been substantial collaboration around Head Start navigating the process of establishing eligibility as a private provider for classrooms that still remain entirely under their governance. Within the next three years, GCPS' shared goal with Head Start is that all Head Start three-year-old classes will qualify as eligible pre-K slots for students. At this time, Garrett County is also working with two private providers that are applying for the expansion grant. This progress is a result of robust communication and support as evidenced in the Provider Communication Outreach Log referenced in question 1 where communication is documented and tracked to ensure all providers are being informed about supports and services they are eligible to receive.

GCPS will continue to partner with MSDE specific to private provider qualifications and the process towards private provider eligibility in FY25 through FY27 to further collaborate and partner with local private providers in this expansion. Once Garrett County has identified eligible private providers, GCPS will collaborate with all eligible providers to establish a unified enrollment process to support efficient and effective enrollment. The anticipated launch date for this will be Spring of 2025. This will be developed and refined over the next three years.

### **Strategy 2: Professional Development and Staffing**

[Professional Development](#) has been and will continue to be offered to all private providers during hours that are convenient for staff and directors. Judy Center Virtual Power Hours are offered quarterly to all providers and focus on the four domains aligned with Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. In addition, providers are made aware of additional training and conferences that are relevant to the learning domains of interest or need. GCPS, Head Start, and Judy Center partner to host four professional developments throughout the program year as well. All partnering providers are invited to those opportunities.

GCPS continues to refer providers to supportive child care agencies such as Child Care Choices, APPLES for Children, and Judy Center to offer extensive partnerships to local providers in reaching EXCELS rating of 5, achieving accreditation, and offering SEL support. These agencies along with the GCPS early childhood staff support providers with information and services throughout the Maryland EXCELS and accreditation process. Information is shared with providers in regards to accessing MSDE accreditation funds. The GCPS Director of Early Childhood is ensuring that providers have access to the expansion grant and technical assistance is provided.

GCPS also provides support and educational opportunities to private providers to assist in the process of obtaining the proper certifications. Through partnerships with Garrett College and

Frostburg State University, GCPS will create awareness of opportunities available and promote the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program for private providers along with the Childcare Career and Professional Development Fund Grant. We will continue to partner with the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC), and Judy Center to support providers in achieving the appropriate credentials needed.

### **Strategy 3: Community Resources to Meet Student and Family Needs in a Mixed Delivery System**

GCPS will collaborate with community resources to meet the needs of students and families of eligible private providers in the following ways as appropriate:

- Garrett County Judy Center partnerships that offer family services (i.e. goal setting, continuing education, parent education, mental health, etc.)
- Vision and hearing screening from the Lion's Club and local physicians
- Health screenings by Mountain Laurel Mobile Outreach Van
- Dental screenings by the Garrett County Health Department (GCHD)
- GCPS Speech Pathologist support to screen all enrolled prekindergarten students. A comprehensive evaluation process is provided for qualifying students.
- Mental Health Services: Child Care Choices, Judy Center, Local Care Team, GCHD, Dove Center, APPLES for Children
- Wrap around care offered by the provider or community agencies
- The Department of Special Education will collaborate with ECAC and the Department of Early Childhood to provide information to private providers on the referral process for Infants and Toddlers and preschool special education.
- Private providers will work directly with Child Find to support children with IEPs
- Child Find provides IEP services by disseminating staff to private centers
- Child Care Choices works with private providers to support behavioral challenges through their Partnership for Emotionally Resilient Kids (PERKS) program.
- GCPS Department of Special Education will deliver services to private providers to children that qualify through the IEP process.
- Social emotional support is provided on a daily basis through GCPS prekindergarten Maryland accredited curriculum (Savvas: Three Cheers).
- Community schools will service families in various ways based on the results of their needs assessments.
- Student and family needs will be identified through the completion of the Garrett Cares portion of the Pre-K 3&4 and Kindergarten application. Judy Center family service staff will provide identified individuals with direct services and community referrals to address their area of need.

In conclusion, GPCS early childhood staff will use the following targets below to progress monitor the increased opportunities in a mixed delivery system:

- The number of eligible private providers and private provider student slots
- The number of public and private early childhood programs that demonstrate increased quality through the accreditation process
- The number of private and public early childhood programs that demonstrate progress towards Level 5 Excel Rating of private providers.

GCPS feels confident in the work that has been completed to implement a mixed delivery system. Successful collaborative partnerships with providers and Head Start have opened many additional potential opportunities for our early learners and their families. We look forward to

achieving these increased opportunities as we stand up a high quality mixed delivery system in the next three years.

### 03. Workforce Development and Pipelines for High-Quality Pre-K Staff

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 19 - 22*

In March 2023, the LEA described its plan to **develop its workforce and build pipelines for teachers and teacher assistants that meet the high-quality requirements.**

Responses addressed providing professional development related to the instructional program and high-quality instructional materials discussed in Pillar 3, using a diverse set of strategies to build the Pre-K teacher and teacher assistant pipelines, supporting teachers and teacher assistants in meeting the credentialing requirements set forth by the Blueprint by the beginning of SY 2027-2028, and communicating opportunities to current and prospective employees.

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint Outcome of Pre-K teachers and teacher assistants meeting high-quality requirements.**

GCPS continues to provide opportunities to support staff in meeting the Blueprint high quality staffing requirements. The staffing data shown on [Tab 3 of the Data Appendix](#), shows that GCPS has been able to secure the necessary pre-K teachers to support the GCPS pre-K classrooms as well as the joint pre-K collaborative classrooms under our preview. The data shows that we have two long-term sub teaching assistants in the current school year. However, this was intentional as one of the positions is backfilled with a long-term substitute while the regular teaching assistant participates in the Accelerated Teaching Residency with FSU to earn her teaching license through the local Grow Your Own initiative as described below. The other was filled with a long-term sub due to budget reasons after a mid-year resignation.

Moving into next school year, GCPS expects all teaching and teacher assistant positions to be filled. What this data doesn't show is the struggle GCPS faced with staff turnover in pre-kindergarten classrooms over the last year where there were two retirements, two resignations, and two added classrooms as part of expansion. This equates to a 31% turnover rate due to retirements and resignations with a 15% new hire increase with the two added classrooms. As such the staffing needs have been a challenge to meet given the nationwide teacher

shortage. GCPS is fortunate to have all 13 classrooms fully staffed this year. However, two of the thirteen teachers are on a conditional license and every effort is being made to ensure all teachers are endorsed in early childhood by the school year 2024-2025. Individualized support has been implemented to reach this goal. The goal is for GCPS to be fully staffed with pre-K teachers who are all endorsed in early childhood by 2024-2025. Moreover, in 2022-2023 only seven teaching assistants met the Blueprint credential requirements. The goal moving forward is to have 100% of teaching assistants meeting the criteria.

It is also important to note in 2023-2024, the data shows GCPS had 13 teachers and 12 teaching assistants. This is because we implemented one four-year old classroom with a 10:1 ratio with a licensed teacher. We are anticipating in 2024-2025 that one of our collaborative classrooms will have lower enrollment and it will be staffed with a GCPS licensed teacher and a Head Start teacher meeting the CDA requirements. As shown in the data, GCPS does not have any eligible private providers. However, as we establish these programs in the coming years, we will have a strong understanding of staff positions and qualifications.

Based on the data analysis above, GCPS has focused on several strategies detailed below to ensure staff meet the high quality standards required by the Blueprint, to support increased retention of early childhood teachers, and ensure all early childhood vacancies are filled.

**Strategy 1: Teaching Assistants Earn Child Development Associate (CDA) Certification**

In order to fully implement the Blueprint, GCPS will ensure that all teaching assistants either hold a Child Development Associate or an Associate’s Degree in our full day 3-year-old and 4-year-old early childhood classrooms. From 2022 to 2024, five instructional assistants that currently serve in Pre-K classrooms completed the requirements to meet the Blueprint expectations of earning a CDA. GCPS partnered with Garrett College and Howard Community College to support this process. This initiative was funded through the Maryland LEADS Grow Your Own

Teaching Assistant Credentials		
Year	# of Pre-K Teaching Assistants	# of Pre-K Teaching Assistants meeting Blueprint Credential Requirements
2022-2023	12	7
2023-2024	12	10 (2 Long Term Subs)
2024-2025	12	12

initiative. GCPS, with the support of Head Start administrative staff, has ensured that all instructional assistants either hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) or an Associate’s Degree in our full-day 3-year-old and 4-year-old early childhood classrooms, all requirements were met by January 2024. This is shown in the table to the right.

In the future, the Human Resources Department will add certification requirements through job postings to meet updated Blueprint requirements to ensure all teaching assistants have the required credentials.

**Strategy 2: Recruitment and Grow Your Own**

In order to address the staffing concerns raised, GCPS has an active recruitment program and participates in on-site and virtual recruitment fairs at colleges and universities. GCPS has made a concerted effort to establish a partnership with Diversity in Ed, a national organization promoting education as a career for individuals from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, GCPS has built an extensive community of partnerships to support and maintain the enhancement of

staff qualifications. GCPS partners with Frostburg State University (FSU) with the Childcare Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF) Grant. GCPS has informed local providers of the CCCPDF Grant. This allows local providers or others working for them, to obtain their teaching degrees at no charge. In addition, GCPS collaborates with FSU on several executive committees (P-20 Executive Council, FSU Mega Community, and FSU Educational Advisory Band, and Professional Development School) charged with examining goals and objectives to recruit future teachers to be prepared to enter the workforce and teacher candidacy pool with the appropriate credentials and Praxis requirements. Through partnerships, GCPS is able to evaluate the level of preparedness and serve as ambassadors to enhance the teacher preparation programs at Garrett College, Allegany College of Maryland, and Frostburg State University. These strategies have been successful in ensuring staff vacancies are filled with qualified candidates.

Additionally, through the Maryland LEADS grant, GCPS has partnered with FSU to provide a Bachelors and Masters Accelerated Teaching (MAT) Residency with a year-long internship experience. These programs were designed to support current staff in pursuing advanced degrees in the area of teaching. While we had five candidate openings, we were only able to solicit interest from two individuals pursuing the MAT elementary program and one individual pursuing their Bachelors. This was after attempts to re-advertise and recruit additional candidates. This initiative has been successful for the individuals participating and allowed GCPS to invest in current employees. However, with very limited interest, GCPS will be shifting towards a new strategy aligned with AIB feedback on the 2023 GCPS submission. This strategy involves GCPS pursuing a pathway for current students to obtain their Associate's Degree in the field of Education from Garrett College within the next three years to further support the teacher pipeline in Garrett County. This will allow students to transfer to a four-year school to complete the final two years of instruction to become a licensed teacher. We do not anticipate any major barriers specific to standing up this pathway. Once this pathway is established, GCPS will heavily advertise through counselors the benefits of becoming a teacher in Garrett County, Maryland along with the new pathway. This will allow GCPS to continue a pipeline of future educators within Garrett County.

### **Strategy 3: High Quality Mentoring and Professional Development**

It is important for GCPS to focus on high quality mentoring and professional development in order to retain and continue to grow our current staff. Consequently, GCPS implements a strong mentor teacher program to retain and support teachers once hired. GCPS has developed a process for assigning teacher mentors for teacher interns and new hires. Teachers who serve as mentors are identified as highly qualified teachers in their field. Mentor orientation and training takes place with GCPS human resource staff. Teachers and interns are matched with a mentor in their respective fields. During the first three years, new hires will meet with their mentor a minimum of 40 minutes per week. Each activity with the mentee is documented using the [Mentor Time Sheet Activity Form](#).

GCPS has also established and will continue to implement a robust professional learning plan to support early childhood teachers and eligible private provider staff in building instructional capacity within the field as evidenced in question 2.

GCPS has implemented the following strategies to support continued staff learning:

- GCPS has and will continue to partner with the Judy Center and GCCAC Head Start to hold professional development for prekindergarten teachers, kindergarten teachers,

Early Head Start teachers and instructional assistants, Head Start teachers and instructional assistants, and private provider staff.

- GCPS Pre-K lead teachers are creating Pre-K Shell Courses through Schoology for teachers to access innovative and effective teaching strategies to enhance instruction.
- GCPS includes instructional assistants from Pre-K, K, Early Head Start, Head Start, and private providers to Judy Center Virtual Power Hour professional development opportunities quarterly.
- The Judy Center has historically and will continue to budget funds to provide substitute coverage for private providers and their staff to attend professional development to support the mixed delivery system
- GCPS Pre-K teachers received E-LETRS training on the Science of Reading.
- GCPS teachers received IMSE Phonological Awareness training
- Judy Center continues working with private providers to support accreditation for the mixed delivery system
- GCPS provided professional development on the Three Cheers high quality instructional materials.
- GCPS is working on a Scope and Sequence in math and ELA for Pre-K teachers.
- GCPS will continue to review Kindergarten Readiness Assessment data using the four domains to identify areas of weakness and share the data collected with Pre-K teachers, Kindergarten teachers, Early Head Start teachers, Head Start teachers and private providers that attend the collaborative professional developments hosted by Garrett County Judy Center Early Learning Hubs.

To identify future training needs, staff complete a professional needs assessment to identify areas of need. Evaluations are completed to provide feedback on professional development. The mastery of the participant’s content understanding is assessed through the professional development evaluation feedback, instructional observations, data from student progress, teacher feedback from progress, and Judy Center Coordinator collaboration meetings with private providers.

In conclusion, GCPS has and will continue to implement protocols to ensure that high quality educators are obtained and supported to offer the highest level of education for students. The strategies above will continue as we move forward into FY25- FY27.

#### 04. Kindergarten Readiness

Discuss the LEA’s plans to **ensure all students in Pre-K programs, public and private, are ready for kindergarten.**

Plans should include strategies for supporting the development and implementation of the instructional program in mixed-delivery settings and using data (e.g., Kindergarten Readiness Assessment) to adapt instruction.

Considerations:

- Private provider collaboration
- Selection and use of materials
- Teacher training and professional development
- Resource sharing
- Specific instructional strategies for early learning
- Transition from half-day to full-day Pre-K

- Alignment between Pre-K and K-2
- Transition into Pre-K and from Pre-K to Kindergarten
- Student groups (special education, multilingual learners, students experiencing homelessness)

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint Outcome of ensuring all Pre-K students are ready for kindergarten.**

GCPS takes a holistic approach when ensuring all students from public and private providers are kindergarten ready. Kindergarten Readiness Assessments scores in language and literacy, math, social foundations, and physical well-being provide data to identify professional development needs for the early childhood staff. Lead teachers create instructional lessons and provide strategies that will be taught with fidelity throughout the Garrett County Public School System. The high-quality professional development opportunities throughout the year will be held in collaboration with private providers, Head Start teachers, Head Start instructional assistants, Judy Center staff, and Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) teachers and instructional assistants as evidenced in early questions. In this manner, all staff members that work with the Pre-K and K populations will be provided instructional support and high expectations.

As shown in [Tab 4 of the Data Appendix](#), GCPS most recently achieved a 53.9% readiness rate for kindergarten which is above the state average by 9.8%, followed by 32.7% of students approaching readiness. The data does however show an achievement gap with students who are economically disadvantaged (44.6%) and students with disabilities (20.7%) although both are also above the state average. When diving deeper into the data at the school level, GCPS has identified a significant outlier impacting the overall performance rate of the system. By addressing this, GCPS anticipates being able to increase the proficiency rate by another five percent. GCPS Leadership and Judy Center Leadership have worked together to provide additional support to private providers in this catchment area. Moreover, GCPS is analyzing facilities and pre-K program planning to provide as many students as possible with high quality opportunities within their school catchment area as detailed in earlier questions.

Additionally, GCPS has made and will continue to make progress towards the goal of all students being Kindergarten Ready through the following strategies:

**Strategy 1: High quality instructional materials have been vetted and purchased for early childhood classrooms**

*Pre-K 3&4: Savvas Three Cheers*

Three Cheers is a Pre-Kindergarten resource that prepares young children to be ready for kindergarten. It emphasizes skills-based experiences and purposeful play initiate learning around quality children’s literature. It has highly effective multisensory activities and interactive digital content. A Family Engagement web portal includes learning games and tools for parents and caregivers. The rich concept development activities in Three Cheers for Pre-K are mirrored in Uno, dos, tres ¡Prekínder! to support multilingual learners. Early childhood needs are met through routines, play, and active engagement. Positive themes encourage children to think for themselves, interact with others, and explore a concept. The curriculum consists of nine themes, four weeks each that challenge children academically within the play framework and develop social-emotional and behavioral skills. Ready-to-Go Theme Kits contain materials to deliver developmentally appropriate learning experiences across all KRA skill domains. It

includes opportunities for developing letter recognition, letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, and number recognition.

#### *Early Head Start & Start: Creative Curriculum*

Creative Curriculum utilizes early childhood development research to provide the foundation for each product. The Creative Curriculum balances both teacher-directed and child-initiated learning, with an emphasis on responding to children's learning styles and building on their strengths and interests. It is an inclusive curriculum that supports all children and enables teachers to see children's development and learning along a progression across the whole of the early childhood years. Creative Curriculum is a research-based preschool curricula that applies the latest theory and research on best practices in teaching and learning and the content standards developed by states and professional organizations. The Creative Curriculum for preschool clearly defines the teacher's vital role in connecting content, teaching, and learning for preschool children. It features goals and objectives linked directly to the valid and reliable assessment instrument.

#### *Partnering Judy Center Providers: Creative Curriculum & Frog Street*

Key learning domains are evident in the Frog Street curriculum, and weekly instructional plans are easy to follow and implement with fidelity. Integrated STEAM projects promote problem-solving and beginning coding skills. Interactive digital programs support virtual learning and families at home. An exclusive partnership with the Conscious Discipline program provides the tools for a strong social-emotional foundation. Research-based scope & sequence for literacy, math, and content domains is included. Acknowledging the individual needs of all learners, the pre-k curriculum includes strategies for differentiated instruction, and adaptations for special needs and English Language Learners, and more. Cultural responsiveness strategies are also included at point-of-use, with prompts and reminders to help teachers maintain an anti-bias mindset. A fully integrated digital assessment tool informs instruction, and professional development tips at point-of-use help to build teacher capacity. Frog Street's curriculum is available in English, Spanish, and dual-language.

### **Strategy 2: Professional Development and Private Provider Collaboration**

Professional development is offered to public and private early childhood staff during hours that are convenient for private provider staff and directors. Judy Center Virtual Power Hours are offered quarterly and focus on the four domains aligned with Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. In addition, private providers are made aware of additional training and conferences that are relevant to their domain. GCPS, Head Start, and Judy Center partner to host four professional developments throughout the program year. Public and private provider staff are invited to those opportunities. The Infant and Toddler Program participates in joint training with Head Start and Judy Center staff. The Judy Center has historically and will continue to budget funds to provide substitute coverage for private providers and their staff to attend PD to support the mixed delivery system

GCPS Pre-K teachers have had training opportunities in IMSE Phonological Awareness Training, E-LETRS training on the Science of Reading, and Social Emotional Learning. Pre-K teachers have access to the Pre-K Shell Courses through Schoology and the Scope and Sequence for math and ELA.

Judy Center staff will conduct bi-monthly site visits to partnering providers to support Maryland EXCELS and accreditation, offer enrichment activities, curriculum implementation, and refer to community partnerships that will enhance programming. The GCPS Director of Early Childhood

and Elementary Education will conduct site visits at private providers to support curriculum implementation, grant updates, and other needs. Maryland EXCELS and accreditation support, curriculum implementation, professional development opportunities, programmatic questions, partnership connections, and enrichment activities will be tracked in the outreach log. Through partnerships, additional private providers will be identified and supported to offer Blueprint eligible programs/resources.

GCPS reviews KRA data using the four domains to identify areas of weakness and shares the data collected with Pre-K teachers, Kindergarten teachers, Early Head Start teachers, Head Start teachers and private providers that attend the collaborative professional developments hosted by Garrett County Judy Center Early Learning Hubs. In July, GCPS, Head Start, and Judy Center administration meet to look at the ELA/KRA data, and identify professional learning needs, and secure presenters for professional development.

Finally, Garrett County has also seen incredible success in preparing students to be ready for kindergarten from the partnership between GCPS and Head Start specifically related to the collaborative classroom model. All but one Pre-K classroom serving three-year-olds next year will be collaborative classrooms and GCPS intends to continue the two pre-K 4 collaborative classrooms currently established, while continuing to review, analyze, and consider additional opportunities for collaborative classrooms. The two pre-K 4 collaborative classrooms currently in place are in the top three performing schools in the county when reviewing KRA data. As such, GCPS is anxious to see the impact of increasing three-year old opportunities in that same model.

### **Strategy 3: Transitions Between Grade Levels and Between Providers**

All GCPS Pre-K 3 & 4 programs operate on full-day schedules. Pre-K 4 is universal in Garrett County. Pre-K staff participate in developing the School Improvement Plan. Collaboration between grade levels, as well as with additional instructional staff, takes place during these meetings to ensure vertical alignment. Schools have the autonomy to implement grade blended professional learning communities. At times, Pre-K staff will join upper grades to conduct PLCs to develop best practices, share expectations, and ensure a successful transition from grade to grade.

Transitions from Pre-K to Kindergarten are planned out and designed to be successful. A transition meeting is held each spring for teachers to articulate student strengths and ways to support needs. Public and private providers attend this meeting to ensure all children are discussed and transitions are seamless. Teachers receive articulation notes on students entering their classroom. Head Start administrative staff meets with the GCPS Director of Early Childhood, Director of Special Education, Director of Student Services, and the Judy Center Coordinator to discuss students transitioning between programs. Judy Center conducts Summer Transition Camps for incoming Pre-K and Kindergarten students at qualifying Judy Center sites. Judy Center hosts Head Start and private providers transition field trips to schools, as well. During this trip students are able to ride a bus, visit a classroom, eat lunch in the cafeteria, and play on the playground.

### **Strategy 4: Supporting All Students**

Through a significant collaboration with Infants & Toddlers, Healthy Families, Early Head Start, Head Start, Judy Center, and private providers, GCPS has and will continue to support early identification of Tier I students (income eligible, multilingual students, students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness).

GCPS will continue to collaborate with private providers to serve all multilingual learners in the following ways:

- Utilize the Coordinator of Special Programs to oversee services provided to Multilingual Learners in the private provider setting
- Establish early identification of Multilingual Learners procedures by partnering with community agencies: GCPS Infant and Toddler Program, GCCAC Early Head Start & Head Start, Garrett County Health Department (GCHD) Early Care Programs, Garrett County Judy Center, and local pediatricians
- Implement a curriculum with extensive Multilingual Learner accommodations
- Make family engagement events, parent communication, and family supports available in the family's native language utilizing a translator program or staff as appropriate

Continued utilization of the Child Find process will support early identification of students with disabilities. Students are able to be referred for services through the Child Find process. Any local agency, service provider, community program, parent, or family member is able to make a referral to Special Education if they feel the child may have a delay and may qualify for Special Education and related services. The Child Find process and information about making referrals to Special Education is made available through our social media outlets (Facebook, etc.) on the GCPS website, through Child Find brochures, and through public relations events such as participation in Judy Center events, Head Start events, GCHD events, etc.

Services are provided in the natural environment for infant and toddler programs as well as preschool Special Education services which may be at the service provider location, the home, or community programs such as Head Start or daycare centers. In a few special circumstances preschool Special Education services may be provided in the home setting.

Infant and toddler services and Preschool Special Education services are provided in the classroom setting for children that are attending a public Pre-K or community program such as Head Start. The teachers are provided colleague-to-colleague coaching on strategies to use with children to assist with narrowing any developmental gaps identified through the IEP or IFSP or extended IFSP.

For infants and toddlers that are attending a public Pre-K or private provider, such as Head Start, the provider is included in the routines-based interview that is completed with parents to determine priorities and IFSP and extended IFSP outcomes and the IFSP meeting is held at the school setting to include parents and providers in the IFSP and extended IFSP development. The services are provided in the classroom with the child and the teacher/provider.

For Preschool Special Education services, the IEP is developed with the parent and providers if the child is in a community-based program such as Head Start or a public Pre-K program. The meeting is held at the child's school and the services are provided at the child's school in the general education classroom setting.

In conclusion additional positive factors that impact Kindergarten Readiness Achievement include:

- Highly qualified early childhood staff
- High Pre-K enrollment
- Expansive opportunities for school readiness activities with Judy Centers
- Strong Early Head Start/Head Start partnership
- Extensive vertical alignment between Head Start, Pre-K, and Kindergarten

- Community partnerships that focus on school readiness (Ruth Enlow Library, Healthy Families, Community Action Home Based Program, local pediatrician, etc.)

Moving forward, GCPS will continue to review KRA data using the four domains to identify areas of weakness and share the data collected along with effective strategies with all staff and partners.

## Pillar 2: High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders

### 05. A High-Quality and Diverse Teacher Workforce

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 28 - 36*

In March 2023, the LEA described how it would **recruit and hire a high-quality and diverse teacher workforce**.

Responses included identifying the most critical hiring needs, strategies for recruiting and hiring a diverse workforce, and how the LEA would partner with institutions of higher education and educator preparation programs to build talent pipelines in response to its needs (e.g., strategic placement and support of teacher candidates, full certification of conditionally certified teachers, grow your own programs, alternative preparation programs, etc.).

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the district's staffing needs and the Blueprint outcome of recruiting and hiring a high-quality and diverse teacher workforce.**

#### Strategy #1: Grow your Own

GCPS utilized Maryland LEAD funds to create a Grow Your Own (GYO) initiative to build a pipeline of educators within our school system. Currently, we have offered several staff members the opportunity to increase their educational credentials. This initiative provided our current staff with the opportunity to fill critical roles in our teacher workforce, but also allowed them to continue to polish and build upon their skillset. Moreover, this initiative allowed GCPS to be in full compliance with the early childhood expectation requiring all assistants in Pre-K classrooms to have an Associate's degree or Child Development Associates. Additionally, we have numerous employees who enhanced their qualifications to support students with

challenging behaviors which were identified as a need. Additional data on this initiative is shown on page 7 of this plan.

GCPS sees the Grow Your Own program as a valuable resource in growing and maintaining the teacher pipeline as well. This program has resulted in at least two employees completing a teacher program to become qualified/certified teachers. Additionally, GCPS continues to invest in current employees by supporting educational credentials beyond those required for initial licensure and/or employment. As a result of these efforts and others, our staff has achieved the educational credits shown to the right.

GCPS Educational Credentials	
Degree	# of Staff
Associates Degree	7
Bachelor's Degree	66
Master's Degree	248
Doctorate Degree	12

GCPS has plans to expand the GYO initiative in collaboration with Garrett College over the next three years by developing a new College and Career Pathway that will provide current students the opportunity to earn an Associate's degree in education that will fully transfer to Frostburg University as they pursue a Bachelor's degree. This initiative is in alignment with AIB feedback. While the AIB recommended that GCPS explore the Teacher Academy in Maryland Program, due to enrollment, staffing, and breadth of programming, the best solution for the system is to stand up an alternative path that will reach the same outcome of providing students an opportunity to pursue the field of education while in high school.

We also plan to offer current GCPS employees the opportunity to transfer to Frostburg State University to earn a bachelor's degree or enroll in a Master of Arts in Teaching program once they've earned an Associate's degree. We know this will be a great asset for our school district to increase a teacher pipeline with current employees that know the school district and school communities.

**Strategy #2: Diversifying Recruitment**

Upon review of the student-to-teacher population, the GCPS workforce closely represents the diversity within the student population. Based on an analysis of [Tab 5A](#) and [5B](#) of the [Data Appendix](#), in 2023 approximately 2% of our students identified as Latino, 1% as black and 2% as two or more races. When exploring staff data, 0.7% of our staff identified as Latino and another 0.7% as black. See the [GCPS Diversity Report 12.1.23](#) for this data broken down by school. The data does show an area of need around increasing the number of male teachers. Since 2021, we have seen a slight increase in the number of male teachers in our schools. In 2021, male teachers comprised only 19% of the workforce and in 2023 that number is closer to 22%. Despite the increase, there is still an opportunity to increase the number of male staff across our schools given the current ratio of male to female teachers. This is something we are working to address as part of our GYO initiative.

In GCPS, we are also experiencing a low result in diverse candidates to open positions in our school district. We will continue to explore a more robust and wide spread campaign on social media outlets to attract a more diverse workforce to achieve our vision and mission of attracting and recruiting highly-qualified employees that value all stakeholders in the school community (students, parents, and the larger community). Currently, due to a variety of budgetary factors including the sunseting of ARP ESSER federal grant funding, GCPS does not currently have many open teaching positions for external applicants. Most positions are being filled with

internal candidates at this time. However, when the opportunity for external recruitment arises, GCPS intends to focus recruitment efforts around diversifying our workforce to the greatest extent possible. In line with this, GCPS will continue to work closely with Frostburg University and Garrett College as we stand up the GYO pathway to recruit students from diverse backgrounds.

GCPS further plans to meet with our current teachers from diverse backgrounds to gain knowledge of their experiences with GCPS and the recruitment process, along with what they feel we could do differently to attract more diversity within our school system. We intend to explore what types of obstacles employees have encountered within our community that might be a barrier to attracting other diverse candidates as well. Furthermore, Garrett College has international students. GCPS will explore ways to elevate diversity and culturally responsive experiences in collaboration with Garrett College for our students and school system. There may be an avenue for this through career day.

One challenge has been incentivizing staff to earn the credentials necessary to teach dual-enrollment courses. As a result, we are focused on creating a plan to increase the number of teachers credentialed to teach dual enrollment courses at the local higher education (Garrett College) and with the two high schools to give GCPS students more opportunities for dual enrollment courses. We are currently in the brainstorming phase with the Chief Academic Officer, Director of Secondary Education, secondary principals, GC President, and Dean of Instruction at GC.

### **Strategy #3: Training**

We have continued to partner with Frostburg University's traditional education program and MAT program by supporting several student teachers within our schools each year. This year, we have made a strategic shift in practice by having the instructional team be more involved in the placements of those teachers. This allows the instructional leadership team to have a stronger knowledge and connection with incoming prospective teachers while also providing an opportunity to be more involved with the partnership. Student teachers have been placed in classrooms that will provide them with a robust learning environment. Frostburg student teachers often become future teachers for the school system. GCPS has also focused on several initiatives to support and retain new teachers. We have provided all new teachers an intensive onboarding program called BEST class while also providing a high quality mentor who provides support throughout the school year. Additionally, this past year we developed a [GCPS Professional Development Plan](#) to ensure high levels of support for all teachers.

Moving forward, GCPS intends to focus on exploring systems and structures that will better meet the needs of all of our teachers including experienced teachers. We will need to shift from a structure that elevates higher education attainment to offering support for educators to earn a NBC while providing additional support throughout the workday. Our hope is that as we explore how to implement a 60/40 time release model in alignment with the Blueprint that this will provide opportunities during the school day for this type of training and support to occur which will positively impact teacher participation. Additionally, GCPS currently has eight half day professional development opportunities throughout the school year that occur once a month. We are exploring ways to leverage a portion of this existing structure to provide support for our NBC candidates. GCPS currently has a work group meeting at the end of April to review a recent professional development survey that was administered to all staff. We will also be reviewing our Blueprint Strategic Priorities and gathering feedback on implications for professional development along with possible structural changes needed to accomplish this with

the goal of providing a rich experience that will support and retain our high quality staff workforce.

## 06. A High-Quality and Diverse Corps of School Leaders

For the March 2024 submission, the LEA must also discuss how it **recruits and hires a high-quality and diverse corps of school leaders, including its collaboration with institutions of higher education and other organizations to build leadership pipelines**. Consider the potential impact of the Career Ladder and how the LEA will adapt its plans to address any challenges (e.g., National Board Certification for future school leaders, smaller candidate pools if teachers remain in classrooms, etc.).

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the district’s staffing needs and the Blueprint outcome of recruiting and hiring high-quality and diverse leaders.**

### Strategy #1: Financial Incentives

GCPS places high value on ensuring a quality administrative workforce. To meet the minimum teaching salary of \$60,000 on July 1, 2026, GCPS has committed to providing a 15% increase in salary for teachers over the next three years. The GCPS Board of Education made this same commitment for the administrator unit. This is a substantial local investment that elevates the importance of quality administrators. GCPS feels that this investment will allow GCPS to remain competitive locally and ensure quality candidate pools for administrative positions. The work will now shift to negotiating the career ladder for administrators. GCPS has also committed to providing the salary enhancements for eligible certificated staff to ensure we meet statutory requirements.

Additionally, the career ladder offers two pathways of incentives for teachers to develop as instructional leaders. The first pathway is to promote teachers to take on more responsibilities, but to stay in the classroom. The second pathway is for teachers to enter into an administrative role, which would create a hardship for GCPS. Currently, we have low turnover in administrative positions so this does not pose an immediate threat, however it could be a challenge down the road. Therefore, the salary incentives for teachers being NBC could potentially create a challenge for a low candidate pool for administrators due to teachers staying in the classroom. With that said, the GCPS negotiated contract states, “when current non-administrative type employees, or when a current A & S employee is transferred within the A & S salary scale, placement shall be completed so that new unit members will receive at least a minimum increase in per diem rate as well as a minimum increase in annual salary”. This clause ensures that as teachers progress into administrative roles, they receive at least a minimum increase in per diem pay. This in combination with the projected salary increases should support a strong candidate pool. However, the lack of state funding offered to provide school administrators comparable salary enhancements for NBC as compared to teachers is a significant barrier for our school system.

GCPS has had excellent success with building pipelines for instructional leaders using federal funding to invest in county-wide lead teachers and literacy coaches. Additionally, restricted funding sources have been used to provide administrator in residency experiences that allow

teacher leaders to experience a sabbatical program where they shadow an administrator with a release from their classroom assignment for 90-180 days. With the sunsetting of federal funding, GCPS faces the challenge of continuing to invest in teacher leadership opportunities during a time when there are a number of budgetary concerns. As such, GCPS is exploring alternative strategies through the development of the career ladder, while also exploring alternative funding opportunities to support future administrators.

### **Strategy #2: Collaboration**

The partnerships created with Institutions of Higher Education (Garrett College, Allegany College, and Frostburg State University) to offer GYO programs to support our staff to pursue additional educational degrees have been very beneficial. We have had many staff members take advantage of those programs. Additionally, we have various stakeholder groups (i.e, P20, PDS School Committee, etc.) to address ways to increase resources for academic support and collaborate on ways to gain a deeper understanding of ways to enhance the educator preparedness programs and leadership pipelines that include strategies to recruit and support each other.

GCPS is also exploring tapping into other employers in Garrett County to work together to create a more diverse workforce across our county. We plan to work with GC Workforce Development and the GC Chamber of Commerce to discuss strategies to attract a more diverse population to Garrett County. This is a county initiative to build a more diverse workforce countywide. We see an opportunity to address long standing community issues such as the lack of affordable housing and reliable public transportation through this collaboration as well as stay abreast of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiative from the county commissioners

### **Strategy #3: Use of Social Media and Technology**

Based on an analysis of [Tab 5A](#) and [6](#) in the Data Appendix, in 2023 approximately 2% of our students identified as Latino, 1% as black and 2% as two or more races. While 0% of our school leaders identified as Latino or black. While there is not a significant variance, these enrollment numbers illustrate that there is continued work to be done to diversify the GCPS leader pipeline so that it more closely represents the diversity of the GCPS student population. One current challenge faced is that due to budgetary constraints, GCPS is currently filling administrative positions internally. This limits the diversity of the pool considered for an administrative position.

GCPS is prepared to recruit externally when the time comes. This year we have launched a partnership with Diversity in Education in order to attract a more diverse pool of candidates. Through this partnership, we have identified more diverse job boards and social media outlets to target for our recruitment efforts. During 2023, we upgraded our recruitment efforts/platforms to extend our outreach nationally using [k12jobspot.com](https://www.k12jobspot.com) in an effort to reach more highly qualified applicants. In addition, we updated our website to be more user-friendly and to make job opportunities more accessible. Our new platform allows for a more seamless process for applicants. Lastly, we are continuing to post positions in diverse social media outlets and higher education websites. We are hopeful that the recruitment efforts shared above will support more diverse and larger candidate pools when the system is able to recruit externally.

#### Strategy #4: Grow Your Own

In GCPS we have historically implemented a GYO program with administrators, called Administrator in Residence. The purpose of the Administrator in Residence Program is to induct and train future assistant principals and principals in the following areas:

- GCPS Leadership Philosophy, Core Values, and Education Model
- Building Culture
- Instructional Leadership
- People and Resource Management
- Community Leadership
- Problem-Solving

This has been a successful program and GCPS will continue to explore possible funding sources to continue offering this program, when possible.

### 07. National Board Certification

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 37 - 44, 48, and 51*

In March 2023, the LEA described its plans to **recruit and support diverse candidates through the successful completion of National Board Certification or advanced degrees (if NBC is not available)** to be eligible for the designation of Lead Teacher within the Career Ladder.

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome to recruit and support diverse candidates pursuing and achieving National Board Certification or advanced degrees (if NBC is not available).**

### Strategy #1: Development of a National Board Certification (NBC) Pipeline

Overall, there has been an increase in GCPS teachers who are pursuing their NBC over the last three school years. GCPS local data reflects a significant increase in teachers pursuing and attaining NBC as detailed to the right. According to [Tab 7A](#) and [7B](#) of the Data Appendix provided by MSDE, only three GCPS teachers earned NBC as of 2023 and 51 teachers are in the pipeline. This is not representative of the teachers who recently earned NBC.

NBC Teachers (Local Data)	
Year	# of Staff
SY21-22	10 NBC Teachers
SY22-23	9 NBC Teachers, 43 initial candidates, 1 Maintenance of Certification
SY23-24	20 NBC Teachers, 40 initial candidates, 1 Maintenance of Certification

Our projection is that for FY25 and beyond we will increase our number of National Board Certified teachers by 5% each year. While the candidate number will be higher, the certification rate will be lower, mainly because most candidates opt to complete the process in multiple years. We project a large jump in NBC teachers in December of 2024, if all of our teachers in the pipeline qualify. However, there are not as many initial candidates for 2024-2025. Of note, our NBC teacher candidacy pool is spread across the county in every school with the exception of Swan Meadow Elementary and Rt. 40 Elementary.

Moving forward our focus is diversifying the pool of NBC candidates in the following ways:

- Increasing the number of CTE teachers obtaining NBC
- Increasing the number of secondary male teachers obtaining NBC

It's important to note that GCPS does not have any low performing schools and no strategic assignment of NBC teachers has occurred yet. However, we should anticipate these happenings as the career ladder is rolled out.

### Strategy #2: Collaboration

GCPS is participating in the MSDE Grow Your Own community of practice for school districts to look at different initiatives to support candidates. Moreover, GCPS has been a leader in the Western regional consortium specific to NBC. GCPS also has a strong working relationship with Garrett College (GC) and Frostburg State University (FSU) that fosters opportunities to incentivize teachers to pursue higher education. Through the work of Dr. Jane Wildesen, Director of Human Resources, GCPS is leading information sessions twice a year with teacher candidates at FSU to share about the NBC process and the support Garrett County provides teachers. Dr. Coluzzi, assistant principal with GCPS, is also teaching a NBC micro-credential course through Frostburg State University that covers an overview of the NBC process, what teachers should know and be able to do in the NBC process, and an in depth review of the NBC Five Core Propositions. Moving forward, there is additional work to be done alongside Institutions of Higher Education to gain a better understanding of the EdTPA process and how it relates to NBC.

GCPS will continue to encourage school-based administrators to invite NBC leaders to join their staff meetings to answer questions and personalize the NBC process for teachers. There has been very little collaboration with the Title 1 Coordinator to discuss the process. We have recognized this gap and will have collaborative meetings with the coordinator moving forward to offer the NBC orientation meeting dates and support. GCPS NBC leaders also intend to reach out personally to present at schools that do not currently have any NBC candidates in order to

explain NBC opportunities and share the book “How School Leaders can Support NBC: A Pathway to Accomplished Teaching” with school and district leaders.

Our goal is to increase collaboration with administrators to encourage teachers to join the NBC process. Through collaborative meetings with administrators we can continue to target our under-represented populations. By prioritizing personalized connections and invitations to learn about the NBC process and support, we aim to increase our NBC candidates. Furthermore, GCPS is committed to implementing a stronger, more robust communication campaign, through all social media outlets, on the salary enhancements and the intensive technical support offered to NBC candidates.

**Strategy #3: New Development and Training Opportunities**

Our NBC cohort model is a strength. Dr. Coluzzi, Assistant Principal with GCPS has been leading these cohorts, however recently we’ve made a concerted effort to distribute leadership by having additional NBC teachers facilitate these meetings and taking on leadership roles. This is one example of how GCPS has enacted AIB’s 2023 feedback in our Blueprint implementation plan. We have been continuously seeking out opportunities to allow teachers to engage in leadership opportunities. These meetings have been an opportunity for ongoing reflection and continuous improvement conversations. Our NBC teacher mentor program has also been a strength and something we plan to continue. Mentors are now being offered based on the school site or teacher certification area.

Dr. Coluzzi is teaching a micro-credential course through Frostburg State University for this year for the first time as well. This is an opportunity to collaborate with higher education to support the NBC candidates and provide support for FSU students in better understanding what is included in the NBC process, timelines, certification requirements, and other pertinent details of obtaining an NBC.

While we have experienced positive feedback and results from the NBC support in place, our GCPS certification rate for NBC remains lower than the national average. Nationwide the NBC certification rate is 71%, while GCPS is below 60%. This suggests there is an opportunity for more support for teachers going through the process. GCPS is committed to provide personal support to the NBC candidates by continuing to offer a mentor to the NBC candidates. Through this process, NBC mentors will encourage NBC candidates to use the resources provided and offered as a means to support successful attainment of the NBC. Moreover, as discussed earlier, over the next three years, GCPS will be focused on exploring structures that may provide greater job-embedded opportunities to support teachers pursuing NBC. We have also learned that ongoing support meetings/structures for NBC candidates are not well attended. As a result, we have made an adjustment to this strategy by recording those meetings and making them available for candidates on demand. GCPS will continue to offer a variety of technical support for NBC candidates while also making available the NBC Schoology resource page. GCPS is currently providing the following technical support for all NBC Candidates:

NBC Technical Support Calendar	
Month	Technical Support
August	Orientation
September	Planning meeting

<b>November/ December</b>	Receive Score/Assign mentor
<b>January</b>	Dig Deeper for Understanding C1
<b>February</b>	Dig Deeper for Understanding C2
<b>March</b>	Dig Deeper for Understanding C3, Practice Writing NBC Standards, Practice C1 Writing
<b>April</b>	Dig Deeper for Understanding C4, Practice Writing NBC Standards Technical Assistance/Uploading Practice C1 Writing
<b>May</b>	Technical Assistance with NBC Submission

In addition to our current structure detailed above, GCPS intends to create the following training opportunities moving forward:

- Training/onboarding for NBC Mentors
  - GCPS is working with other Maryland school districts/agencies to offer a training session of best practices in being a NBC mentor
- A Maintenance of Certification Cohort by FY26 to provide differentiated support to teachers at different points in the process
- Exploring ways to incorporate the 5 Core Proportions of NBC into future county-wide professional development opportunities, when possible.

#### **Strategy #4: Use of Data**

This school year, we have hosted focus groups with NBC candidates, non-NBC candidates, and former NBC candidates that withdrew from the process to better understand those barriers that occur with teachers and administrators in pursuit of obtaining NBC.

We are continuously improving our support program for NBC candidates. In order to understand their experiences and needs we administered an anonymous survey where teachers shared their experiences with our candidate support program as well.

In response to feedback we've collected this year both quantitative from the survey and qualitative from focus groups, we plan to explore the following ideas:

- Providing a virtual NBC notebook to candidates to assist with knowledge management as well as enable us to view where candidates are in the process.
- Providing professional development for mentors of NBC candidates. We are currently exploring partnerships with micro credentialing organizations such as Bloomboard.

#### **Strategy #5: Communication**

An area that GCPS would like to enhance moving forward is communication. While we have experienced initial success recruiting a substantial size of candidates while also increasing national board certifications within the county as shown above, the rate of employees indicating pursuit of NBC is slowing. As such, to support forward momentum in the area of teacher's pursuing NBC, GCPS has prioritized communication as a strategy. GCPS will utilize social media to recognize NBC teachers and candidates, while also recruiting out of state teachers with NBC to join GCPS. We will attend job fairs and create a brochure that showcases benefits

of NBC and GCPS. We also plan to add a section to our website in order to showcase our NBC leaders, our NBC process, and our staff members who have earned the credential. In order to target underserved populations, we will target secondary, males, CTE, secondary foreign language teachers, and counselors.

GCPS will also focus on adjusting communication around NBC timelines. Based on feedback received, there needs to be increased clarity around important dates so that all key stakeholders are knowledgeable and aware of required timelines. Some areas of focus include:

- Timelines for hiring NBC scorers from GCPS pool of NBC teachers
- FY25 cohort meeting schedule
- Orientation meetings date and times. It is of note that GCPS has moved orientation from August to May based on stakeholder feedback from focus groups with non-NBC teachers.

## 08. Cultivating and Managing Effective Partnerships

How does the LEA **cultivate and manage its partnerships with institutions of higher education (IHE) and educator preparation programs (EPP) to ensure the needs of all organizations are met?**

Consider the challenges associated with the current labor market and the individual mission and goals of each partner. Discuss how the LEA works with its partners to build relationships and adapt each organization's systems and practices to achieve shared goals.

Considerations:

- Teacher candidate placement and experiences
- Teacher induction and mentorship programs
- Talent pipelines, including alternative pathways to certification and professional development
- Advanced degree programs (e.g., in support of dual enrollment expansion, critical needs areas, etc.)
- Developing and implementing Post College and Career Readiness (CCR) pathways and CCR Support pathway
- Regular communication and feedback between LEA and IHE/EPP leadership to strengthen programs and systems

### Strategy #1: Stakeholder Engagement

We have set up various stakeholder groups to increase resources and academic support in targeted areas such as student services (school counseling, social workers, speech and language therapists, etc.), special education and ELA. Below are examples of some of the groups we participate in.

- Primary to post-graduate (P20) - A regional meeting facilitated by Frostburg for school districts and colleges in western Maryland. These meetings are attended by Garrett College, Washington County Public Schools, Alleghany County Public Schools, and Allegany College. During these meetings we discuss thinking strategies for our EPPs and ideas for how to support interns.

- HR Roundtable - Focuses on workforce development. It is a collaborative structure that local businesses attend. Discussion topics include how to attract talent to Garrett County through salary structures and financial incentives.

We proactively seek feedback and collaboration from these groups in order to gain a deeper understanding of ways to enhance educator preparedness programs and our leadership pipelines. This approach ensures that our recruitment efforts are mutually beneficial.

### **Strategy #2: Intentional Support for Student Interns**

GCPS has collaborated with IHE to design, implement, and facilitate multiple professional learning opportunities for student interns. This strategy will continue to be offered. It has been beneficial for student interns to also experience the same professional development our teachers are offered to allow the interns to have a deeper understanding of GCPS's curricular programs, resources, and best practices while they shadow the cooperating teacher in their internship.

Our strategy of strategically assigning the best GCPS teachers as cooperation teachers for our student interns has been successful to ensure the student successfully completes the requirements. We have site coordinators at each school that work with the faculty at IHEs to develop a clear understanding of shared values, standards, and research-based practices to ensure the successful completion of student internships.

GCPS believes a supportive school environment offers candidates the ability to collaborate with their cooperating/mentor teacher and participate in professional development within GCPS and IHEs. Furthermore, our student interns receive constructive feedback throughout the internship from the building administration and have a supportive school culture that is consistent with the school system's belief that each student should achieve their fullest potential. By having all of those supports in place, we believe this collaboration provides assurances that our student interns successfully complete their internships and are prepared to begin their careers as strong teacher candidates.

Recently, we have expanded the internship program beyond teaching and began placing interns in high needs areas such as counseling and school social workers as well.

### **Strategy #3: Professional Development Schools and Mentor teachers**

GCPS has established MOUs with our partner higher education institutions (Garrett College and Frostburg State University). Multiple schools are designated as Professional Development Schools (PDS), and each PDS has a liaison who serves on the PDS Coordinating Council, which meets one to two times a semester as well as once in the summer for mentor training. Those liaisons are highly effective teachers in the school or the building administrator. In addition, the selected liaisons are provided specific training from FSU on being an effective mentor or Site Coordinator. Those individuals receive a minimal stipend, tuition remission, and additional CPD credits for serving in this role. The Office of HR at GCPS works with the Office of Field Experience at FSU to thoughtfully and strategically place interns in the most diverse placement. This year, GCPS intentionally shifted to having the district instructional team to be more involved with the placement process. Mentor teachers within the three field experiences (Assistantship, Internship I, Internship II) must have the following required qualifications:

- At least 3 – 5 years of successful teaching experience (varies by placement county)
- Full-time tenured teacher in the school in which they will mentor
- Hold current certification in their grade or subject area

- Considered “highly qualified” in their teaching area
- Approved to mentor by the local school district administration
- Participate in mentor training required by FSU/P-12 School Districts
- Participate in mentor orientation provided by FSU

The selection process for mentor teachers begins with a recommendation by the individual’s school principal and an indication from the recommended teacher of his/her availability and willingness to mentor an undergraduate assistant pair/intern for the length of the field experience. This year, instructional directors supported the coordination of placements. Mentors receive updates on program activities and changes in internship requirements for candidates via PDS coordinating councils and provided professional development. The accreditation process at FSU through Council of the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) requires an assurance for the quality of teacher mentors. Teacher residents and teacher mentors must complete an orientation and ongoing quarterly meetings that offer professional development and essential skills and resources necessary in a highly qualified mentor/mentee program. Mentors are provided Continued Professional Development (CPD) credits and a stipend for serving in this capacity.

**Strategy #4: Higher Education Partnerships**

The partnerships created with Institutions of Higher Education (Garrett College, Allegany College, and Frostburg State University) to offer GYO programs to support our staff to pursue additional educational degrees have been very beneficial as indicated in question 5.

GCPS has partnered with FSU to offer the Maryland Accelerated program for both elementary (MAT-E) and secondary (MAT-S) teacher preparation programs for career changers to earn a master’s degree in teaching. This alternative pathway program offers a one year intensive internship program, FSU teacher prep program, and MAT-E courses. This partnership with FSU is in addition to our traditional educational interns from FSU. GCPS has been able to support this partnership with FSU in the Maryland Accelerates Program by strategically utilizing the Maryland Leads grant funding. This has resulted in two of our current employees achieving teaching credentials this spring.

It is important to note, in GCPS, we value our partnership with FSU and the ongoing collaboration during our bimonthly meetings with the Maryland Accelerates (MA) team at FSU with Washington County Public Schools and Frederick County Public Schools. This work has allowed GCPS to invest in our staff while continuing this MA partnership with FSU. As a result of our partnership with Frostburg we have developed and launched the following micro credentials to support our teachers’ development 1) Micro credential in SEL concentrated on poverty 2) Microcredit on culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy.

GCPS has spent considerable time building partnerships with Garrett College, Allegany College, Frostburg State University and West Virginia University (WVU) in order to provide motivated high school seniors an immersive college experience and opportunities to earn college credits while simultaneously completing high school. Currently, the partnership with Garrett College offers students two Associate's degree pathways. Within the next three years, GCPS will expand by offering a pathway in education. The partnership with FSU offers the Bobcat Academy for GCPS students in their senior year. All classes for the Bobcat Academy are offered on the FSU campus, which allows for a true college experience. Those students are challenged with exposure to early higher education, and upon high school graduation, will gain

acceptance into FSU where they can complete their pursuit of a bachelor's degree and beyond. Student's may also transfer to another four year institution.

To be implemented next year, GCPS students will have two additional opportunities for dual enrollment resulting from partnerships with WVU and Allegany College. Students will have the opportunity to earn dual enrollment credit through the GCPS Agricultural program with WVU as well as dual enrollment credit in culinary and auto mechanics coursework through Allegany College.

## 09. Educator Compensation

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 52 and 54*

In March 2023, the LEA discussed how it intended to **meet the requirements set forth in the Blueprint to improve teacher compensation.**

The LEA's response was to ensure that teachers receive a minimum starting salary of \$60,000 by July 1, 2026.

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome to ensure teachers receive a minimum starting salary of \$60,000 by July 1, 2026.**

### Strategy #1: A phased approach to Increasing the starting salary

According to the data in [Tab 9 of the Data Appendix](#), there have been steady increases to the GCPS starting salary from \$46,199 in SY 21-22 to \$51,839 during SY 23-24. As evidenced by Artifact #3 from question #53 of our 2023 Blueprint submissions, GCPS has demonstrated a 10% increase of the Unit I (certificated) scales between 2019-2024. Over the next three years, GCPS has projected an increase of 4.9%, 5.0%, and 5.1% to its salary scale. As a result, GCPS will meet the requirements set forth in the Blueprint to improve teacher compensation. GCPS will ensure that all teachers receive a minimum starting salary of \$60,000 by July 1, 2026.

GCBOE members voted during the April 9, 2024 meeting to offer a three-year contract to ensure compliance with the Blueprint requirement of reaching \$60,000 by FY27. Over the next three years the salaries for teachers will increase by 15% above the FY24 salary scales. The [GCPS 3 Year Contract Memo for Unit I Compliance \\$60,000](#) provides evidence of that

commitment. GCPS has reached tentative agreement with our GCEA (Unit I) and GASA (A&S) bargaining units at this time.

The uncertainty of funding year over year to ensure we reach the required minimum starting salary for teachers of \$60,000 is one of the greatest challenges faced by GCPS. GCPS leaders are anticipating funding challenges as a result of the following factors:

- Decreased student enrollment
- Increased Maryland State Retirement and Pension System (MSRPS) contribution rates

GCPS may need to find channels for seeking additional state and local funding in order to meet the increased salary requirements as well as collaborate with local government officials to better understand the mandates in the Blueprint funding formulas. Additionally, GCPS is being very intentional and thoughtful through the budget process as we navigate the sunset of federal grant funds. We are analyzing staffing, enrollment, resource needs, and programs as we consider allocations in future budget years in addition to Strategy 3 detailed below.

### **Strategy #2: Negotiating a School Year 2024-2025 Salary Scale including Levels 1 to 3 of the Career Ladder**

Below is a draft model of a career ladder created in collaboration with various stakeholder groups that will be negotiated with teacher and administrators units. GCPS launched a career ladder work group and advisory group to provide recommendations in this area. These groups elevated the importance of a balanced approach that honors NBC, experience, and educational credits. There was also a recommendation to provide a locally supported initiative that would allow for lead content specialists at the 2B level. GCPS operationalized these important pieces of feedback in the draft GCPS Career Ladder Model discussed below. GCPS feels that by honoring the feedback of these work groups, there is greater likelihood of teacher buy-in and this will incentivize staff to desire to move to the career ladder.

GCPS will establish a mutually agreed upon career ladder that allows for salary enhancements. The draft model shows the FY27 starting salary of \$60,000, NBC salary enhancements, and parameters on how an educator will advance on the career ladder. The [draft GCPS Career Ladder Model 4 11 24](#) outlines the salary enhancements for the career ladder and additional considerations for other components associated with the career ladder. The draft [GCBOE/GCEA Maryland Blueprint Career Ladder Negotiations 4.16.24](#) presentation provides additional insights specific to the Career Ladder Model. We are still currently in active negotiations specific to the career ladder with the goal of coming to an agreement prior to the end of this school year. The drafts above are being shared with permission from the respective bargaining units.

Some related challenges we will need to turn our attention to as we continue work in this area over the next year include:

- Establishing a Peer Assistance Model
- Developing a plan to operationalize time release for teachers
- Further develop a plan for Level 4 of the career ladder as well as the administrator career ladder

Additional strategies in place to incentivize teachers to opt into the career ladder include:

- Developing and clearly communicating the salary scale for all levels of the career ladder so staff can see the financial incentives for opting in.

- Continuing the Career Ladder Work Group and Advisory Committee in order to broaden stakeholder engagement and collaboratively work on the challenges posed above.
- Launching NBC recruitment and information events during the spring semester in addition to the fall per stakeholder feedback.
- Leveraging existing NBC candidates to recruit colleagues and encourage their participation.
- Launching FSU micro-credential on NBC and encourage enrollment specifically for Frostburg M.A.T. candidates.
- Continuing ongoing communication efforts to educate and inform staff about the incentives offered to teachers across the four levels in the career ladder throughout the development process to provide clarity to staff on all aspects of the Career Ladder by leveraging focus groups, administrative meetings, Blueprint newsletters, and working groups.

GCPS intends to measure progress towards successful implementation of the Career Ladder with the following targets:

- #/% of teachers who opt into the Career Ladder
- #/% of teachers pursuing National Board Certification
  - Including specifically increasing # of male NBC candidates and # of secondary candidates
- #/% of Level 1, 2, and 3 staff with schedules that support 60/40 split in responsibilities
- Develop 5 new higher education partnerships to expand and diversify teacher pipelines.

### **Strategy #3: Implementing a new grade band structure**

The GCPS proposed FY 2025 budget was formulated upon retaining current staff and services despite the challenges of reductions in federal and state funding. We have reallocated funding for salaries and instructional materials in order to do this while also elevating the Blueprint priorities stated above. To decrease system level costs and address the resource reallocation necessary to address budget constraints, GCPS has been exploring different staffing and scheduling models that create efficiencies. For example, next year in the southern end of our district, we are moving to a PK-6 and 7-12 grade band model. Broadford Elementary will be absorbing all southern end sixth graders as we launch the sixth grade academy. While Southern High School will serve grades 7 through 12 on the southern end of the county moving forward. Making this change will allow GCPS to renovate the current Southern Middle School into a state-of-the-art facility for Broad Ford Elementary students PreK-6. Once this renovation is complete, Broad Ford Elementary students will move to their new school site and the current Broad Ford Elementary school will be demolished. This reduces the number of schools in Garrett county from 12 to 11. To date this consolidation has resulted in a reduction of nine positions. GCPS is also implementing a campus model on the northern end of the county for Northern Middle School and Northern High School. Starting in the school year 2023-2024, the northern campus was led by one principal and two assistant principals, which allowed for innovative ideas around the use of staff and a decrease in administrative staff. During the 2023-2024 school year, GCPS worked with a variety of stakeholder groups to adopt a new secondary schedule for all 6th-12th graders that would allow greater flexibility and efficiencies in scheduling and the use of staff moving forward. We have been exploring additional efficiencies by seeking teacher candidates at the secondary level who have dual certifications whenever possible. This allows greater flexibility when scheduling. Finally, GCPS closed the central office building at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year in Oakland and reallocated staff to Dennett Road Educational Complex and Northern Middle School thereby further reducing the school system footprint and expenses to address budgetary challenges.

## Pillar 3: College and Career Readiness

### 10. College and Career Readiness in English Language Arts

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 57 - 76 and 81*

In March 2023, the LEA described how it would **ensure all students are proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade and Pre-K-5 students are on the path to becoming college and career ready in English language arts.**

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome ensuring all students are proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade and on the path to becoming college and career ready in English language arts.**

**Note: LEAs must submit their final Pre-K-12 comprehensive literacy plans in alignment with the science of reading by June 28, 2024.**

#### Strategy 1: Comprehensive Literacy Plan

Garrett County Public Schools' (GCPS) literacy team created the first draft of the Comprehensive Literacy Plan which was submitted in January 2024. The plan established the vision, mission, and beliefs aligned to the Science of Reading. The plan components were originally aligned to the former Maryland Comprehensive Plan and adapted to align more closely with the components of the Maryland Blueprint. While the original components of professional learning, core instruction coupled with supplemental or tiered instruction, and family engagement were included, measurable objectives were added to the goals for the 2023-2024 school year. Specific action steps over three years were added for district leaders, principals and teachers. The feedback was obtained through focus groups conducted with our principals at our administrative meetings and using our lead teachers in the content areas of Reading and Social Studies. The results of the feedback were collected on a Jamboard and revisions were made specifically to the action steps. The professional development plan, elements of effective instruction, and a supplemental guide were developed as guiding documents to support teachers in acquiring and applying best practices through the support of Insight Education Group using Maryland Lead Funds.

## Strategy 2: Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Required Data Analysis

The instructional LEAD team conducted a comprehensive needs assessment using diverse academic data sources including, but not limited to: 2023 MCAP scores as well as historical MCAP data, 2023 local data including the universal screener, and kindergarten readiness data. New this year, the LEAD team facilitated a county-wide principal school improvement data day where system administrators worked alongside building administrators to complete a SWOT analysis as part of the comprehensive needs assessment. A professional development needs survey was also conducted during the spring of 2023 and a new professional development study group was formed and developed a professional learning plan for the 2023-2024 school year. In addition, GCPS held a series of stakeholder meetings throughout the 2022-2023 school year and are continuing these meetings throughout 2023-2024. The information collected was considered in the needs assessment. This review informed our Title I, Title II, and Title IV grant programs. Individual schools also completed a Comprehensive Needs Assessment as part of the School Improvement Process, of which all schools identified math and ELA as areas of focus. Some relevant results of the overall district comprehensive needs assessment are included on [Tab 10 of the Data Appendix](#).

A historical analysis was completed specific to MCAP scores and showed that six grade levels in English Language Arts had historically high achievement rates since 2016 including grades: 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and English 10. When comparing ELA performance over the past several years, GCPS has experienced growth as evidenced in the tables to the right.

MCAP Proficiency Rates Grades 3-8		
Before Covid	2018-2019	<b>39.6%</b>
During Covid	2021-2022	<b>44%</b>
After Covid	2022-2023	<b>49%</b>

Discrepancies can be observed when looking student groups with only 39% of the economically disadvantaged population achieving proficiency and 9% of students with disabilities. One highlight that shows promise is that Garrett County Public Schools achieved a 20% increase in proficiency for 3rd grade from 2019 to 2023.

MCAP Proficiency Rates Grade 10		
Before Covid	2018-2019	<b>40.1%</b>
During Covid	2021-2022	<b>51%</b>
After Covid	2022-2023	<b>64%</b>

GCPS purchased i-Ready as the elementary universal screening tool in the 2022-2023 school year. The elementary proficiency rate increased as detailed in the chart to the right.

K-5 i-Ready Proficiency Scores				
	Fall % Proficient	Winter % Proficient	Spring % Proficient	Change
SY 22-23	<b>18%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>+41%</b>
SY 23-24	<b>20%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>TBD</b>

Discrepancies are evident with the students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged student groups. In the 2022-2023 school year, students with disabilities increased proficiency by 30% raising the fall rate of 3% to 33% proficient in the spring. The semester growth in 2023-2024 for students with disabilities was 12% increasing from 5% on the fall administration to 17% on the winter assessment.

Economically disadvantaged students improved by 38% in 2022-2023 from 12% (fall) to 50% (spring). In 2023-2024, the semester growth was 22%, growing from 16% proficiency in the fall to 38% in the winter administration. I-Ready data can be found on [Tab 10A of the Data Appendix](#).

<b>i-Ready Proficiency Scores for Students with Disabilities</b>				
	<b>Fall % Proficient</b>	<b>Winter % Proficient</b>	<b>Spring % Proficient</b>	<b>Change</b>
SY 22-23	3%	15%	33%	+30%
SY 23-24	5%	17%	TBD	TBD

<b>K-5 i-Ready Proficiency Scores for Economically Disadvantaged Students</b>				
	<b>Fall % Proficient</b>	<b>Winter % Proficient</b>	<b>Spring % Proficient</b>	<b>Change</b>
SY 22-23	12%	33%	50%	+38%
SY 23-24	16%	38%	TBD	TBD

Most pleasing is the progress of our kindergarten through second grade success on the foundational skills assessment using the Institute of Multi-Sensory Education's Orton-Gillingham program. Our Fall 2023 administration in these grades demonstrated that 23% were proficient. On the midyear assessment, the district data achieved 80% proficiency.

<b>K-2 IMSE OG Proficiency Scores</b>				
	<b>Fall % Proficient</b>	<b>Winter % Proficient</b>	<b>Spring % Proficient</b>	<b>Change</b>
SY 21-22	6%	46%	56%	+50%
SY 22-23	20%	75%	63%	43%
SY 23-24	23%	80%	TBD	TBD

Students with disabilities demonstrated an increase of 26% in proficiency yet were only 32% proficient on the midyear assessment. Our economically disadvantaged students increased by 36% but were only 54% proficient.

GCPS had 245 kindergarten students who completed the KRA for the 2024 administration. The 2024 results show that 53.9% of incoming students demonstrated readiness for kindergarten. However, discrepancies exist with students with disabilities and the economically disadvantaged populations. 20.7% of students classified with disabilities scored at the proficient level in 2024, while 44.6% of the economically disadvantaged students demonstrated readiness for kindergarten as evidenced on [Tab 4 of the Data Appendix](#).

Instructional coaches and administrators collected walk through implementation data specific to the use of instructional resources in ELA throughout the year. The impact of the professional

learning specific to the high quality instructional materials (HQIM) especially LETRS and IMSE, has been evidenced in the data gathered. The teacher's walkthrough observation data has demonstrated an increase in fidelity of implementation of the vetted instructional materials. Data collected over the 2022-2023 school year indicated 74.7% of teachers were using the materials with fidelity, 22.7% demonstrated partial fidelity, while only 2.5% were using incorrect processes. This has increased already at this point in the 2023-2024 school year with 78.9% implementing with fidelity, 19.7% with partial fidelity, and only 1.4% using incorrect processes.

During the Fall 2023 school year, the Title I office facilitated their annual parent survey to identify priorities and needs from parent's perspective. The results of that survey revealed that reading and writing strategies were of highest importance with 50.4% identifying reading and 31.9% identifying writing strategies. Schools conducted a variety of site-based activities including collaborative activities with the Judy Center explaining how students learn to read and write, parent conferences with teachers specifically discussing the Science of Reading, specifically the IMSE foundation programs and ways to support at home, teacher newsletters to update parents on what is being taught and ways to support from home. In addition, the LEA has created a set of resources on the website addressing how to support literacy at home.

All of the data shown above was extrapolated throughout the process of our comprehensive needs assessment and used specifically to identify our areas of focus with Reading/English Language Arts prioritized by each of our schools, in both Title I and non-Title I schools, for individual school improvement and the ESSA Consolidated Strategic Plan. These areas were given a thorough review once prioritized to investigate the root cause. Underlying contributing causes were examined in order to determine the district level approach to address these areas of focus.

In addition to the data for specific student performance, data was reviewed through an equity lens in order to determine any specific area of focus as deemed appropriate. In doing so, academic gaps for students in the student groups of economically disadvantaged and special education were identified as disproportionately larger than those students who were not in those groups.

The literacy team, consisting of coaches and the English Language Arts supervisor, conducted a literacy self-assessment with all of the schools in GCPS using the LETRS for Administrators Universal Literacy Instruction Rubric. The areas self-reported as the areas of strength included universal literacy instruction and assessment at 71% implementation and universal literacy instruction at 70%. The areas of greatest need were leadership and community and family involvement. These areas, as well as the professional development components tied to literacy were incorporated into the action steps of our plan. The literacy team developed a portion of the plan to guide core literacy instruction, a guide for supplemental instruction including tiered supports through MTSS and an overview of the additional programs supporting literacy.

Feedback and input were sought from administrators and key teacher groups to support the development of the plan and inform the action steps to support achievement of the goals in line with AIB feedback for stakeholder involvement. The draft document is still under construction with plans to add the secondary components in the next submission.

### **Strategy 3: Professional Development Plan**

GCPS has spent the past year partnering with one of our Maryland Leads grant partners, Insight Education Group, to design a meaningful professional development plan to meet the needs of

our instructional staff. A comprehensive needs assessment specific to professional development, professional learning communities, coaching, and mentor/mentee opportunities was completed consisting of a comprehensive survey, system level data analysis, and focus group discussions. There were three priority areas identified as part of the needs assessment identified below:

- Develop a system-wide professional learning community (PLC) framework
- Develop a systemic coaching model for the system
- Create a professional development committee to develop a strategic plan for professional development

Per feedback from AIB on our 2023 submission, we have sought opportunities to increase stakeholder involvement in the development of our plans. As a result, a committee and a workgroup composed of teachers, assistants, union leaders, and administrators provided additional input into the design of the professional development models and needs. The survey revealed that 66% of staff were satisfied with the professional development provided, agreeing that it was aligned to the work conducted and met their needs. Sixty-one percent indicated they had input into the professional development delivered. When asked specifically about the LETRS training model, the majority preferred virtual training or face-to-face over a hybrid model of both. The survey gathered data on the preference for when the synchronous training for LETRS would be delivered with a mixed result including the use of stipends and substitutes to complete the asynchronous portion. Fifty-six percent of those participating expressed an interest in additional training on student behavior and 36% indicated a need for student wellness. Thirty-nine percent asked for content specific professional learning. The work conducted through this process determined a need for professional learning supported by Insight on the Professional Learning Community process and structure as well as Instructional Coaching. This process supported the development of a [Professional Development Plan](#) that highlights the major district focus of training for PLCs, Instructional Coaching, and Student Emotional Learning. LETRS training was reimagined to allow teachers to choose a stipend or continue the job embedded learning with the in-person training delivered in a model based upon the feedback of the teachers and principals. All training sessions were included in a live calendar as well as a menu of offerings available to the individual schools. This plan was distributed to all staff and incorporated into the Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

Over the past year, we have completed the first cohort of PLC training with key leaders including instructional supervisors, directors, principals, and teachers with follow up sessions supported by PLC coaching at four of our schools. We began the Instructional Coaching training, but due to the substitute shortage, completion of the training has been delayed until the summer. Another round of PLC and Coaching training will be added during the summer of 2024. Our schools have started the initial stages of establishing PLC groups, times, and structures with a focus on the STEP Teacher Effectiveness Project model that asks teachers to analyze data to seek, discover, confirm, and share how to achieve the milestones established in their aim statement. Initial coaching sessions on implementing successful PLCs have been planned for March and April.

#### **Strategy 4: Science of Reading**

One of the more challenging lifts of the Blueprint plan was the continued training of all PK - Grade 3 teachers in the Science of Reading. The Maryland Leads grant provided support in implementing LETRS training for GCPS staff in grades PK - Grade 3. The job-embedded model of training with teachers provided coverage for their asynchronous portion of the training proved to be challenging on two fronts. Not all teachers were satisfied with having to lose their

instructional time with students and GCPS struggled to find enough teachers to place in permanent sub positions. The solution was to offer stipends for those desiring to complete the training beyond the duty day and remove the full-time employees hired to serve as substitutes using them to fill other open vacancies. Those preferring the job embedded model were given the opportunity to choose their days of coverage for the asynchronous learning and allowed schools to manage their daily substitutes as needed. This change in process was in direct alignment with the professional development survey, committee, and workgroup feedback from a variety of stakeholder groups.

In order to be fully trained in the Science of Reading, teachers must complete both volumes of LETRS generally taking 160 hours of course time. This has been a barrier for GCPS given that the chosen model was half of a volume per year and the funding from the Maryland Leads grant is sunsetting in September 2024. Currently, only 15% have completed both volumes. However, GCPS decided to move to the Institute of Multi-Sensory Education's structured literacy courses as the training needed for the Science of Reading which can be completed in 33 hours and has been established as part of our core literacy program. At this time, 92% of the teachers serving students in grades K - 3 are fully trained with the final 6% planned to finish the final 3 hours needed before June 30, 2024. GCPS is also in the process of training all Pre-Kindergarten 3 and Pre-Kindergarten 4 teachers and elementary administrators in the LETRS course specific to them. At the end of the school year, 100% of these groups will be fully trained in the Science of Reading. All elementary school principals, the director, and the supervisor will have completed LETRS for Administrators by the end of the 2023-2024 school year. This training has afforded these administrators with protocols and tools to support schools with self assessments of their literacy programs, and walk through observations to increase alignment to evidence-based instruction in structured literacy.

#### **Strategy 5: High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)**

Culturally responsive high quality instructional materials (HQIM) have been implemented with GCPS using a dual approach with the American Reading Company (ARC) primarily supporting the comprehension and writing portion of the program through a knowledge based approach. The Institute for Multi-Sensory Education's Orton-Gillingham program is used to address the word recognition skills in the primary grades and explicit word meaning through explicit morphology instruction in the upper elementary grades. GCPS has worked to create a rotation for renewal of all HQIMs in a five year replacement cycle. This year, GCPS has been focusing on developing and implementing system support and professional development specific to writing across all content areas while providing increased central support at identified schools within the system with ELA considered to be a priority area.

A supplemental instruction guide for teachers has been developed as part of the work conducted around the needs assessment and creation of the Comprehensive Literacy Plan. Its purpose is to support instructional leaders and teachers in ensuring all students are equipped with the critical literacy skills needed to be successful in school and in life in compliance with Maryland's Ready to Read Act (2019) and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The guide describes research-based models of literacy that should guide instructional planning and decision-making and explains GCPS supplemental instruction processes. Resources are provided to support teachers with assessing student needs; planning appropriate supplemental instruction; and monitoring, documenting, and analyzing student progress. The supporting documents contained are in the initial development phase and will continue to be developed and revised based on the system needs and curricular resources. In addition to the supplemental guide, GCPS is in the process of exploring and adopting a management system to support the

Multi-Tiered System of Supports that will provide disaggregated data and progress monitoring support for teachers and administrators. Identification and progress monitoring have been maintained by the teachers in a home built system in PowerSchool and has been proven to be time consuming and difficult to extract and track student progress in an organized fashion. The new tool will allow educators to identify and track student needs with extensive inputs, conduct and monitor interventions, and review MTSS framework efficacy for continuous improvement. The shift towards a new management system for MTSS is a result of feedback shared from teachers in the MTSS Committee work group.

## **Challenges and Future Work**

### *Comprehensive Literacy Plan:*

The Comprehensive Literacy Plan will be further developed to include the secondary grades with a focus on the Universal Design of Learning (UDL) using structured literacy. Current observation data trends include a need for an increase in strategies for student engagement, differentiation, and appropriate scaffolds in instruction. Plans to incorporate the Professional Learning Community (PLC) with a draft of a protocol being implemented and revised through the next year will support these needs as well as data analysis to support equity in instruction. GCPS is committed to ensuring all students are College and Career Ready. Currently, the middle and high schools are using high quality instructional materials that are evidence based. A platform and framework for the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is being investigated through a committee led by the secondary principals. Once a platform is chosen, protocols will be developed incorporating the program into the plan. An evidence-based intervention program has been purchased and implementation began in the second semester of the 2023-2024 school year for students not demonstrating College and Career Readiness by the end of grade 10. All guides and protocols will be developed and enhanced to cover the PK-12 approach with differentiation applied when appropriate to address the needs of the specific grade bands. The current plan lacks a more developed equity plan to address the underserved population as well as a more robust family and community engagement plan. These areas will be addressed through a coordinated effort of all pillars in the GCPS Blueprint plan.

The continued declining enrollment and sunseting of the federal ESSER funds create a need to revise some of our approaches. With all current teachers in grades PreK-3 trained in the Science of Reading by the end of the current school year, GCPS will be working towards a sustainable plan to train any new teachers in these grade bands through the Institute of Multi-Sensory Education programs. District trainers for LETRS and Early Childhood LETRS will maintain their status with an optional option for teachers to complete LETRS. Refreshers and walk through tools will be developed over the next year to support the continued implementation of evidence-based strategies. An overview of the science of reading is being delivered to the secondary staff to support their initial understanding of how reading develops in the child and considerations for those struggling. Another challenge is that literacy coaches were funded through ESSER funds. In an effort to support the implementation of Lead Teachers and design supports appropriate to each school, as well as address the teacher shortage, the coaches are returning to teaching positions. Over the next year, the system will be designing the Lead Teacher and Content Specialist model, which will be phased in starting FY26. This will allow the system to reimagine coaching and teacher leader opportunities. The lift of the PLC model will be used to analyze data, seek areas of need, discover effective practices, confirm the effectiveness through data, and share the practices. The shell courses that were previously managed by contracted teachers to share guidance on the pacing of the content and practices will be replaced with all grade level teachers contributing some of these best practices in a discussion board while past courses left intact without a specific individual maintaining the

course in the learning management system as the system is in transition to our new model of teacher leaders.

*High Quality Instructional Materials:*

Currently, GCPS has high quality instructional materials that are evidence based. As the Science of Reading and Learning advances, textbook companies as well as those developing supplemental materials, are improving their products. A textbook renewal timeline was developed with GCPS considering the ELA curricular resource selection in the school year 2027-2028. Over the next few months, additional resources for supplemental instruction supporting our struggling readers, especially in the elementary grades, will be considered. GCPS has also provided additional supplemental materials for students with disabilities to further enhance instruction such as age-appropriate decodable readers.

*Professional Development:*

The current professional development plan and process have been successful. Teachers will be completing a survey to gain information on self-identified needs, feedback on support provided this year, and preference in logistics of any training conducted in the next few months. The professional learning committee and group will be involved in the development of the plan for the next school year.

*Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS):*

With so many components of Maryland's Blueprint to consider, the most challenging task has been determining the area of greatest need and creating focus. As we move into the next portion of planning, the two areas requiring the most development are applying and refining the PLC process and implementing a cohesive MTSS plan that meets the needs of all levels. The Supplemental Instruction Guide is going to receive focus from the district level literacy team. Clearly defined Tier 2 and 3 protocols, instructional supports, schedules, identification processes, goal setting, and progress monitoring will be further developed and incorporated into the PLC structures. An equity approach focusing on the underserved populations will need to be developed with professional development provided not only for equitable approaches, but also the PLC and MTSS protocols and processes. The current draft of the PLC meeting protocol has been undergoing revisions due to the feedback received from the administrative group. Principals provided insight into what should be included, prioritized as a requirement, and which components can be customized to meet the needs of the individual teams.

With the challenge of a declining enrollment in a small district, moving forward, a specific focus on the highest priorities will allow for intentional use of the human resources. With a realignment of the instructional coach positions and the supervisors moving to grade band focus rather than content, efforts will be placed primarily on the revision of the MTSS framework and implementation of PLCs to ensure all learners are on grade level by 3rd grade and attain College and Career Readiness.

## 11. College and Career Readiness in Mathematics

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 82 - 100 and 105*

In March 2023, the LEA described how it would **ensure all Pre-K-5 students are on the path to becoming college and career ready in mathematics.**

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome ensuring all Pre-K-5 students are on the path to becoming college and career ready in mathematics.**

**Note: LEAs must submit their draft Pre-K-5 comprehensive math plans in alignment with the science of learning by September 15, 2024.**

### Strategy #1: Comprehensive Mathematics Plan

During the summer of 2023, Garrett County Public Schools began working on components of its Comprehensive Math Plan. We established a workgroup composed of math teachers from PreK through Algebra 1. The working group's first task was to provide feedback on the vision, mission, and goals of the Initial Implementation Plan. As a result of their feedback, we drafted a new goal to emphasize the importance of GCPS building relationships with families and community members in order to effectively communicate grade-level expectations and how learning can be supported at home. Next, teachers conducted a SWOT analysis of our Initial Implementation Plan to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Some of the biggest takeaways included the need for a consistent model for professional development, increased access to opportunities for collaboration, and clear guidance on best practices for mathematics instruction. The working group studied examples of comprehensive math plans in order to identify the essential components of an effective plan aligned to the Maryland Blueprint. We surfaced the need to include professional learning, core instruction coupled with supplemental or tiered instruction, and family engagement. We also plan to include measurable objectives with specific action steps over three years for district leaders, principals, and teachers in order to mirror the Comprehensive Literacy Plan. Lastly, we plan to anchor our Comprehensive Math Plan around NCTM's Effective Teaching Practices and the Standards for Mathematical Practice to support teachers in understanding and being able to apply best practices aligned to the science of learning.

Throughout the summer, we revised our essential skills documents and pacing guides to reflect our instructional priorities with the ultimate goal of equipping our students with the mathematical skills necessary to demonstrate College & Career Readiness by the end of 10th grade. GCPS is in the process of reviewing and revising its Comprehensive Literacy Plan while work on the Comprehensive Mathematics Plan remains ongoing. Per feedback from AIB on our 2023 submission, we continue to seek opportunities to increase stakeholder involvement in the development of our plans for informational purposes and to seek feedback as evidenced above. While this work is underway, GCPS strives to ensure alignment to the Blueprint expectations and strong foundations of Universal Design of Instruction to ensure that all students receive the support they need to master grade level content.

**Strategy #2: Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Required Data Analysis**

The instructional LEAD team conducted a comprehensive needs assessment using diverse academic data sources including, but not limited to: 2023 MCAP scores as well as historical MCAP data, 2023 local data from our universal screener, and kindergarten readiness data. New this year, the LEAD team facilitated a county-wide principal school improvement data day where system administrators worked alongside building administrators to complete a SWOT analysis as part of the comprehensive needs assessment. During the spring of 2023, a professional development needs survey was also conducted, a new professional development study group was formed, and our school year 23-24 professional learning plan developed. In addition, GCPS held a series of stakeholder meetings and is continuing these meetings throughout 2023-2024. The information collected was considered in the needs assessment. This review informed our Title I, Title II, and Title IV grant programs. Individual schools also completed a Comprehensive Needs Assessment as part of the School Improvement Process, of which all schools identified math and ELA as areas of focus. Some relevant results of the overall district comprehensive needs assessment are included on [Tab 11 of the Data Appendix](#).

When looking at overall proficiency rates, GCPS math data shows that our pandemic recovery efforts have been successful and positioned the county well moving forward (see chart to the right).

MCAP Proficiency Rates Grades 3-8		
Before Covid	2018-2019	<b>28.2%</b>
During Covid	2021-2022	<b>26%</b>
After Covid	2022-2023	<b>29%</b>

Additionally, the historical analysis completed of math MCAP scores revealed that GCPS also experienced a historical high proficiency rate since 2016 in three grade levels (3,4, 8) and ranked eighth in the state for growth with a +2.9 percentage change in grades 3-8. GCPS further experienced an increased rate of students scoring in the developing learner proficiency rate in math, which positions the system very well to increase the overall proficient learner rate within the county. According to the data on [Tab 11 of the Data Appendix](#), third graders achieved a 54.2% proficiency rate in 2023, which is promising as we move forward, while only 31% of 4th grade students and 24.5% of fifth grade students reached proficiency. GCPS also acknowledges that the significant gains seen in ELA have not been as significant in math. As a result, our district is placing a higher priority on math moving forward.

During school year 21-22, GCPS purchased i-Ready as the universal screening tool for K-8. Year over year data is shown to the right. Of particular interest is the K-5 student performance in the algebra and algebraic thinking domain shown to the right.

From the first year of implementation, this domain has seen a 7% increase in students scoring at or above grade level on the beginning of the year screener. At the end of the 2022-2023 school year, 89% of our K-5 students were on or above grade level in algebra and algebraic thinking. Most recently on our winter diagnostic in January of 2024, less than 10% of our students scored two or more grade levels below in this domain. We are positioned to see an increase in the percentage of students meeting grade-level expectations in this domain.

<b>K-5 i-Ready Proficiency Scores</b>			
	<b>Fall % Proficient</b>	<b>Spring % Proficient</b>	<b>Change</b>
SY 21-22	7%	55%	+48%
SY 22-23	11%	64%	+53%
SY 23-24	14%	TBD	TBD

<b>K-5 i-Ready Algebraic Reasoning Scores</b>			
	<b>Fall % Proficient</b>	<b>Spring % Proficient</b>	<b>Change</b>
SY 21-22	14%	59%	+45%
SY 22-23	19%	67%	+48%
SY 23-24	21%	TBD	TBD

The performance of students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged groups remains an opportunity for growth throughout the district as shown to the right.

It is important to note that GCPS uses “standard view” as our default setting when looking at i-Ready data throughout the year. This provides a consistent view throughout the year when monitoring student data. “Standard view” reports assume a student has been exposed to grade-level standards and is a more rigorous expectation.

GCPS had 245 kindergarten students who completed the KRA for the fall 2023 administration. The 2023 results show that 53.9% of incoming students demonstrated readiness for kindergarten.

While scale score performance in the mathematics domain is consistent with language and literacy the social foundations, physical well-being, and motor development domains overall have higher scale scores. Additionally, discrepancies persist in the performance of students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged populations. Performance on the KRA revealed that 20.7% of students classified with disabilities

<b>i-Ready Proficiency Scores for Students with Disabilities</b>			
	<b>Fall % Proficient</b>	<b>Spring % Proficient</b>	<b>Change</b>
SY 21-22	1%	22%	+21%
SY 22-23	2%	36%	+34%

<b>i-Ready Proficiency Scores for Students Classified as Economically Disadvantaged</b>			
	<b>Fall % Proficient</b>	<b>Spring % Proficient</b>	<b>Change</b>
SY 21-22	4%	46%	+42%
SY 22-23	8%	56%	+48%

demonstrated readiness for kindergarten and 44.6% of the economically disadvantaged students demonstrated readiness for kindergarten as reflected on [Tab 4 of the Data Appendix](#).

For the school year 2022-2023, GCPS returned to using common benchmarks in grades K-5. Benchmarks were selected by the district's K-5 Math teacher LEAD team from enVision Common Core instructional materials. The team selected a fall benchmark to be given after the completion of topics 1-4 and a cumulative winter benchmark to be given after the completion of topics 5-8. In the first year of implementation, the number of items on each benchmark was reduced so that the assessment could be completed in one class session. Leveraging the data collected, we were able to determine where curriculum pacing was lagging behind. The district also provided strategies to support teachers in analyzing benchmark data. We gathered feedback from each grade level cohort in order to revise items to ensure alignment with Maryland College and Career Readiness standards prior to implementation. In comparison to year one data, K-5 students improved performance on average by 6% in year 2. GCPS common benchmarks will go through one final round of revisions at the end of the school year 23-24 based on feedback provided by teachers in each cohort and year-over-year data.

### **Strategy #3: Professional Development**

GCPS offers a variety of training opportunities with limited district-level mathematics staff. In addition to utilizing professional development sessions through our HQIM vendors, GCPS has participated in all mathematics learning opportunities provided by MSDE. Through a strategic selection process, GCPS has prioritized attendance for individuals demonstrating leadership in mathematics to implement a train-the-trainer model where information can be disseminated to each of our elementary schools. This strategy is in direct alignment with AIB feedback received from the 2023 plan.

Beginning in the summer of 2023, a team of teachers from grades 2-5, intervention, and special education participated in MCTMs Summer Math Academy. During this academy, teachers learned best practices for math fact fluency. This information was shared with the math workgroup as a strategy to engage families in mathematics learning at home. Schools developed Math Nights to share information and educate families and the community about how to support their students in developing fact fluency through games. The next step includes developing a parent engagement resource to continue this work. In the fall of 2023, each grade level cohort Pre-K through Algebra 1, participated in a curriculum development day. Based on district MCAP data, a need to develop student modeling and reasoning skills was identified. Each grade level cohort identified ten 3-Act math activities to support our students' skill development in these areas. The math office also partnered with one of the district's literacy coaches to support the necessary work in vocabulary development. Previous work resulted in new district vocabulary banks for each grade level. Building off of the early work of the Comprehensive Literacy Plan, vocabulary strategies were introduced through the mathematics lens. The next steps include assessing the level of implementation and determining district needs for ongoing professional learning in mathematics vocabulary development. Throughout the 2023-2024 school year, GCPS has participated in Leading for Mathematics, MCAP Simulation Series, Reasoning and Modeling Professional Learning Series, Mathematics Learning Lab, and OGAPs Proportional, Multiplicative, Additive, and Fraction sessions. The next steps include selecting additional participants for the summer sessions, including special educators, and identifying potential district trainers.

GCPS has spent the past year partnering with one of our Maryland Leads grant partners, Insight Education Group, to design a meaningful professional development plan to meet the needs of

our instructional staff. Feedback and input were sought from administrators and key teacher groups to not only support the plan's development but also inform the action steps to support the achievement of the goals. A comprehensive needs assessment specific to professional development, professional learning communities, coaching, and mentor/mentee opportunities was completed consisting of a comprehensive survey, system-level data analysis, and focus group discussions. There were three priority areas identified as part of the needs assessment identified below:

- Develop a system-wide professional learning community (PLC) framework
- Develop a systemic coaching model for the system
- Create a professional development committee to develop a strategic plan for professional development

Per feedback from AIB on our 2023 submission, we have sought opportunities to increase stakeholder involvement in the development of our plans. As a result, a committee and a workgroup composed of teachers, assistants, union leaders, and administrators provided additional input into the design of the professional development models and needs. The system also administered a survey to reach a wide group of stakeholders. The survey revealed that 66% of staff were satisfied with the professional development provided, agreeing that it was aligned with the work conducted and met their needs. Additionally, 39.6% asked for content-specific professional learning.

Our schools have started the initial stages of establishing PLC groups, times, and structures with a focus on the STEP Teacher Effectiveness Project model that asks teachers to analyze data to seek, discover, confirm, and share how to achieve the milestones established in their aim statement. The PLC structure is in varying stages throughout the district. While some schools are focused on English Language Arts PLCs, others have begun to explore student work samples in math to support teachers and students as we strive to increase student learning outcomes. In addition, our largest elementary school incorporated math lesson studies during PLCs in grades 3-5. The lesson standard was identified through data analysis and each grade level designed a lesson for the study. After the lesson was implemented with each class, the team participated in a debrief to identify strengths, areas for growth, and high-impact teaching strategies.

Current observation data trends indicate that math teachers could benefit from additional support with student engagement, differentiation, and scaffolding strategies. We are in the early stages of planning for job-embedded professional development to support these effective teaching practices with plans to utilize a protocol for PLCs that supports teachers' planning and data analysis for equitable instruction.

We plan to include a walkthrough tool aligned to the Science of Learning in our Comprehensive Mathematics Plan. Additionally, GPCS staff currently attend a large number of MSDE sponsored math professional development opportunities. However, there is not a plan for how to bring these insights back to share across GCPS. Moving forward we will develop a plan for MSDE PD participants to disseminate information to their colleagues after participating in a learning opportunity.

#### **Strategy #4: High-Quality Instructional Materials for Mathematics**

Exiting the pandemic, GCPS has implemented culturally responsive, high-quality instructional materials throughout the county. Our adopted materials, enVision Common Core, meet expectations for alignment to College and Career Readiness standards and usability based on a

third party review from EdReports. This resource also meets expectations for a balanced portrayal of various demographic and personal characteristics and encourages teachers to draw upon home language and culture to facilitate learning.

In the fall of 2023, based on feedback from teachers at the grade level curriculum development days, a decision was made to continue using Envision Common Core. Beginning in the school year 2024-2025, GCPS will be implementing the 2024 version of this resource systemwide. This leverages teacher familiarity as we continue the ongoing work with our district pacing and essential skills documents, common benchmarks, and the Comprehensive Mathematics Plan. GCPS has worked to create a rotation for the renewal of all HQIMs in a five-year replacement cycle. This year, GCPS has been focusing on developing and implementing system support and professional development specific to writing across all content areas, with a focus on reasoning and modeling while providing increased central support at identified schools within the system to increase growth in mathematics. GCPS also utilizes the i-Ready Mathematics curriculum and Teacher Toolbox in grades K-8 as a supplemental and intervention resource. All teachers have access to each grade level's resources to support pre-teaches and reteaches in Tier 2 and more intensive interventions in Tier 3.

In our district administrator PLC, principals are informed of mathematics updates. In addition, all principals are members of grade-level shell courses to gain insight into pacing. A district walkthrough tool has been shared to assist building-level leaders in assessing the level of use of HQIMs. To enhance our instructional practice in mathematics, principals received professional development on Universal Design for Learning and they provided a session for all teachers in their buildings. The district SDI coach has also completed training for all staff on effective co-teaching models.

### **Challenges and Future Work:**

The Comprehensive Mathematics Plan work has been ongoing and GCPS will submit its draft for K-5 in September of 2024. Due to declining enrollment, our district no longer employs a math coach and there is currently only one full-time employee in the math office. Decreased staff has made it difficult to enact the coaching cycles planned in the district's initial submission. Additionally, two GCPS schools have been identified for targeted central office support while other schools require support, on an as needed basis, depending on their i-Ready, district benchmark, and other school improvement metrics. Providing this support can be challenging with limited staff. Moreover, there will no longer be lead teachers as implemented through the ARP ESSER recovery grant. To address this moving forward, our district will explore how to best utilize Lead Teachers, as defined in the Career Ladder, in order to continue our math focused work that has helped our district achieve growth in several schools. This work will allow the system to re-imagine distributive teacher leadership and enhance building level leadership opportunities to fill this gap.

Our current approach to identification and progress monitoring for supplemental instruction through the MTSS framework is time-consuming and difficult. It requires that teachers maintain a homegrown system in PowerSchool. The current data infrastructure makes it difficult to extract and track student progress in an organized fashion. Consequently, GCPS will be exploring ways to strengthen the current MTSS framework over the next three years. We have started this work by establishing a committee led by secondary principals with the goal of exploring different platforms for our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that will provide disaggregated data and progress monitoring support for teachers and administrators. The new tool will allow educators to carry out cycles of continuous improvement more easily. Educators will be able to

identify and track student needs with extensive inputs, conduct and monitor interventions, and review the efficacy of our MTSS framework. Once a platform is chosen, we will incorporate aligned data analysis protocols into our Comprehensive Math plan. This committee will also work towards building a comprehensive plan for implementing supplemental instruction to ensure all students are accessing grade level math and reaching college and career readiness.

## 12. Algebra Readiness and Success

Describe the LEA's plan to **increase student readiness and success in Algebra I at both the middle and high school levels**, including specific strategies and supports to intervene with students struggling with math. Discuss related challenges and data as needed.

Considerations:

- Analysis of student-level data by specific skills
- Intervention models and progress monitoring
- Training and professional development for teachers
- High-quality school day tutoring

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome of increasing middle and high school students' college and career readiness in mathematics.**

### Strategy #1: Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Required Data Analysis

GCPS students have many growth achievements in mathematics to celebrate. There is evidence of growth on both system-wide and state-wide assessments.

- Three of our 3rd and 4th grade cohorts demonstrated a 10%+ increase in proficiency from the 2021-2022 school year to the 2022-2023 school year.
- One grade in each school landed in the top five across the state for the greatest increase.
- Three schools achieved a median student growth percentile of at least 80. This includes grade 7 at one of our middle schools.
- Three grade levels across the district achieved a proficiency increase of 5 percentage points or more from the 2021-2022 school year to the 2022-2023 school year. This includes Algebra 1 at the middle school.

Overall student achievement data in math has demonstrated that GCPS has recovered from the pandemic and is beginning to surpass pre-pandemic performance levels. GCPS has experienced a historically high proficiency rate since 2016 in three grade levels in math and ranked eighth in the state for growth with a +2.9 percentage change in grades 3-8. GCPS math data shows a proficiency rate of 28.2% in 2019, 26% in 2022, and 29% in 2023 when looking at the grade 3-8 grade band showing a three percent increase year over year. GCPS further experienced an increased rate of students scoring in the developing learner proficiency rate in math, which positions the system very well to increase the overall proficient learner rate within the county.

Even with this positive growth, GCPS still has a significant need for continued growth in math to ensure all students are on track to meet the College and Career Readiness Standard at the end of their tenth-grade year. Based on the data reflected on [Tab 12 of the Data Appendix](#), only 15.5% of 9th graders are scoring proficient on the Algebra MCAP. While this is an increase of

3.7% year over year, there is considerable work to be accomplished to increase grade level proficiency towards College and Career Readiness Standards. Moreover, there is still work to be done to ensure all students are meeting proficiency levels in all student groups while also meeting the state ESSA accountability targets. Specifically, students identified as economically disadvantaged and special education continue to demonstrate lower performance in comparison to their peers. Subsequently, based on a comprehensive needs assessment, GCPS has identified math as one of our significant areas of focus for continued growth as we strive for all learners to meet or exceed proficiency standards.

The district is in year one of benchmark development for grades 6-8 and year two for Algebra 1 as a strategy for progress monitoring students. In the first year of implementation for Algebra 1, the number of items on each benchmark was reduced so that the assessment could be completed in one class session. As the district gathers data from year 2, we are adjusting questions to ensure alignment with the Maryland College and Career standards. After the initial implementation of benchmarks in grades 6-8 is completed, we plan to gather feedback from each grade level cohort to make necessary edits and revisions. Year-over-year data is needed to determine correlations between student performance on district benchmarks and proficiency on MCAP mathematics assessments. In addition, GCPS is exploring the use of a mathematics screener for all students in grades 9 and 10.

GCPS purchased i-Ready as the universal screening tool for K-8 in the 2021-2022 school year. In the first year of implementation, the percentage of students in grades 6-8 performing at or above grade level increased by 25%, with a fall proficiency of 16% and a spring proficiency of 41%. In our second year of implementation, the percentage of students at or above grade level increased by 24%, with a fall proficiency of 20% and a spring proficiency of 44%. In the fall of 2023, 20% of our students were on or above grade level. This is a 4% increase from our fall diagnostic in 2021. Of particular interest is the 6-8 student performance in the algebra and algebraic thinking domain. From the first year of implementation, this domain has only seen a 4% increase in students scoring at or above grade level on the beginning of the year screener. At the end of the 2022-2023 school year, 43% of our 6-8 students were on or above grade level in algebra and algebraic thinking. With 35% of our students scoring two or more grade levels below in this domain on the winter diagnostic in January 2024, targeted support was provided to increase the percentage of students meeting grade-level expectations.

The performance of students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged groups remains an opportunity for growth throughout the district as reflected on the i-Ready diagnostic. In the 2021-2022 school year, students with disabilities increased proficiency from 0% in the fall to only 4% in the spring for 6th-8th grades. In the 2022-2023 school year, students with disabilities showed no increase in proficiency with 2% scoring on or above grade level on the fall and spring administrations. Economically disadvantaged students improved by 15% in 2021-2022 from 6% at or above grade level in the fall to 21% in the spring. In 2022-2023, economically disadvantaged students improved by 20% from 11% at or above grade level in the fall to 31% in the spring.

It is important to note that GCPS uses “standard view” as our default setting when looking at i-Ready data throughout the year. This provides a consistent view throughout the year when monitoring student data. “Standard view” reports assume a student has been exposed to grade-level standards and is a more rigorous placement-level view.

## **Strategy #2: Professional Development**

In February, our largest middle school participated in a professional development session to support teachers in strategically using i-Ready's teacher-assigned lessons and the Teacher Toolbox classroom resources. Teachers reviewed their i-Ready score reports and recommended lessons to identify students who could benefit from additional support during upcoming grade-level instruction. In addition, all middle school teachers participated in an MCAP data dive that included an evidence statement analysis to identify instructional priorities for the remainder of the school year. Teachers at our largest middle school are working to improve writing opportunities in mathematics by looking for alignment between classroom tasks and reasoning and MCAP modeling evidence statements.

During the 2023-2024 school year two secondary teachers participated in MSDEs MCAP Simulation Series. This professional development opportunity aimed to increase teachers' knowledge of item writing, content review, and range finding processes. Teachers gained insight into the connections between Maryland's College and Career Readiness Standards and MSDEs MCAP Evidence Statements as well as how the MCAP holistic rubrics were used to identify evidence of students' reasoning and modeling. In addition, one of the district's 8th-grade teachers participated in OGAPs Proportional Reasoning professional learning. The goal of this four-day workshop was to deepen educators' understanding of proportional reasoning, mathematics education research, and the utilization of the evidence in student work to make instructional decisions. Moving forward, GCPS intends to leverage the information learned in summer workshops and professional development opportunities in the fall.

As our district renews our core instructional resource, professional development will be provided to ensure the implementation of these HQIMs with integrity and alignment of classroom instruction to the rigorous expectations of Maryland Standards.

## **Strategy #3: Remediation and Acceleration**

Currently, our secondary schools use an additional period during the student day to provide targeted support for students struggling to meet grade-level expectations. Tutoring, credit-bearing mini-periods, and remedial instruction can all be done during this time. In grades 6-8, i-Ready Personalized Instruction is utilized to provide students with lessons to address learning gaps. During this time students may also work one-on-one or in a small group for a grade-level reteach. In high school, students participate in rotations to solidify skills in algebraic thinking. The focus of learning in these rotations includes but is not limited to linear functions, trend lines, arithmetic and geometric sequences, exponential functions, rational and irrational numbers, equations, inequalities, systems of equations, polynomials, factoring and solving quadratic equations by factoring, and all methods for solving quadratic equations.

Students not meeting the CCR standard for mathematics have multiple opportunities, based on deficiency, to remediate for the standard without being deprived of post-CCR pathway options or graduation requirements. Individualized CCR plans are developed for each student to determine the most appropriate path and level of intervention required. GCPS has partnered with Garrett College to develop a remedial credit-bearing course for students not meeting the CCR standard for mathematics. This course is in addition to the student's regular math class and occurs during the built-in intervention period. During the summer of 2023, an assessment was developed in conjunction with Garrett College to ensure students were meeting expectations after the completion of all coursework.

Presently, our honors students are placed in an accelerated math course in grade 7 and take Algebra 1 in 8th grade while the rest of our students take Algebra 1 in grade 9 followed by Geometry in grade 10. After several meetings with representatives from middle school and high school math departments, the decision was made to change our course progression to allow more time for students to develop their skills in algebraic thinking. For the 2024-2025 school year, honors students will take the Geometry course in 8th grade and Algebra 1 in 9th grade. This means the majority of our students will take Geometry in grade 9 and Algebra 1 in grade 10. During the summer, secondary math teachers will work to integrate algebraic thinking and opportunities for reasoning and modeling into the Geometry course. This decision allows for the continued acceleration of our most capable students while allowing more time for students not yet ready to meet algebra expectations to strengthen their skills.

### **Ongoing Challenges in Algebra Readiness and Success**

With so many components of Maryland's Blueprint to consider, one of our district's greatest challenges has been implementing a cohesive Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) plan that meets the needs of all levels. A platform for the MTSS is being investigated through a committee led by two of our secondary principals. Clearly defined Tier 2 and 3 protocols, instructional supports, schedules, identification processes, goal setting, and progress monitoring will be further developed and incorporated into the PLC structures as we work to develop a Comprehensive Mathematics Plan. An equity approach focusing on underserved populations will need to be developed with professional development provided not only for equitable approaches but also for the PLC and MTSS protocols and processes. GCPS is committed to developing the mathematical understanding and ability of every student. As the work to develop a Comprehensive Mathematics Plan continues, GCPS strives to meet the rigorous expectations of the Maryland College and Career Standards and Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

## **13. High Quality School Day Tutoring**

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 77 and 101*

In March 2023, the LEA discussed how it **leveraged high-quality school day tutoring to accelerate instruction and provide additional support to students in literacy and math.**

Responses included considerations related to the LEA's organization of the school day, collaboration with external partners, and alignment of resources (e.g., Transitional Supplemental Instruction Aid).

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

GCPS has provided tutoring to students in grades K-8 in the areas of ELA and math utilizing Transitional Supplemental Instruction Aid throughout the past several years. This funding sunsetted in December 2023. Students worked in groups of no more than 4:1 with tutors focusing on specific skill deficits within the subject area. Tutors and teachers worked collaboratively to ensure students were provided strategic instruction that met their needs. Tutoring occurred during the regular school day at a range from 3-5 days per week for a duration of 30 minutes. Tutoring instruction was provided using the GCPS instructional materials. Teachers and school level administration monitored student progress regularly through PLC's using informal assessment data to ensure student needs were being met. Additionally, the Response to Intervention process was used when appropriate to track and monitor individual student progress. Schools also used the universal screener data collected at the beginning, middle, and end of the year to measure and monitor student progress and identify target skills. In addition, informal assessments were utilized as well as other content specific screeners based on the skill deficit of the student (ex: Orton Gillingham, Kilpatrick etc.) which are all part of the county instructional program.

Through the implementation of high quality school day tutoring, GCPS learned that this strategy is more successful at the elementary level than at the secondary level. The tutoring described above was provided by individuals identified from the school system's substitute list working in conjunction with the classroom teachers. While finding individuals that were comfortable and qualified at the elementary school was a relative success, finding individuals at the middle and high school levels has proven to be very challenging. After multiple attempts, GCPS was unable to find qualified individuals at the high school level. We were able to find limited individuals to serve at the middle school level. To address this, both high schools offered after school tutoring provided by current staff to provide additional support with the use of vetted techniques using local funding. Moreover, both high schools implemented targeted support for students during the intervention period provided by GCPS teachers. Transportation has proven to be an obstacle to getting many of the identified students to participate after school. Therefore, having the in-school option is of significant importance.

GCPS also received funding from the State and Local Blueprint Transitional Supplemental Instruction program to provide tutoring for K-3 students during the 2023-2024 school year. These funds are tagged to qualified full time GCPS employees who are providing targeted tutoring services to groups of 4 or less students in grades K-3. Services are provided by both certified teachers and qualified instructional assistants daily.

[Tab 13 on the Data Appendix](#) reflects data specific to the tutoring provided by the Transitional Supplemental Instruction K-3 as well as 4-8 grants for the 2022-2023 school year. This data was submitted to the state in December of 2023. Students receiving targeted tutoring services showed significant growth in grades K-3, while relatively limited growth was achieved at the upper grades. As a result, GCPS is intentionally moving away from a tutoring model with temporary contracted employees at the upper grades and shifting towards developing a more robust MTSS framework that leverages current fulltime employees to provide targeted supplemental instruction. We will continue to provide targeted tutoring services to students in K-3 primarily utilizing our current fulltime employees in addition to enhancing the MTSS framework at that level as well to ensure high quality supplemental instruction for all identified students.

## 14. Support for Students to Demonstrate College and Career Readiness in High School

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 109 - 110 and 112 - 115*

In March 2023, the LEA described the **services and support provided to students identified as not on track to graduate in 9th grade and/or not demonstrating college and career readiness (CCR) by the end of 10th grade.**

Responses included creating and implementing student support pathways, collaborating with institutions of higher education partners, developing individualized CCR plans for each student, and engaging families in supporting student success.

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome of providing support to students identified as not on track to graduate in 9th grade and/or not demonstrating college and career readiness (CCR) by the end of 10th grade.**

### **Strategy #1: Improved Data Systems/Early Warning System and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support**

Garrett County Public Schools has been working toward the goal of ensuring all students reach College and Career Ready by the end of Grade 10. GCPS has developed early warning systems through robust data analysis for our students in Elementary, Middle, and High School to determine if students are on track in order to provide early interventions and support. GCPS has developed a 9th grade tracker through Power School to identify students who are on track towards CCR achievement. Students at the Elementary and Middle levels are regularly screened and assessed to determine their level of proficiency in ELA and Math through the administration of the i-Ready math and reading diagnostic assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of year. Students who are identified as having deficits through the i-Ready assessment, MCAP data, classroom assessments etc. are assigned to intervention to provide supplemental instruction to address identified learning gaps.

Students at the High School level are screened and assessed to determine their level of proficiency in ELA and Math through end of year 8th grade i-Ready data and high school benchmark assessments in the areas of math and ELA. GCPS is exploring the option of incorporating an Algebra readiness screener at the high school level as well as utilizing

CommonLit to identify students in need of support. Those students who are identified as needing improvement are assigned to intervention during classes and during the designated intervention time. Additionally, at the high school level, students who have been identified as being off track toward proficiency in Algebra and English 10 are scheduled for year-long Algebra I course as well as some students being assigned to a year-long English course which includes one semester of Essentials of Reading.

The Essentials for Reading class includes the use of CommonLit for screening and progress monitoring of the students' readiness for MCAP proficiency in Grade 10. GCPS began the development of this course through a 2023 Summer curriculum writing effort with high school teachers selecting lessons from the core components of the Common Lit open resources for Grade 10 standards. These lessons were shared with Garrett College staff with a collaborative decision to add grammar and sentence level tasks to strengthen the program. This included the purchase of Common Lit 360 which adds additional supports, assessments, and the data dashboard to conduct a pilot of the product during the Spring 2024 semester. The plan is to leverage Maryland Leads funds to purchase the program as the supplemental high school resource in English and develop a more robust curriculum map in the 2024 Summer.

Based on the 9th grade tracker data reflected on [Tab 14a of the Data Appendix](#), GCPS has experienced a significant decline in 9th graders being on track (>95 to 67.6%) to achieving CCR. However, an error was detected during the preparation of the May 2024 Blueprint Implementation Plan submission. Specifically, the data concerning College & Career Readiness for 9th-grade students in LEA 11, Garrett County, was found to be inaccurate within Tab 14A of the Blueprint Appendix linked above. Upon review, it was determined that the error originated from the GCPS HSDC 2022-2023 file submitted to MSDE in September 2023. The issue pertained to the "CD" column in the HSDC file, which was inaccurately reported by GCPS. However, it's important to note that other columns tracking 9th-grade metrics, such as "credits accumulated" and "semester course failures," remain accurate. Overall GCPS statistics for 9th grade on track for the year 2023 are  $\geq 95.0$  which is similar to the previous year and a more accurate representation of the performance of our students and system.

MSDE was notified of this discovery on Friday, April 26, 2024, leading to a quick meeting with staff from the Office of Performance Reporting and Accountability of MSDE and GCPS staff via Google Meet to address the matter. It was decided that GCPS would provide corrected information to MSDE, which would then be added to our records at MSDE. However, no amendments to existing publications or public-facing data concerning the 9th-grade tracker will be updated at this time. GCPS has diligently reviewed the data pertaining to the 9th-grade tracker and has produced a revised chart found on [Tab 14a-1 of the Data Appendix](#).

Even with this corrected 9<sup>th</sup> grade tracker data, due to the number of students not meeting CCR standards based on the interim CCE standard (85.3% in 2023) as evidenced on [Tab 14b of the Data Appendix](#), GCPS has elevated the need to focus on strong vertical alignment as well as enhanced multi-tiered system of supports. One strategy that the system is actively implementing is a secondary model where all 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students are under one administration. The southern end will be in one school while the northern end will be on one campus. This strategy will allow for ownership and accountability 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade as well as enhanced vertical teaming.

Additionally, the Chief Academic Officer, Supervisor of ELA and Social Studies, and both high school principals recently (April 2024) attended the MSDE Learning Labs in Washington County

centered on supplemental instruction and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. This experience has elevated a need to further analyze and redesign current structures and practices around supplemental instruction in the upper grades and high school. As GCPS reflects on current processes within the multi-tiered systems of support, additional work is necessary to ensure strong Tier I instruction with robust universal design of instruction strategies with built in supports for grade level instruction. Additional areas to consider include assessment structures, evidenced based interventions aligned with core materials (rather than stand-alone computer-based platforms), logistical structures etc. For example, a barrier we have encountered at the high school level is the availability of vetted screening and resource tools identified as needed for the process.

In ELA, we have started the transition to the CommonLit program as our resource and screener. This is being utilized during our school day intervention period with identified students. In Algebra, we have had difficulty in securing an appropriate screener and intervention resources. We have developed Common Assessments for Algebra, and we continue to test the correlation between the student success on the Common Assessments versus MCAP success. GCPS is exploring the possibility of an Algebra readiness screener moving forward. As we further analyze our framework around supplemental instruction, GCPS will identify strategies to strengthen and overcome these barriers. Furthermore, based on feedback from teachers, the current data system and progress monitoring framework is cumbersome and inefficient. Thus, GCPS is exploring a new platform to better meet the needs of our teachers and students as detailed in questions 10 and 11. The MTSS platform will allow for improved communication with families regarding students not being on track to CCR and/or not having met the criteria for CCR. Work around strengthening the multi-tiered system of support within GCPS will be a priority in our systems strategic plan over the next three years. GCPS hopes to continue working with our Blueprint Strategic Facilitator in prioritizing this work moving into the 2024-2025 school year.

Finally, to improve our outcomes in regards to students attaining CCR, school-wide goals have been established to improve Tier I instruction related to writing improvement and modeling with mathematics. These are areas that our MCAP data have shown need improvement.

### **Strategy 2: Individualized CCR Plans**

Students who have completed grade 10 and have not demonstrated proficiency have been assigned to attend remediation in identified CCR courses. These courses occur during our regularly scheduled blocks in the schedule as well as during the designated remediation time and have been developed in collaboration with Garrett College to ensure alignment with Blueprint requirements. New this year, GCPS is utilizing CommonLit as a supplemental instructional resource and progress monitoring assessment in the area of ELA for non-CCR identified students.

Students/families who are determined to not be College and Career Ready by the end of grade 10 are notified of the individualized CCR plan and the associated remediation through a letter home. Departmental PLC time is utilized to examine the student data and determine rotations for assignments of students into the remediation courses. Lead teachers have been identified as CCR Liaisons for the purpose of developing individualized CCR plans with academic departments and making contact with families. A committee was formed at the beginning of the year with key stakeholders from both high schools as well as the technology department. GCPS designed an individualized CCR plan in Power School that is used to house

the plan and to monitor student progress. GCPS launched this Power School form in the fall of 2023.

One challenge faced by both high schools was the high number of students requiring individualized CCR plans based on the interim CCR standard data. To address this concern, both high schools implemented a phased approach by identifying students that were most in need of required remediation as the Maryland State Board explored the new CCR standard. This was also necessary due to the time needed to finalize the ELA support path course. With the adoption of the new CCR standard, many students will now meet the CCR standard and the number of students needing an individualized CCR plan has become more manageable.

## 15. Access to Post- CCR Pathways

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 118 - 122 and 128 - 133*

In March 2023, the LEA discussed how it would **ensure every student has access to post-CCR pathways, including college preparatory programs** (IB Diploma Programme, Cambridge AICE Diploma Program, and Advanced Placement Program), **dual enrollment programs, middle and early college high school programs, and CTE programs that include opportunities for apprenticeships and other industry-recognized credentials.**

The LEA's response included descriptions of current offerings and proposed expansion plans if applicable, strategies to recruit students representative of the school system's demographics, and plans to overcome barriers for student enrollment such as transportation, scheduling, entry requirements, or inadequate academic support.

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

### Strategy #1: Career Coaches

Garrett County Public Schools made significant progress in implementing the post-CCR pathways and the strategies articulated in last year's plan. GCPS has two full time career coaches who have created a full scope and sequence to interact with all students K-12, and individually with each child from grades 6-12. The MOU for the career coaches between GCPS, Garrett College, and the Western Maryland Consortium has been agreed upon and finalized by all parties and approved by the state. A highlight from last year's plan that was implemented successfully this year was the post- CCR Pathway Nights at each high school, which were supported by career coaches. Both high schools welcomed over 100 individuals (parents and

students) to their campus to learn more about the opportunities in AP, CTE, and dual enrollment that are available to them. Recruiters from our dual enrollment partners in higher education were on hand to answer questions about our joint programs, our apprenticeship coordinator attended to show parents and students what opportunities are available and what opportunities are planned for the future, AP teachers attended to recruit for their classes and promote the Capstone Diploma option, and CTE instructors were present to show parents and students the shops and opportunities they offer, as well. The career planning program Naviance has been purchased and key personnel have been trained to use the program. Students have started to actively utilize the platform this year. Every student in grades 6-12 has an account in Naviance and the career coaches use it to offer career lessons to students to help guide them toward their interests and aptitudes.

**Strategy #2: Advanced Placement Courses**

GCPS has been approved to offer the AP Capstone Diploma program for both high schools. Staff have registered to receive training in the AP Seminar course, which will be a new course offering next school year (2024-2025). GCPS has also identified the personnel who will be trained in AP Research for the 2025-2026 school year. Those two classes, along with the addition of AP Pre-calculus this year to the course offerings, takes students to 20 possible AP courses available to them. The biggest challenge to growing the AP program has been the decreasing enrollment in Garrett County, as increasing the opportunities available to a shrinking pool of students makes it difficult for all programs to grow and succeed. In spite of that, through greater outreach to the public and marketing through traditional GCPS materials and platforms, GCPS has shown the following growth:

<b>Garrett County Public Schools Advanced Placement Enrollment</b>			
	<b>School Year 2022-2023</b>	<b>School Year 2023-2024</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Unduplicated AP Students	<b>162</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>+14%</b>
Duplicated total AP Course enrollments	<b>212</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>+45%</b>

**Strategy #3: Dual Enrollment**

GCPS has also expanded their dual enrollment opportunities with not only Garrett College, but also Frostburg State University, Allegany College of Maryland, and West Virginia University. The school system went from 29 dual enrollment classes with Garrett College in 2023-2024 to 64 in 2024-25. This includes two concurrent tracks to earn an Associate’s Degree simultaneously with the high school diploma which are: Business Administration and Arts and Sciences – math/science concentration. Furthermore, GCPS partnered with Frostburg State to create the Bobcat Academy, an early college program where high school seniors spend their final high school year on the campus of FSU taking a college freshman schedule. What began this year as a very structured schedule for the initial four Bobcat Academy students will be changed for next year’s Academy students, as GCPS learned that flexibility was necessary in order to make sure each student received the classes that they needed in order to graduate and to have a better experience at FSU. This adjustment is a direct result of students, parent, educator, and partner feedback. In planning for next year, GCPS is in negotiations with Allegany College of Maryland to offer transcribed credit for both the automotive and culinary programs, as well as with West Virginia University for transcribed credit in the agriculture program. The same challenge exists for increasing dual enrollment as it does for AP in that

declining enrollment makes it hard to offer more opportunities. Again, in spite of that challenge, GCPS increased the number of students taking advantage of early and middle college opportunities year over year.

Garrett County Public Schools Dual Enrollment Data			
	School Year 2022-2023	School Year 2023-2024	% Change
Unduplicated Dual Enrollment Students	206	261	+27%
Duplicated total Dual Enrollment Courses taken	459	610	+33%

**Strategy #4: CTE**

In CTE, GCPS offered Apprenticeship Maryland for the first time in 2023-24. Seven apprentices took advantage of the opportunity and eight different businesses have signed on in Garrett County. This program is gaining a lot of interest by both students and businesses and is expected to continue to expand into the future. That is a major accomplishment from last year’s plan, as hiring an Apprenticeship Maryland Program coordinator was a goal that was achieved enabling the program's implementation. GCPS is applying to offer the Maryland Fire and Rescue program to its CTE offerings in 2024-25, as well. Unfortunately, the declining enrollment of the school system is forcing GCPS to look at offering opportunities differently moving forward. The Business Administration AA degree dual enrollment track with Garrett College will eliminate the business pathway from GCPS CTE offerings. This cluster has GCPS’s lowest completion numbers in CTE and by partnering with the college, students will still have an opportunity to participate in business education. Planned abandonment for these business pathways began in this school year (2023-24) and will conclude in the 2024-25 school year. Furthermore, Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Engineering, which also traditionally has very low participation rates, is transitioning to a partnership with the college, as well. PLTW fees and training costs applied to such a low population of students is not a wise use of scarce financial resources and the college can still provide the opportunity for students to engage in a robust engineering program. Planned abandonment for this program is also set to conclude in 2024-25. Outside of a declining enrollment, another challenge for increasing CTE participation, especially in Work Based Learning and apprenticeship opportunities, is the lack of public transportation in Garrett County. In fact, there is no public transport in the county at all, which creates a barrier. GCPS is in the process of looking to acquire school-based transit for each high school that would allow staff to drive students to work sites. The goal is to have those state approved vehicles in place for the start of the 2024-25 school year.

**Strategy #5: School Consolidation & Grade Band Structure**

As previously stated, GCPS’ largest challenge is adding educational opportunities in a declining enrollment while trying to maintain the existing programs at the same time. GCPS has mitigated this challenge by consolidating schools and changing grade band structures to provide greater efficiencies with staffing. Southern Middle School is being closed and the seventh and eighth graders will be moving to the high school. The sixth graders will move to Broad Ford Elementary School. The Northern Middle School/Northern High School campus is now under one administrative umbrella in an effort to share teaching staff more efficiently. This strategy, in addition to saving money, will allow more teachers to be in the high school building allowing more flexibility in scheduling to offer elective classes and to add AP offerings to students. Furthermore, GCPS has also changed the secondary bell schedule from a four period

day to a five period day, allowing students to potentially earn 40 high school credits in a four year career rather than the previous 32. This gives students the ability to take more courses rather than having to choose between one course or another, potentially creating larger class requests to justify keeping courses in the schedule. GCPS held stakeholder meetings with teacher/administrator groups to help develop the new schedule. Student groups were engaged from each secondary school to discuss the new schedule and solicit feedback from a student perspective, as well. The feedback from stakeholders was crucial in creating the new schedule as well as determining how the schedule will be operationalized. The new schedule was presented to the elected board of education in a public meeting to inform the parents and community of the forthcoming changes.

In order to provide more access to the programming that GCPS provides, in addition to adding more classes via the approved schedule change, all schools are adding and/or enhancing a multi- tiered system of support to assist students in meeting the CCR standard by the end of 10th grade. This work is detailed in the previous questions of this submission (questions 10-14) and will be a priority over the next three years.

## **Pillar 4: More Resources to Ensure All Students are Successful**

### **16. Engagement and Communication with Multilingual learner (ML) families**

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Question 137*

In March 2023, the LEA described how it would **engage and communicate with Multilingual learner (ML) families, also known as English learners (EL), including leveraging the EL family coordinator position.**

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) continues to provide robust opportunities for our multilingual learners (ML) and their families to be engaged and informed members of our school system. First and foremost, GCPS believes that strong communication and collaboration are essential for fostering positive family relationships.

To increase communication with our families, GCPS has a fully accessible website that can be translated into over one hundred languages with the click of a button. Within the website, GCPS has dedicated a whole page to resources for multilingual learners and their families. On this webpage, parents can find information regarding our mission statement, belief statement, identification, eligibility, notification process, assessments, exit criteria, and current enrollment information. In addition to the website, GCPS also provides news releases and whole-system notifications in English and Spanish, with additional translations available. Within the school setting, GCPS utilizes newsletters, notes, phone calls, emails, and home visits as needed to communicate with the families of our multilingual learners. GCPS also utilizes translation apps such as “Say Hi” and “Translate”, along with a translator as needed. GCPS continues to send the Home Language Survey at the beginning of every school year and provides additional resources to the parents in their native language throughout the year. Some of these resources include *A Guide to School for Families of English Learners*, progress reports, benchmark data, and additional newsletters. One challenge identified this school year was families' ability to read and comprehend information once it was translated into their native language. GCPS has mitigated this concern by providing in-person meetings with our multilingual families to review the information above, collaborate on any concerns, and maintain open communication throughout the school year. GCPS has also supported families with accessing accessibility features on their personal devices such as text-to-speech to further support access to information.

To increase collaboration with our families, GCPS has also prioritized providing individualized invitations to our multilingual families to participate in our school-based teams (School Improvement Team (SIT), Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS), and others as appropriate), along with individualized invitations to attend school activities (field trips, festivals, performances, after-school events, and others as appropriate). GCPS would like to continue to evolve in this area by connecting the multilingual families in our county to build a community of support. Within the next two years, GCPS is planning to hold at least one family event a year in which families will have the opportunity to connect, share experiences, and receive additional information and resources, all while enjoying a fun family-friendly event.

A huge portion of the success of our Multilingual Learner program is creating and sustaining the ML Family Coordinator position. Due to the limited number of multilingual learners in our school system, GCPS has opted to use an already existing staff member to fulfill the roles of this position. In order to ensure we were meeting the Blueprint expectations of elevating support for our families, we utilized the recommended job description released by the Maryland State Department of Education in comparison to our current ML teacher's job description. Our ML teacher, Coordinator of ML, and Director of ML met to review this job description and determined the following areas need to continue to be elevated in Garrett County; professional development for our teachers and establishing community partners. In order to address these areas, GCPS is exploring avenues for professional development opportunities for our general education teachers including Vector Solutions training videos, contracting with a trainer, and establishing our own internal training for general education teachers. GCPS is also exploring community resources that could support our ML families and developing a local resource guide for our families. Once this guide is created, it will also be available on our website.

Our ML Family Coordinator currently services as a bridge between our families and our school community. At the beginning of every school year, our ML Teacher/Family Coordinator attends meetings with all of our families individually. At these meetings, the team reviews the student's needs, discusses services, and plans out support for the year. Our ML Teacher/Family

Coordinator gathers and shares parental input and identifies any specific cultural influences. This individual then utilizes the information gathered from the parents to collaborate with teachers to develop culturally responsive lessons, activities, and assessments. If a teacher would like to recommend a ML student for our Gifted and Talented program or Special Education services, our ML Teacher/Family Support Coordinator helps facilitate the understanding of this process and provides families with resources in their native language such as the MSDE's *Parent Information Series*. Parent training on topics such as the referral process to one of these programs, along with a variety of other topics are facilitated by our ML Teacher/Family Support Coordinator on an individual-family basis. Due to the limited number of ML families in Garrett County, our ML Teacher/Family Support Coordinator maintains strong relationships with our families and is in contact with them frequently.

## 17. Supporting Multilingual Learners and Increasing Language Acquisition

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Question 138 - 139*

In March 2023, the LEA described how it would **support Multilingual learners (ML), also known as English learners (EL), and implement the recommendations of the ML workgroup to increase English proficiency for ML students.**

Responses included strategies to increase language acquisition and ensure the alignment and investment of resources.

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome of increasing English proficiency for Multilingual learner students.**

Garrett County Public Schools follows the requirements of each ML student's Multilingual Learning Plan in order to increase his/her acquisition and/or growth in reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening. At the beginning of every school year, GCPS reviews the student's plan and determines if there are any new or emerging needs. The ML Teacher shares best practices and strategies to utilize with the student and answers any questions that the teacher may have. This is also a time when families can share any new or different information about their child to collaborate with the school on their child's educational needs. This year, the teams encouraged student-led conferences in which the student is the lead in their education. The

team also utilizes the WIDA Maryland standards to set expectations for English Language Development and Early Language Development.

Once the school year begins, our ML Teacher works collaboratively with our teachers to plan lessons, activities, and assessments for our ML students. Our ML Teacher and general education teachers are given opportunities to plan together to create rigorous culturally responsive instruction that meets the needs of our ML students. In addition, teachers are implementing the six co-teaching models in the inclusion setting to maximize student outcomes. Through these models, general education teachers are given the opportunity to observe the ML Teacher for best practices to implement across all instruction and settings. Some general accommodations utilized for our ML students are listed below.

General Classroom Accommodations may include:

- To improve listening comprehension, incorporate books using read-alouds and music, especially from their cultural communities.
- Role play in pairs/small groups; interviewing someone, resolving conflict, etc.
- Make/draw connections with their experiences; this will increase comprehension.
- Use visuals and have students point to pictures, act out vocabulary, and write reflections.
- Partner reading of text that is just beyond the MLs independent reading level.
- Speak slowly and use shorter words, but use correct English phrasing.
- Model "survival" language by saying and showing the meaning.
- Use of wait time to help the ML student formulate a response to the question
- Opportunities for peer tutoring as appropriate/as available.
- Use of assistive technology, i.e. speech-to-text (Say Hi App via iPad with the help of microphone/headphones)

General Classroom composition for ML success may include the following:

- The use of learning centers for language arts, math, science and/or social studies learning activities.
- The student is involved in both reading and writing experiences.
  - use of fiction and nonfiction texts as sources of information
- In instruction, the student
  - is offered choices; may work collaboratively
  - uses background knowledge
  - capitalizes on his/her interest
  - may read, write, speak, and listen during the experience
  - culture and language is valued and supported
- The content serves a purpose and is meaningful to the student
- The student is valued and provided opportunities for achievement

The teachers collectively review student progress data from the iReady diagnostic, county-wide benchmarks, and formal/informal data.

General Testing Accommodations may include:

- Simplify the language on the overall test using short sentences and easy vocabulary.
- Use word banks containing appropriate vocabulary for completion exercises.
- Allow students to generate a list instead of composing constructed responses or complete sentences.
- Complete graphic organizers similar to those used during class instruction.

The current data for Garrett County is suppressed due to the limited number of multilingual learners within the county as shown on [Tab 17 of the Data Appendix](#); however, GCPS reviews the data yearly and analyzes trends. In the past three years, GCPS has seen students steadily progress on the WIDA assessments in all areas (listening, speaking, reading, writing, oral language, literacy, and comprehension). GCPS has seen significant progress in the areas of listening and oral language. Reading and literacy are areas that GCPS continues to prioritize with students. At the high school level, students tend to struggle the most in the areas of speaking, but can test out of services due to strengths in the other areas listed above.

Collaboratively, our ML teacher and general education teachers utilize numerous resources to enhance instruction. One main resource is the WIDA Consortium. This resource has provided our teachers with professional development opportunities in the areas of classroom environment, family support, and instructional strategies. The other major resource that our teachers utilize is Colorin Colorado. Colorin Colorado is a resource to educators and families that has provided professional development, lesson templates, program supports, development guides, and much more to increase student outcomes.

In order to continue to improve language acquisition for our ML students, GCPS is committed to aligning resources to meet the needs of our students and their families. This year, GCPS employed a full-time ML teacher/Family Coordinator, which was an increase from the previous year. GCPS also utilized counselors and the Community Schools Specialist to further assist students and families with individual needs. Lastly, GCPS is committed to providing a translator through a temporary contract for parent conferences, phone calls, meetings, after-school events, and other activities as needs arise.

## 18. Improve Education for Students with Disabilities

*Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Questions 140 and 142*

In March 2023, the LEA described how it would **improve education for students with disabilities**.

Responses addressed supporting general and special education teachers in the implementation of effective classroom instructional practices and increasing and aligning investments in talent, time, and resources.

Considerations included:

- Strategic staffing to implement a co-teaching model that allows for two teachers to share all responsibilities for a single classroom
- Professional development to support all teachers in differentiating instruction effectively
- Scheduling models to support collaboration and co-planning between general and special education teachers

Based on implementation of the LEA's plans over the last year, discuss the district's progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome of improving education for students with disabilities.**

GCPS is committed to enhancing special education services to increase outcomes for students with disabilities. Our dedication to this area is demonstrated through our emphasis on co-planning, co-implementation, co-evaluation, and family support. GCPS has also allocated resources to support coaching, professional development, and caseload management to further assist in these areas.

High-quality instruction remains an emphasis for the Department of Special Education. During the past school year, GCPS has provided professional development for special education teachers through two county-wide professional development days, six professional development opportunities focused on Augmentative and Alternative Communication, and ongoing Autism training. Special education and general education teachers have also been offered content-based professional development, along with grade-level PLC time. During this time, trainers have shared high-leverage practices to increase outcomes for students with disabilities. In addition, special education teachers are provided with one Specially Designed Instruction/Collaborative Planning day a month to meet with general education teachers to co-plan and co-evaluate instruction for students with disabilities. GCPS also recognizes the importance of collaboration among special education teachers and has provided quarterly special education meetings for school-based special education teams. During these times, special education teachers, our Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) Coach, IEP Coordinators, and administrators analyze student data, plan instructional strategies, and share ideas and resources.

In the classroom students with disabilities are integrated into the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to the maximum extent possible. GCPS has taken an aggressive approach to this philosophy by decreasing the percentage of time students with disabilities are removed from the general education setting. GCPS is also implementing a full-inclusion model with a regional elementary program for students with significant cognitive disabilities. This shift in approach began with providing professional development for the administrators in the six co-teaching model and Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). From that point, all special education teachers received the same refresher training and worked with their administrators to provide building-level professional development for the general education teachers. GCPS has continued to maintain the SDI Coach that was an integral part of the implementation process. The SDI Coach collaborated with the special education teachers and building administrators to plan and implement professional development specific to their building levels' needs. Some schools chose to do a whole-staff training, while others chose to work within grade-level or content-level groups. In addition to the co-teaching and SDI professional development, some

schools chose to use the SDI Coach to also provide training on utilizing instructional assistants to the maximum extent possible, what accommodations and modifications should look like in the classroom, and how to create collaborative lesson plans.

After all the county and school-based training was completed, the SDI coach began SDI fidelity checks that were completed for every special education teacher and their corresponding co-teacher. The SDI fidelity check looked at the following areas; evidence-based instruction, co-teaching, instructional accommodations, supplementary aids and services, modifications, and support personnel. In addition to gathering this baseline data for inclusion services, our SDI Coach also provided teachers with the opportunity to engage in Video-Stimulated Response (VSR), in which she would record the lesson, review the video as a team, and determine areas of strength and areas of growth. The results from the SDI fidelity checks were shared with administrators for planning out future professional development. Looking ahead, GCPS will be exploring the option of special education and general education teachers having their formal observation during a co-teaching lesson to ensure the carryover of high-leverage practices. This year, GCPS utilized lead special education teachers to create folders of resources for general education teachers to use in the classroom setting to further support this mission. GCPS will also continue to support low caseloads for special education teachers to allow them to focus on the unique and individualized needs of their learners to plan appropriate instruction.

In addition to classroom instruction, GCPS continues to prioritize the importance of preparing students with disabilities for college or career readiness. GCPS continues to align resources to provide a full-time secondary transition teacher who serves as a support to our students and teachers address post-secondary outcomes. Our secondary transition teacher begins by providing professional development for our special education teachers in appropriate secondary transition activities and progress monitoring assessments that are student-centered. This teacher also supports and facilitates work-based learning experiences for our students with disabilities by connecting them to a career interest of choice, organizing job coaching, and arranging transportation for the student to and from school. GCPS is unique in that these opportunities are offered to students during the school day to remove any access barriers. Our Secondary Transition teacher also plans and organizes a Secondary Transition fair in which students with disabilities and their families come to learn about organizations, agencies, and employers to support students with their post-secondary outcomes. By putting a strong emphasis on secondary transition, GCPS is taking steps towards increasing the percentage of students graduating within four years with a high school diploma.

For students with disabilities working on alternate learning standards, GCPS continues to maintain high expectations. All students have the same opportunity to participate in CTE courses and participate with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible. When reviewing the state data on [Tab 18 of the Data Appendix](#), there has been a steady decrease in special education proficiency scores on the State Alternate Assessments in reading and mathematics. GCPS was able to maintain all students with disabilities achieving a proficiency level 3 but saw an increase in level 1 and level 2 proficiency. The percentage of students achieving level 5 proficiency was less than or equal to 5% of participation. GCPS has provided intensive training to administrators, teachers, and parents on the qualifications of students taking the alternate assessments and emphasized the importance that only our students with the most significant cognitive disabilities should take the Alternate Assessment. If students are achieving level 4 proficiency, GCPS is discussing whether the Alternate Assessment is still appropriate for the student to be taking. GCPS is also utilizing the new Appendix A tool provided by MSDE to

ensure that all students working on the alternate standards and taking the Alternate Assessment meet the eligibility criteria.

## 19. Disproportionate Identification and Disciplinary Practices

Discuss the LEA's plan to **improve education for students with disabilities through accurate screening and disciplinary practices**. Provide an analysis of current data related to both the under- and over-identification of students with disabilities and disproportionality of student discipline during the pre-referral process or once identified as a student with a disability. Identify affected student groups and areas of disproportionality, the root causes for the disproportionality(ies), and the specific strategies the LEA uses or intends to use to mitigate and eliminate such occurrences at individual schools and across its system of schools.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome to mitigate disproportionate identification and disciplinary practices.**

Based on the most recent disproportionality data from 2022-2023, GCPS is not identified as being disproportionate or significantly disproportionate in any area for students with disabilities. As shown on the [Tab 19 of the Data Appendix](#), GCPS has maintained eligibility, discipline, and placement implementation below two standard deviations. GCPS has consistently maintained this status over the past three years. In order to meet these indicators, GCPS has a robust process in place to address the under or over-identification of students with disabilities, along with discipline practices for students with disabilities.

The Child Find process in Garrett County is the first step of our success. Information regarding the Child Find process is posted on our GCPS website, school-based websites, school newsletters, social media platforms, on the radio, and in the local paper. Additional information is shared with our local childcare and medical providers, and distributed at our Special Education Citizen Advisory Committee (SECAC) meetings. GCPS responds to any Child Find requests within 10 days after the referral has been made. As appropriate, a referral meeting is scheduled and the IEP team determines if additional assessments or information is needed before determining eligibility.

Within the school setting, GCPS implements a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) program. General education teachers and intervention teachers work together to set individualized goals for students in each tier of the intervention process. Student data is tracked through our PowerSchool system to determine if the student is making adequate progress. If a teacher determines that a student is not making adequate progress in intervention, then they refer the student to the School Support Team (SST). The SST, which consists of the general education teacher, intervention teacher, administrator, counselor, and others as appropriate, meets regularly to review the progress of students in tier 1 or tier 2 of the MTSS process. At these meetings, the team reviews the areas of need, the intervention currently being provided, and the corresponding data. If the student is making adequate progress, then SST would recommend that the current interventions continue. If the student is not making adequate progress, the SST would determine if new or additional strategies need to be implemented or if the student's lack

of progress warrants a special education referral. If the team determines that a special education referral is necessary, they complete the special education referral form.

GCPS has created a special education referral form that ensures the team is reviewing and considering all factors when making the referral. On the form, the SST must identify the reason for the referral, areas of concern, past assessment data, medical needs, communication needs, cultural and environmental factors, student interests, parent input, documentation of MTSS supports, SST information, and signatures for the team and the administrator reviewing the referral. Once the referral is completed, it's sent to the Director of Special Education to review before a referral meeting is held. This additional layer ensures that the referral includes all of the necessary components before proceeding. Once the Director of Special Education reviews the referral, it's sent to the IEP Coordinator who schedules a referral meeting.

GCPS recognizes the importance of using consistent tools for determining eligibility for students with disabilities. GCPS has developed and implemented eligibility criteria for each disability code, in addition to utilizing guidance documents provided by MSDE such as the Intellectual Disability eligibility tool. Utilizing a consistent tool has helped our county ensure consistency when determining whether a student is eligible or not eligible for special education services despite the individual completing the assessments. GCPS also utilizes a model where we employ Diagnostic Prescriptive Teachers (DPTs) who complete all formal academic assessments across the county. Once again, this ensures that the assessments are completed without biases and are consistent across the county. Another component of the eligibility process is providing professional development for our staff regarding eligibility criteria. GCPS provides professional development for administrators, special education teachers, school psychologists, DPTs, and other providers in the referral and eligibility process and corresponding tools.

Analyzing data throughout the year is another essential component to the over or under-identification of students with disabilities. GCPS completes a data analysis with the Director of Special Education and IEP Coordinators every fall before the October 1st student count. Throughout the year, the IEP Coordinators track referrals and eligibility through a Google Form that is reviewed at monthly IEP Coordinator meetings. If the team identifies an area of significant increase or decrease, a root cause analysis is completed and discussed with the appropriate stakeholders. GCPS also closely monitors the percentage of students with disabilities working on alternate curriculum and taking the alternate state assessments. This data is also reviewed monthly at IEP Coordinator meetings. Lastly, GCPS views the disproportionality reports on the Maryland Online IEP platform monthly to continue to monitor the over and under-identification of students with disabilities.

GCPS also closely monitors discipline practices for students with disabilities. Similarly, to the academic process, GCPS requires teachers to utilize the MTSS process for a student who may be demonstrating challenging behaviors. Each school has established trained Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) teams who have developed behavioral expectations for their schools. These teams meet regularly to review school data and strategies to address student behavior and discipline through positive interventions. Annual evaluations provide each school with an assessment of their progress with PBIS. Schools also use the school-wide collection of data to collect and analyze specific school-wide discipline data. A review of the school-wide discipline data, in conjunction with the annual progress evaluation, enables each school to focus on specific discipline concerns that can be addressed with planned interventions and strategies. If a student is in tier 2 and continues to not make

progress, the SST will request for the Behavior Coach to complete a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). The team then reconvenes to review the antecedent, behavior, and consequence identified through the FBA process. The SST will then decide if the student needs to continue with interventions or have a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) in place. If the student is already identified as having a disability, then the permission for an FBA and BIP would go through the IEP team. In some situations, the school-based team may also determine the need for a safety plan or health plan depending on the student's individual needs. In addition to these school-based plans, the IEP team may also consider IEP goals, supplementary aids, or services that the student may need to be successful.

GCPS outlines all disciplinary practices in the student handbook. In accordance with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Board of Education, Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, age, religion, disability, genetics, ancestry/national origin, marital status, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing educational programs and services and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. GCPS operates equal opportunity programs for students and staff. To avoid the disproportionality in the area of discipline, GCPS has established a Response to Disciplinary Offenses guide within the handbook. This chart provides guidance on the level of discipline or consequence that can be provided for specific offenses. By having a consistent measure in place, GCPS can closely monitor data to ensure that students with disabilities are not disproportionately disciplined.

If an administrator is recommending suspension for a student with a disability, the administrator is required to contact the Director of Special Education to discuss the offense, review the IEP, and determine if the disciplinary action is appropriate. This process has allowed for collaborative conversations regarding how we change behaviors in the school setting, while also monitoring suspension data. If a student with a disability is suspended, the IEP Coordinator is notified and an IEP meeting is scheduled to determine if any new or additional areas need to be addressed through the student's individualized plan. Suspension data, along with other disciplinary data, is reviewed at monthly Administrative and Supervisory (A&S) meetings.

<b>20. Effective Community Partnerships</b>
How does the LEA <b>support students attending community schools where there is a higher concentration of poverty</b> by supporting their community schools through a collective impact approach?
Describe how the LEA ensures its schools align partnerships to their needs assessments and collaborate with partners to share leadership, establish goals, and increase accountability for achieving intended outcomes in service of a specific community and its students.

School year 2023-2024 provided Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) with their first community school. From day one, Yough Glades Elementary School truly believed they were trailblazers for our school system, students, staff and community through this designation and needs assessment process. The Community School Specialist, Director of Student Services, and School Health Manager traveled to Philadelphia to attend the National Community School Conference in June 2023 to start the process of understanding the intricacies of what a community school is and how the needs assessment, community partnerships, and different types of data help to drive future planning to help positively impact the school and community.

Upon returning to Garrett County, the Community School Specialist created a steering committee which included school and central office staff, community partners, and parents of Yough Glades community. Utilizing feedback from the steering committee, strategies were developed to communicate with all stakeholders about what it meant to be a community school while also ensuring the community understood the goal of completing a [comprehensive needs assessment](#) throughout this past school year. Throughout the year, the school utilized different methods of communication such as: school website; community school newsletter; school messenger; flyers/QR codes (handed out and posted); and community school potluck events. As Yough Glades Elementary School continues to build out the model, they have discussed other ways to increase communication by providing Incentives, family engagement nights/take home bags, parent/teacher conferences, and Title I events.

The work that the Community School Specialist accomplished expanded and enhanced existing strong community partnerships between the school system and community. Over the years, these partnerships have been seen as a strength by those across the state of Maryland. These strong partnerships are centered around the shared vision and support of one another to help our students and families. The partnerships include the Department of Juvenile Services, Department of Social Services, Garrett College, Garrett County Head Start, Garrett County Health Department, Garrett County Sheriff's Office and the Maryland State Police. These partners collaborate often in different committee meetings like the Behavioral Health Task Force, Health Planning Council, Local Care Team and the Western Maryland Consortium to name a few.

As of the beginning of March 2024, Yough Glades Steering Committee, through asset mapping, has identified sixty-two assets to their community. These assets range from businesses, doctor's offices, food supply options to parks and recreation options. The school continues to actively recruit partnerships that can help support them with a shared vision. They are also looking for how we can work together to align resources, funds, staffing, and programs. Guiding questions when looking at assets for the community school are: Which assets are being utilized? Which assets are being underutilized? Which assets need strengthened?

As the school year started, the Community School Specialist leveraged the partnerships, the steering committee, school staff, parents and students to start to collect data in a variety of ways. Surveys were provided to all of those groups of people that were designed to look at what the Yough Glades community needed. Additionally, other data points were gathered and discussed like Yough Glades Maryland Report Card rating and information, Yough Glades School Improvement Plan, iReady Math and English Language Arts scores, and Judy Center/Early Childhood Programs along with recently gathered Health Statistics and Data from a survey that the Garrett County Health Department conducted. Throughout this process the Director of Student Services for GCPS has been involved and kept up to date with all things related to community schools and the needs assessment. This included his participation in the steering committee to review survey and data results and approving the plan to spend down the remaining grant funds for the year.

The Yough Glades Steering Committee then analyzed all the data to help determine what wrap around services are needed for their community. Throughout this process the committee communicated the community school model and needs of the school with current and potential partners, and the community as a whole through the previously mentioned communication methods. Additionally, the committee continued to assess, collect, and share student data and

considered factors such as absenteeism, health challenges, etc. Based on the data so far, the steering committee found common trends that are needed. Identified needs are reading programs, parent support and interventions, after school programming, field trips to help expose students to different experiences outside the Yough Glades community and outside Garrett County, family engagement opportunities, access to resources/basic needs, and behavioral and mental health needs.

Based on the needs assessment and other data resources, the school and central office staff are reassessing staffing, specifically those in student services areas such as social workers, counselors, mental health therapists, behavior coaches, etc. to meet the identified mental health needs of our students and/or families. Additionally, community partnerships are being created or expanded to provide support to help address these needs. New partnerships with Mountain Laurel Medical Center and the Baltimore Crisis Response Inc. will help to provide mental health and crisis support to our students and families. Our established partnership with the Garrett County Health Department (GCHD) will help to expand our after-school programs across the county, increase school-based therapists that are able to see our students for mental health services and expand the use of tele-therapy services for psychiatrist services. The GCHD is a key resource for relevant data, like the [2022-2024 GCHD Adolescent Wellness Survey](#), for GCPS when evaluating the health and needs of our students and families. Additional GCHD data information can be found in [Tab 20 of the Data Appendix](#). As we continue to add partnerships, we will have to create additional Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) or Requests for Proposals (RFP) if specific services need to be contracted out based on the needs assessments. Both the MOU and RFP process are handled by central office staff with the final approval coming from the Superintendent of Schools. The MOU and RFP process, with our partners and potential partners, helps to ensure that we work with, support and hold the partners accountable in order to realize results.

Yough Glades Elementary School will be submitting their comprehensive needs assessment document by May 31, 2024 to MSDE. Based on the needs assessment data and reflection, they will start to complete an implementation plan, with measurable goals, for next school year. The implementation plan and goals will be geared around wrap-around services that will include different types of programming, activities and partnerships. The same types of data used in the needs assessment will be re-evaluated along with other information and data from partners and school based interventions and programs. Areas like our tiered system of supports, behavioral health screener will provide insight to the Community School Specialist, and administration to ensure there is an alignment between the needs assessment, provided wrap-around services and the goals of the implementation plan.

Additional artifacts that support the Yough Glades Needs Assessment can be found below:  
[YG Quantitative Data Analysis](#)  
[Yough Glades Qualitative Data, Needs Assessment 2023-2024](#)

## 21. Expanding Behavioral Health Support

Discuss how the LEA will **enhance and expand behavioral health support for students**, including how it leverages the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports to provide services to students and communities.

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome to enhance and expand behavioral health support for students.**

Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) has seen a steady decline of student enrollment over the past ten years but an increase in behavioral health needs, especially since the pandemic. Some areas of concern included in our data analysis of [Tabs 21a-21g of the Data Appendix](#) are:

- Students chronically absent
- Discipline data (disrespect, disruption, attacks on students and adults, use of tobacco and THC vapes and threats)
- Climate Survey Data
  - Staff concerns of safety and student to student relationships
  - Student concerns of bullying, student to student relationships, emotional and physical safety, physical environment and substance abuse
- Maryland Youth Risk Survey Trend Data
  - Increase use of alcohol and drugs
  - Increase of students feeling sad/hopeless, seriously considering suicide, made a suicide plan or attempted Suicide
  - Increase in students stating that their mental health is not good most of the time or always
  - One and three students stating that they ever lived with someone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal

To support the needs identified above, GCPS currently screens students and provides services to meet behavioral health needs through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Tier 1 is implemented through Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programming which is targeted to the whole-school. Tier 2 is overseen by the Department of Student Services through School Service Team (SST) meetings at each school which targets a smaller group of students based on their identified need for improving attendance, behavior, grades, mental health and social emotional. Tier 2 interventions and support may include strategies such as counseling groups, behavior contracts, check-ins, etc. Tier 3 students require a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and determination of a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) to address significant student-centered needs behaviorally or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to address specific academic and/or behavioral concerns. Additionally, referrals for a STARS placement (behavior support classrooms) may be necessary if the student is demonstrating behaviors that are harmful to themselves or others. Some other aspects that GCPS has implemented recently include Trauma-Sensitive Schools training to prepare staff to identify student needs and patterns in behaviors along with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Training.

GCPS currently ensures students are provided behavioral health services through: Formal documentation of interventions, services, and supports provided at Tier 1 in PowerSchool. Formal documentation of interventions, services, and supports provided at Tier 2, along with individual goal monitoring through the SST in PowerSchool. For Tier 3, progress monitoring is completed every three weeks by the case manager. Progress monitoring of BIP goals and fidelity checks are logged in PowerSchool and/or the Maryland IEP online system.

The Pillar 4 Steering Committee has identified several strategies to expand or enhance the behavioral health supports to more proactively support the student needs identified above.

### **Strategy 1: Behavioral Health Screener and MTSS Platform**

During the 2023-2024 school year GCPS established two teams of educators and student service providers to reflect on student needs as represented in the data above as well as on practices focused on improving the MTSS framework. One committee primarily focused on behavioral health supports while the other primarily focused on the academic needs of the system. Aligned with AIB feedback around stakeholder engagement, it was essential to have strong representation from all grade bands and stakeholders (i.e. teachers, counselors, social workers, administrators, etc.) who work closely with students every day. This allowed the system to communicate the reason behind this work with those directly in the field, while also soliciting valuable feedback to plan enhanced services for students. Those representing on the committees were expected to be ambassadors for this work in communicating information back to the school level. Both committees completed a landscape analysis to better understand current needs and supports, while identifying gaps and areas of need to better serve students. Two primary gaps in the area of behavioral health included the lack of a universal Behavioral Health Screener as well as a need for a more efficient MTSS platform to review student data, document supports, and monitor effectiveness of interventions.

The Behavioral Health Committee, led by the Director of Student Services met several times to review various Behavioral Health Screeners, as well as MTSS platforms that would better meet the needs of our school system. The system is in the final stages of evaluation and the feedback and recommendations of this committee will be realized in the selection and adoption of the GCPS Behavioral Health Screener and MTSS Platform.

The new behavioral health screener and MTSS platform should be in place for the start of the 2024-2025 school year. To support implementation, all GCPS staff will be trained in the use of the screener and how it ties into our MTSS process and platform. Student services staff will receive additional training to utilize the data collected to identify students who may need extra support behaviorally or with mental health services. This process will include connecting the students with behavioral health supports in school and with our community partners.

The identified platform will help provide an online behavioral health screener and MTSS process to help ensure that students' needs are being addressed academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally. The behavioral health screener surveys will be administered at least three times a year to all students. These surveys are designed to help students self-reflect on things like their ability to keep working toward a goal, how much they are able to change their own skills, and the social and learning climate of their school. The surveys contain questions on the topics of emotion regulation, social awareness, self-efficacy, school belonging, school engagement, school climate, teacher-student relationships, school rigorous expectations, cultural awareness, action, diversity and inclusion. These surveys are designed to support the

process of informing socio-emotional education, early identification of behavioral health needs, and to create a better learning environment for all students.

Additionally, this platform will provide a one stop shop which will allow the ability to immediately pull data tied to academic performance, attendance, behavior and social/emotional. This will allow GCPS to expand and enhance their tiered system of support specifically to build out Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention plans to help individual students work towards specific goals along with increased progress towards reaching Blueprint outcomes. The program will provide the ability for school staff to track the student's progress toward their goals through integrated progress monitoring tools and dashboards. The program will also provide GCPS staff with hundreds of high-quality instructional resources and evidence-based interventions across academics, behavior, and social-emotional learning.

While GCPS intends to launch this work at the start of next school year, it is understood that the system will be supporting the implementation of this work over the next three years to ensure the highest level of student results.

### **Strategy #2: Staffing and Coordinated Services Plan**

Based on the changing needs since the pandemic, GCPS Department of Student Services is reassessing staffing, specifically social workers, counselors, mental health therapists, behavior coaches, etc. to meet the identified mental health needs of our students and/or families. For the school year 2024-2025, a Student Services Coordinated Services plan is being developed to address these needs in a more effective and efficient manner. For example, through a coordinated approach, School Counselors will provide primarily Tier 1 services, such as basic individual counseling and classroom lessons to all students whereas the School Social Workers will provide more intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, like case management, which could include more specific counseling, family support, and medicine management.

### **Strategy #3: Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports**

GCPS is always looking at expanding and enhancing community partners. Two new partnerships with Mountain Laurel Medical Center (MLMC) and the Baltimore Crisis Response Inc. will help to provide mental health and crisis support to students and families. Additionally, our established partnership with the Garrett County Health Department (GCHD) will expand our after-school programs across the county, increase school-based therapists that are able to see our students for mental health services and expand the use of tele-therapy services for psychiatrist services. As we continue to add partnerships, we will have to create more Memorandum of Understandings (MOU's) or Requests for Proposals (RFPs) if specific services need to be contracted out based on the needs assessments and data trends from the behavioral health screener platform discussed above. Both the MOU and RFP process are handled by central office staff with the final approval coming from the Superintendent of Schools. The MOU and RFP process, with our partners and potential partners, helps to ensure that we work with, support and hold the partners accountable in order to realize results.

Two of the partners described above received letters of support from GCPS for their Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports grant submission. Their grant proposal, which was approved, will help to expand and enhance what they can offer students, families and schools of GCPS.

The GCHD plan includes:

- Enhanced behavioral health support for administrative Tele-Psychiatry services. Services will begin when staffing is secured.
- Increased school-based behavioral health staff and support to expand the number of students served. Services will begin when funding is received, and staffing is secured.
- Expanded wraparound services through the expansion of after school programs and provide Tier II behavioral health sessions at all programs. Services will begin in September 2024.
- Transportation for students through a request for proposal (RFP) process home from after school programming. Services will begin in February 2024.
- Transportation for behavioral health appointments on an as needed basis including the summer months. Services will begin June 2024.
- Training and material support for school-based counselors and staff. To begin as soon as possible.

MLMC has committed to providing high-quality behavioral health-related services to both students and, if necessary, to their families by leveraging the existing services already in place throughout all of their practice sites and expanding for the needs of the student. Given their unique geographic presence in northern and southern Garrett County, MLMC is positioned to efficiently provide assessments for students. Students will have access to MLMC's Behavioral Health Nurse Care Coordination Team to ensure treatment plans are communicated and facilitated. Tailoring plans specific for each student may require higher levels of behavioral health treatment. MLMC's Nurse Care Coordination team will work with students and their family on referral strategies for these higher-level cases which may include trauma therapy and/or added family therapy services. If medication is needed, MLMC is positioned with internal providers that can prescribe the necessary medication which can then be obtained efficiently and cost effectively through the MLMC 340B pharmacy program. In conclusion, GCPS believes that the three strategies listed above will help move the system forward in meeting the behavioral and mental health needs of our students and families.

## Pillar 5: Governance and Accountability

### 22. Stakeholder Engagement

Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan Reference: Question 161

In March 2023, the LEA discussed how it would **engage and represent the voices of stakeholders in the development and implementation of its Blueprint Implementation Plan**, an essential element for the 2024 submission as well. Discuss the LEA's strategy or framework for successfully engaging multiple stakeholder groups for varied purposes during this process, including empowering stakeholders to provide meaningful input into developing and implementing its Blueprint Implementation Plan. Describe how the LEA determines success in this area, including lessons learned and adjustments needed.

Provide specific examples of where stakeholder input has been incorporated into the plan and explain why stakeholder input was critical for each example.

Considerations:

- Key stakeholders (teachers, school leaders, community members, LEA Executive Team including the superintendent)
- Vision building and goal setting
- Communicating to educate and inform about Blueprint implementation (e.g., the Career Ladder)
- Collaborating to create and refine plans
- Establishing feedback loops
- Data collection and analysis
- Engaging educators across subject areas (e.g., social studies, science, fine arts)
- Engaging underrepresented groups
- Successful strategies and opportunities for improvement
- Reporting and sharing progress
- Leveraging strategic facilitators and Blueprint coordinators

In response to Garrett County’s 2023 Blueprint plan, the AIB provided feedback that GCPS leaders should intentionally seek opportunities to engage a range of stakeholders in the development of their Blueprint plans, share their needs and brainstorm solutions. In response to this feedback, GCPS has devoted considerable energy to leveraging diverse two-way communication strategies in order to inform and engage different stakeholder groups. GCPS has sought support from their strategic facilitator to develop a communication plan that seeks to lift up key voices that may not have been engaged historically.

### **Strategy #1 - Developing a communication/engagement plan**

Our communication/engagement plan consists of six tabs – one for each pillar and a cross-cutting structures tab. Each tab is divided into 2 sections that mirror the elements of two-way communication. Section 1 contains strategies for informing/educating such as informational presentations and newsletters. Section 2 contains strategies for collaboration/gathering feedback such as focus groups, participation in working groups and surveys. For each strategy, leaders provide information about the format, target stakeholder group and key information they want to disseminate or insight they want to gather. The cross-cutting structures tab is designed similarly but focuses on high leverage structures that can be employed to communicate about multiple pillars and/or reach multiple stakeholder groups. Strategies on this tab include community meetings, board meetings, our monthly administrator meeting and newsletters. Note that our plan is a ‘live’ document that our pillar leads update continuously and where they can link notes, agendas, protocols etc.

### **Strategy #2 - Tailoring our approach to needs of stakeholder groups**

As we developed our communication/engagement plan, we considered the unique assets of different stakeholders. When focused on informing and educating, we started by identifying the knowledge and skills that were most relevant to that group. When focused on engaging and soliciting feedback we started by considering what expertise and insights each group might be able to provide. Below are some examples of how we applied this thinking to engaging different stakeholder groups.

#### **Principals and Assistant Principals**

- *Inform/Educate*: Legislation requirements for four levels of the career ladder, nuts and bolts of preK3 enrollment and eligibility, change to CCR standard and impact on pathways.

- *Engage/Feedback:* We sought feedback on revisions to the GPCS mission/vision and goals for our 3-year plan as well as the Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

### **Parents and caregivers**

- *Inform/Educate:* Key details about the career ladder and how it will impact teachers at their school, nuts and bolts of preK enrollment, CCR pathway open houses at both high schools, apprenticeship program news article highlighting program.
- *Engage/Feedback:* We sought feedback on preK enrollment and programming along with elements of the comprehensive literacy and math plans.

### **Teachers**

- *Inform/Educate:* We leveraged A & S as an opportunity to prepare principals with the key messages needed to inform their staff. Topics include the career ladder, legislative requirements, PreK-3 enrollment, and the CCR standard. Principals were given time to practice their elevator speeches so they could easily utilize existing slides in order to educate their staff.
- *Engage/Feedback:* We hosted a number of focus groups to understand teachers' current experience with NBC as well as their perception of the career ladder. Teachers were included on pillar committees and workgroups. The teacher voices in shaping our career ladder salary scale was especially important. We also leveraged a teacher survey after school level presentations on the career ladder to understand how staff was feeling about the career ladder. Teacher voice has also been heavily represented throughout Pillar 3 initiatives as a part of planning and implementing identified strategies.

### **District Leaders**

- *Inform/Educate:* Hosted office hours with our pillar leads to answer questions and provide critical updates
- *Engage/Feedback:* Hosted monthly Blueprint Executive Committee Meetings to help pillar leads make connections across workstreams. This team provided feedback on revisions to our mission and vision. They also surfaced gaps and redundancies in works and have been the leading force in developing a three-year strategic plan centered around Blueprint initiatives.

### **Community Leaders**

- *Inform and Educate:* The Chief Academic Officer/Blueprint Coordinator presented Blueprint Initiatives and information to the local Rotary Club.
- *Engage/Feedback:* Several partner organizations participated in our monthly Blueprint Executive Committee to provide feedback and expertise. While others participated in our Career Ladder Advisory and/or Working Group or individual pillar steering committees. They helped think creatively around key strategies for implementation and how to leverage community resources.

Moving forward we plan to continue to leverage many of these targeted stakeholder engagement strategies that we explored this year. Specifically, we have found the use of monthly administrator and supervisor meetings as well as monthly Blueprint updates to the board to be essential touchpoints for disseminating key messages and collecting feedback as referenced in our System-Wide Blueprint Implementation section of this plan.

GCPS would also like to build on successful efforts to distribute a monthly newsletter to all stakeholders. This year we have leveraged our [march newsletter](#) to share information about

PreK enrollment and to clarify aspects of the career ladder, while our May newsletter will focus on the changes to the CCR standard.

Lastly, we aim to continue to invest in our diverse and representative working group structure specific to the career ladder in Pillar 2. This effort has been especially impactful in our work around career ladders where our intentional efforts to educate stakeholders, specifically teachers and union leaders, has yielded dividends in terms of building support for our Career Ladder model. We start each group sharing details from the legislation and level-setting around language.

### Strategy #3 - Leveraging our mission, vision and goals to effectively communicate

The GCPS Executive Blueprint Committee has worked on revising our existing mission and vision to strengthen alignment to the Blueprint as referenced in the Systemwide Blueprint Implementation section of this plan. The next step is to work with the elected board and community to finalize this work. GCPS has leveraged work in this area to communicate the ‘why’ behind the Blueprint. For example, GCPS shared the draft mission/vision along with the three big priorities of focus with the professional development workgroup (teachers, administrators, and support staff) in order to collaborate on how these priorities may impact systems and structures for professional learning as well as elevate specific topic areas of need to achieve the outcomes of the Blueprint. Moving forward, GCPS intends to use the approved mission/vision as our north star, while finalizing outcomes across each of the three big priorities in our strategic plan. These goals will also be helpful communication tools as we think about explaining what the work of implementing the Blueprint will entail. Ultimately, we hope to create a public dashboard for all stakeholders to view that connects to our Blueprint-aligned focus areas. Below is a subset of our draft goals that we intend to use as part of communication strategy.

## GARRETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### DRAFT 3 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO THE VITALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR COMMUNITY. THE GARRETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM MAINTAINS AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH STAFF, STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND THE COMMUNITY WORK COLLECTIVELY FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW. WHILE CELEBRATING THE CULTURE AND TRADITIONS OF GARRETT COUNTY, THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVELY CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE NEEDS OF THE WHOLE CHILD ARE NURTURED TO BECOME PRODUCTIVE, ENTHUSIASTIC, AND SUCCESSFUL MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.

 <b>STAFFING</b> <small>RECRUIT AND RETAIN HIGH QUALITY STAFF</small>	 <b>PARTNERSHIPS</b> <small>FOSTER COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY AND FAMILIES</small>	 <b>HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION</b> <small>ENSURE ALL STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO QUALITY INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT</small>
<p><b>GOALS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit and retain high quality and credentialed staff</li> <li>Create systems that support increased time for teachers to collaborate, participate in job-embedded PD, and work with students in small groups</li> <li>Incentives teachers to move and advance through the career ladder</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a phased roll out plan for the career ladder specific to use of time for teachers</li> <li>Redefine teacher leadership roles</li> <li>Establish and negotiate a salary scale aligned to career ladder</li> <li>Increase minimum salary</li> <li>Support staff in pursuing NBC</li> </ul>	<p><b>GOALS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use behavior health screeners to pinpoint needs</li> <li>Complete community schools needs assessments</li> <li>Strengthen partnership with local Universities</li> <li>Expand early childhood programs</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate with families</li> <li>Support private providers pursuing accreditation and provide technical assistance in becoming an eligible provider</li> <li>Adopt behavioral health screener and support implementation</li> <li>Develop teacher internship opportunities with local colleges</li> <li>Align supports and staffing at community schools with this model</li> </ul>	<p><b>GOALS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve teacher self-efficacy</li> <li>Develop staff on use of high quality materials and evidence based practices</li> <li>Increase students receiving industry certification credentials</li> <li>Provide supports for students using screener results</li> <li>Increase # of qualifying pre-K programs</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop MTSS framework</li> <li>Adopt and implement SEL program</li> <li>Finalize literacy and math plans</li> <li>Provide professional learning on high quality materials</li> <li>Provide professional learning on evidence based practices</li> <li>Continue building Apprenticeships</li> </ul>

We plan to host a series of stakeholder engagement opportunities such as focus groups or community meetings to share our updated draft GCPS mission/vision as well as three-year plan and solicit feedback. The mission/vision and plan have been developed in alignment with our GCPS Blueprint implementation plan.

#### **Strategy #4 - Use of consistent protocol to collect and respond to feedback**

Use of protocols and/or facilitation strategies to engage a variety of groups to capture and incorporate feedback into the plan's development and implementation was a priority for GCPS. Through this process GCPS adopted a consistent feedback protocol for each pillar lead to use. The protocol provides space to consolidate and synthesize the feedback received by different stakeholder groups in a simple centralized template. This protocol also used that same space to reflect on implications and next steps needed to activate the feedback received.

Below are examples from each pillar showcasing how our leaders have surfaced critical feedback and used that feedback to shape the implementation of the Blueprint in Garrett County.

#### **Pillar #1**

GCPS early childhood leaders utilized parent focus groups to understand community beliefs about early childhood programs, specifically Pre- K3 programming. During focus groups, GCPS collected feedback from caregivers about ways to strengthen our Pre-K programs and enrollment processes. Parents voiced concerns about transportation for their 3-year-olds as well as the length of the school day. They consistently articulated a preference for high quality programs close to their homes. As a result, GCPS is focusing on developing unique early childhood models in students' home districts when possible while also exploring ways to strengthen local private providers as detailed in Pillar 1 responses. Additionally, GCPS is providing information about financial tiers/eligibility as well as sample daily student schedules as part of the enrollment activities based on parent feedback.

#### **Pillar #2**

GCPS leveraged critical stakeholder feedback by establishing a work group and advisory committee focused on career ladder development to explore re-imagining teacher's roles, pay structures, and professional learning. These diverse committees included teachers, school leaders, parents, community members, and local agency representatives. We convened these groups monthly to look at artifacts from other districts, study the specific requirements of the legislation, and make recommendations for how a career ladder could be best implemented in GCPS.

Recently, both groups looked at sample salary scales from other districts and reflected on how various structures signaled different values (education, years of experience, and/or NBC etc.). After reflecting on the GCPS community's unique context and values, members of our committees recommended that GCPS adopt a balanced approach where years of service and education continue to be valued in addition to NBC. Members of our committees also recommended that we include a level 2B in our Career Ladder to honor teachers with Masters who might be good candidates for instructional leaders but are hesitant to pursue NBC.

Other strategies included focus groups with teachers pursuing their NBC as well as teachers who elected not to pursue their NBC, and an all-staff survey administered at school sites. Overall, these various strategies illuminated a need for clearer communication around the requirements of the Career Ladder and how it will impact teachers' day-to-day. As a result

GCPS spent a considerable amount of energy leveraging principals to build their staff's knowledge of the Career Ladder. Moreover, we wrote and distributed a district-wide newsletter with information about the four levels of the Career Ladder as well as Blueprint requirements. The Director of Human Resources also visited several schools personally to share information about the Blueprint and also offered a session for staff at a recent professional development day.

### **Pillar #3**

#### *Math*

Below are a few examples of how GCPS leveraged critical stakeholder feedback and applied it in our Blueprint implementation.

- We engaged the K-12 Math LEAD teacher team in providing feedback on the vision, mission, and goals in the GCPS Comprehensive Math Plan. This team surfaced the need to focus on strengthening relationships with families and community members. As a result, we added a goal to our plan that emphasized the importance of effectively communicating grade-level expectations in math out to the community. To achieve this goal, we added additional strategies to our plan related to providing resources and tips for families on how to support student's math learning at home.
- We engaged middle school math teachers (grades 6-8) in evaluating different options to replace the district's current universal screener. Based on feedback from the group, the decision was made to continue with the current screener.

#### *English Language Arts*

Below are a few examples of how GCPS leveraged critical stakeholder feedback and applied it in our Blueprint implementation.

- Early on, we collected and leveraged teacher feedback around LETRS training in order to shape the offering for GCPS teachers. Initially we only offered one path for teachers to receive LETRS training which created some barriers to access this critical Science of Reading training for some teachers. In response to teacher feedback on the barriers and obstacles related to the model of LETRS training, GCPS decided to offer greater flexibility by creating multiple pathways for staff to participate in LETRS training. As a result, we were able to reach more teachers and more widely disseminate research on the Science of Reading.
- We engaged our administrators in producing a sustainability plan for LETRS to ensure new staff are trained and that gaps are filled for staff who do not complete the entire training. Our administrators also advised on updates to our literacy walkthrough tool to ensure that the focus of observations shifted from fidelity of implementation to presence of Science of Reading aligned practices. Lastly, building administrators supported the development of a protocol for schools to use when rolling out the STEP approach to PLCs.
- LEAD teachers provided feedback on aspects of our Comprehensive Literacy Plan including our scope and sequence for our Professional Learning Plan as well as the design of our walkthrough tool. As a result of their feedback we included professional learning on writing and grammar and Science of Reading refreshers. Additionally, we revised the content for our shell courses to include the most critical content identified by teachers.

### *College and Career Pathways*

Below are a few examples of how we leveraged critical stakeholder feedback and applied it in our Blueprint implementation.

- We collected student and caregiver feedback on our BobCat academy. Initially, students were only able to enroll in very specific Bobcat academy pathways. However, after engaging with students and parents, GCPS leaders realized there was a need for greater flexibility in programming and scheduling. As a result of their feedback, we moved away from a one-size-fits-all approach which has enabled us to provide access to courses that yield college credit to a greater number of GCPS students.
- We also collected student and teacher feedback on our secondary master schedule changes.
  - Students surfaced that the current 84 minute instructional block was too long and that they needed additional flexibility in order to take advantage of all of the new opportunities provided by Blueprint. As a result of their feedback we landed on 65 minute blocks for the school year 2024-2025.
  - Teachers raised concerns about losing instructional time if semester classes were shortened from 85 to 65 minute classes. This was especially a concern in tested areas. In response to this feedback, GCPS made courses in all tested areas, including AP and MCAP, yearlong courses. We also “blocked” upper level CTE courses together (i.e. 3rd and 4th period combined) to create more time in a semester for CTE coursework. This longer block is a better fit than shorter yearlong classes given the nature of the shop work.

### **Pillar #4**

#### *Behavioral Screener/MTSS and Community Schools:*

Below are a few examples of how we leveraged critical stakeholder feedback and applied it in our Blueprint implementation.

- During the 2023-2024 school year, we launched two diverse groups of school staff to support the selection of a behavioral health screener. These groups had representation from all grade bands as well as different roles including teachers, counselors, social workers, and administrators. One group focused more on the behavioral health components and supports of MTSS while the other focused more on students’ academic needs. These groups started by reflecting on data as well as on practices focused on improving the MTSS framework. The groups identified two gaps in the area of behavioral health: 1) The lack of a universal Behavioral Health Screener 2) The need for a more efficient MTSS platform to review student data, document supports and effectiveness of interventions. In determining a recommendation for a platform that met GCPS’s needs, these groups considered the following co-constructed criteria, screeners must:
  - Be online and track whether students' academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs are being met.
  - Be administered at least three times a year to all students that will allow schools to track their progress towards goals and provide progress monitoring tools and dashboard.
  - Be designed to promote student self-efficacy by empowering them to self-reflect on things like their ability to keep working toward a goal, how much they are able to change their own skills, along with the social and learning climate of their school.

- Contain questions on a range of topics from emotion regulation, social awareness, self-efficacy, school belonging, school engagement, school climate, teacher-student relationships, school rigorous expectations, cultural awareness, diversity, and inclusion.
- Be a one-stop-shop which will allow schools to immediately access data tied to a student's academic performance, attendance, behavior and social/emotional.
- Include high-quality instructional resources and evidence-based interventions across academics, behavior and social-emotional learning.
- We leveraged a Community School steering committee at Yough Glades to inform plan development and implementation as well. This was launched by the Yough Glades community specialist and included school and central office staff, community partners, and parents from the Yough Glades community. As a result of feedback from the steering committee, we developed strategies to communicate with all stakeholders about what it meant to be a community school while also ensuring the community understood the goal of completing a comprehensive needs assessment. The committee through asset mapping identified sixty-two community assets ranging from businesses, doctor's offices, food supply options to parks and recreation options. The school continues to actively recruit partners, throughout the community, that can help support them with a shared vision.

### *Multilingual Learners*

Below are a few examples of how we leveraged critical stakeholder feedback and applied it in our Blueprint implementation.

- We conducted school-based meetings with administrators and ML teachers.
- We collected feedback from ML parents/guardians. They surfaced a few critical needs:
  - In our context, there are frequent weather-related disruptions to school schedules. Parents highlighted the need for notifications to be sent out by phone in their native language. As a result, GCPS now sends weather-related notifications out in English and Spanish to accommodate this request.
  - Parents also highlighted a need for assistive technology to help them access communications from their child's school. As a result, GCPS has begun holding meetings with parents of ML students to assist them in setting up assistive technology on their personal devices to read aloud school communication in their native language
- We met with a diverse group of staff including administrators and supervisors, the ML teacher and the ML Coordinator to gather feedback on our current staffing model for ML students. They discussed whether our model was meeting the needs of our ML students and if there were additional roles and responsibilities needed to strengthen our supports. All stakeholders felt that the responsibilities surfaced could be embedded into the ML Coordinator and/or the ML teacher position, as they both work closely with our parents/guardians and our ML data. After receiving their feedback, the ML teacher and ML Coordinator met with our Director of ML in order to adjust the job descriptions accordingly.

### *Special Education*

An example of how we leveraged critical stakeholder feedback and applied it in our Blueprint implementation is our monthly IEP Coordinator meetings. During those meetings, IEP Coordinators analyze data (e.g. students working on an alternate curriculum, or students taking an alternate state test) in order to identify a bright spot or pain point. This group then conducts a

root cause analysis and engages appropriate stakeholders in order to recommend a path forward. Additionally, based on the needs of students and teachers, the special education department has implemented increased Autism professional learning as well as Augmentative and Alternative Communication practices.

### **Pillar 5**

Below are a few examples of how we leveraged critical stakeholder feedback and applied it in our Blueprint implementation.

- Through the budget planning process, GCPS engaged in several feedback sessions with principals and district department leaders to gain a strong understanding of system needs as well as Blueprint priorities that would impact the budget. Furthermore, the elected board as representatives of the community provided feedback and insights respective to the Superintendent Budget Priorities, which are largely aligned with Blueprint implementation.

GCPS intends to measure the effectiveness of stakeholder involvement by:

- Evidence that Pillar Leaders are using the feedback protocol to synthesize feedback from stakeholders
- Evidence of bulletins, presentations, committee work, surveys, focus groups etc.
- Evidence that feedback has been integrated into plan development

## **23. Blueprint Funding and Resources**

Discuss the process the LEA uses to assess budgetary needs and make critical decisions about the **allocation of new resources and the reallocation of existing resources to implement its Blueprint Implementation Plan**. Include estimated funding allocations by pillar and program. Provide specific examples and the rationale for the allocation and reallocation of resources.

Considerations:

- Budgeting annually and over multiple years
- Funds following students to their schools (Education Article § 5-234)
- Targeted funds (e.g., Transitional Supplemental Instruction Aid, Concentration of Poverty grants, State Aid Funding for CCR, etc.)

**Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome to ensure resources are aligned to meeting student needs at the school level.**

The Blueprint's goal is to transform public education to "improve the quality and equity of Maryland's education system so that all Maryland students, regardless of where they live, household income, race, ethnicity, gender, language spoken at home, disabilities, and any other unique characteristic, can leave high school globally competitive and prepared for success in postsecondary education, work, and life" (Accountability and Implementation Board, 2022, p.11). Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) recognizes the importance of the Blueprint initiatives and is committed to implementing them as required by law to create improved outcomes for all of our students.

The annual budget process for GCPS is a collaborative approach across all departments. It includes assessment of current departmental budgets, changes in enrollment, and budgetary pressures including increasing healthcare costs, rising fuel and transportation costs, inflationary increases related to supplies & materials, as well as increased cost for operations and maintenance. In developing the FY 2025 budget GCPS collaborated with principals as well as directors and administrators to determine school and system needs as we work collectively to meet student's needs and reach the rigorous outcomes of the Blueprint.

The Superintendent's FY 25 proposed budget was developed in conjunction with system work focused on closely aligning the mission/vision of the school system with Blueprint outcomes. The priorities set forth in the Superintendent's FY 2025 budget are focused on expanding and enhancing academic opportunities for students in the following areas: early childhood education, CCR dual enrollment/AP/CTE opportunities, science and math high quality instructional materials, more diverse art opportunities including dance, and increased services for supplemental instruction. As such, GCPS will continue to prioritize universal pre-K opportunities for all four-year-old students while also providing three-year-old opportunities.

Additionally, through the unique partnership between GCPS, Garrett College, and the county government, GCPS will provide dual enrollment opportunities to students without cost during the regular school year. This provides our students with increased access to higher level course work with very few limitations such as the course work must be within the 180-day school calendar year and GCPS will not pay for a student to retake a failed course. All these areas align with Blueprint requirements and outcomes. Another priority in the FY 2025 budget is a focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of our students. GCPS is addressing that area by enhancing our coordinated student services plan, expanding community schools, and establishing an alternative classroom for grades 5-12.

Under the guidance of our new Superintendent, GCPS developed and implemented [staffing guidelines](#) to inform the budget process and meet the unique needs of our students, schools, and communities. These guidelines offer a framework that provides a base layer of staffing for all schools. The next phase of work involves analyzing minimum school funding amounts in order to layer on additional supports in order to meet the diverse needs of our students based on the demographics of schools as necessary.

The GCPS proposed FY 2025 budget was formulated upon retaining current staff and services despite the challenges of reductions in federal and state funding. We have reallocated funding for salaries and instructional materials in order to do this while also elevating the Blueprint priorities stated above. To decrease system level costs and address the resource reallocation necessary to address budget constraints, GCPS has been exploring different staffing and scheduling models that create efficiencies. For example, next year in the southern end of our district, we are moving to a PK-6 and 7-12 grade band model. Broadford Elementary will be absorbing all southern end sixth graders as we launch the sixth grade academy. While Southern High School will serve grades 7 through 12 on the southern end of the county moving forward. Making this change will allow GCPS to renovate the current Southern Middle School into a state-of-the-art facility for Broad Ford Elementary students PreK-6. Once this renovation is complete, Broad Ford Elementary students will move to their new school site and the current Broad Ford Elementary school will be demolished. This reduces the number of schools in Garrett county from 12 to 11. To date this consolidation has resulted in a reduction of nine positions. GCPS is also implementing a campus model on the northern end of the county for Northern Middle School and Northern High School. Starting in the school year 2023-2024, the northern campus was led by one principal and two assistant principals, which allowed for innovative ideas around the use of staff and a decrease in administrative staff. During the 2023-

2024 school year, GCPS worked with a variety of stakeholder groups to adopt a new secondary schedule for all 6th-12th graders that would allow greater flexibility and efficiencies in scheduling and the use of staff moving forward. We have been exploring additional efficiencies by seeking teacher candidates at the secondary level who have dual certifications whenever possible. This allows greater flexibility when scheduling. Finally, GCPS closed the central office building at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year in Oakland and reallocated staff to Dennett Road Educational Complex and Northern Middle School thereby further reducing the school system footprint and expenses to address budgetary challenges.

Additionally, as GCPS plans towards future budget years, the instructional leadership team created a five year plan that maps out funding estimates for [high quality instructional materials](#). Since this is a considerable expense in the budget, mapping the cost out over five years has ensured a more predictable and balanced approach. GCPS has also offered a multi-year negotiated agreement that will enable the school system to meet the minimum teacher salary requirement by FY27 as prescribed in the Blueprint. This bodes well for attracting and retaining high quality teachers and administrators for GCPS in the coming years. GCPS feels that this work has positioned the system well to begin the significant lift of fully aligning to the criteria set by the Blueprint of minimum school funding.

The Blueprint’s funding directive follows a weighted student formula which is based on total student enrollment and enrollment of certain student groups. Under weighted student funding, dollars are allocated directly to schools based on the number of students enrolled and the specific needs of those students. The chart below illustrates the GCPS funding for FY 2025.

<b>SUMMARY OF BLUEPRINT PROGRAM EXPENDITURES</b>			
	<b>STATE SHARE</b>	<b>LOCAL SHARE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Expenditures Budgeted at School Level</b>			
Foundation (Base)	\$ 11,272,007	\$ 18,573,463	\$ 29,845,470
College & Career Ready (CCR)	\$ 33,143	\$ 51,636	\$ 84,779
Compensatory Education	\$ 5,427,362	\$ 8,142,577	\$ 13,569,939
English Learners	\$ 25,102	\$ 37,653	\$ 62,755
Special Education	\$ 1,315,591	\$ 1,973,732	\$ 3,289,323
Transitional Supplemental Instruction	\$ 83,770	\$ 160,526	\$ 244,296
Prekindergarten	\$ 775,009	\$ 1,635,206	\$ 2,410,215
Career Ladder for Educators (NBC Teacher Salary)	\$ 26,663	\$ 41,637	\$ 68,300
Concentration of Poverty (restricted)	\$ 1,380,645	\$ 39,911	\$ 1,420,556
<b>TOTAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM EXPENDITUR</b>	<b>\$ 20,339,292</b>	<b>\$ 30,656,341</b>	<b>\$ 50,995,633</b>

Garrett County Public Schools has allocated resources to schools based on student/teacher ratios as evidenced by the staffing guidelines discussed earlier. Funding for supplies and materials were also allocated based on student enrollment. This has laid a strong foundation as our system explores layering on funding and support through a weighted student funding approach. Our goals are to increase equity in funding, empower school leaders, and support system requirements to better align with the Blueprint moving forward.

The Blueprint requires that 75% of certain funding programs follow the students directly to schools. In determining how to meet the 75% funding requirement, GCPS faces several challenges. First, tying expenses to a specific program is a monumental accounting task. Since GCPS has a small finance department this is a significant challenge. It is also a challenge to

budget based on Blueprint pillars. Due to cross-departmental collaboration and sharing of resources, assigning costs to a single pillar is difficult. While some programs may be easier to assign to a particular pillar, such as Pre-K in Pillar One, High Quality & Diverse Teachers and Leaders in Pillar II, and College & Career Readiness in Pillar III, there is still work to do to realign our budget with Blueprint requirements. With all that said, a preliminary analysis conducted when developing the FY24 budget demonstrated that 80% of funding was spent at the school level. A deeper analysis over the next year will be needed to ensure distribution across schools meets the minimum funding level of 75% at each school.

GCPS is providing the following year over year revenue projections by Blueprint funding programs with the following assumptions as we plan forward:

- The funding projections included in this table reflect only the Blueprint funding programs; they do not include federal appropriations, use of fund balance, nor GCPS' other revenue sources.
- The projected years are for informational purposes only based on trend data and the phased-in funding included in the Education Article; they do not reflect projections that have been through an approval process.
- GCPS assumes a slight decline rate in enrollment through FY 2027; enrollments include only students eligible for funding.
- The projected revenue by Blueprint program is the total anticipated funding based upon the per-pupil allocations included in the Education Article.

<b>SUMMARY OF BLUEPRINT PROGRAM EXPENDITURES</b>			
<b>REVENUE SOURCE</b>	<b>FY2025 Revenue Estimates</b>	<b>FY2026 Revenue Estimates</b>	<b>FY2027 Revenue Estimates</b>
Foundation (Base)	\$ 29,845,470	\$ 29,999,723	\$ 31,243,224
Blueprint Transition Grant	\$ 1,020,986	\$ 780,754	\$ 600,580
College & Career Ready (CCR)	\$ 84,781	\$ 75,943	\$ 76,209
Compensatory Education	\$ 13,569,939	\$ 14,170,494	\$ 14,069,302
English Learners	\$ 62,755	\$ 63,287	\$ 64,036
Special Education	\$ 3,289,323	\$ 3,326,050	\$ 3,815,000
Transitional Supplemental Instruction	\$ 244,296	\$ 151,300	\$ -
Prekindergarten	\$ 2,410,215	\$ 2,185,423	\$ 2,355,298
Career Ladder for Educators (NBC Teacher Salary)	\$ 68,300	\$ 200,000	\$ 240,000
<b>TOTAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM EXPENDITUR</b>	<b>\$ 50,596,065</b>	<b>\$ 50,952,974</b>	<b>\$ 52,463,649</b>

With the recent guidance provided by MSDE and the AIB, the next step for GCPS is to embark on modeling and identifying the baseline as it relates to minimum school funding throughout the county. The allowable expenses and initial guidelines provided will give GCPS a starting place to analyze how close the system is to the 75% minimum funding requirement at each school, which will also provide essential information for year-over-year budgeting and resource reallocation strategies. As GCPS gains a more complete understanding of the requirements, we will refine our model to ensure adequate progress to reach minimum school funding requirements.

GCPS will continue the strategies detailed above while adjusting as necessary to ensure progress towards meeting the minimum school funding requirement. Additional strategies may include:

- Analyzing operational staffing guidelines and considering student and program needs.
- Analyzing baseline data for FY25 to determine areas of growth, which will guide next steps in meeting minimum school funding requirements. This data will be available through Power School early in the FY26 budget development process.
- Providing principals with the opportunity to work with their school improvement teams to identify action steps to support school needs if adjustments are required to meet minimum school funding.

GCPS has made progress in meeting Blueprint guidance in several targeted funding programs as evidenced below.

#### College and Career Ready (CCR)

The primary use of the per-pupil CCR funding is the payment of tuition and books for dual enrollment. GCPS students benefit further since there is no cap on the number of courses a student may enroll in at Garrett College as long as they are taking the course during the 180 day school calendar year and they are not repeating the course. Additionally, the school system has a unique partnership with the county government and Garrett College which allows students to attend classes without cost to the student. GCPS is also paying for AP exams for courses for which students are enrolled as well as industry exams for career and technical programs using these funds.

#### Transitional Supplemental Instruction (TSI)

TSI funding is designed to ensure that kindergarten through third grade struggling learners receive the supplemental instruction they need to be successful in school and throughout their lives. GCPS has prioritized our TSI funding to provide intervention/tutoring to struggling learners in grades K-3 in our elementary schools. We will continue to allocate this funding specifically for this purpose as long as it is available.

#### Pre-Kindergarten

GCPS continues to prioritize early childhood education through its high quality pre-k 4 program. We are extremely proud of our universal Pre-k program that is offered to all four-year-olds in our school system. Our county government is committed to this program as well and covers all additional costs above our state funding which allows us to offer such a high level of service to our Pre-k 4 students. GCPS continues to be committed to offering this excellent early education program to children in the future.

#### Career Ladders for Educators

The Blueprint is focused on increasing the number and quality of teachers in order to improve the academic achievement for all students, especially those who have been historically underserved. One requirement is the development of career ladders which include enhancements designed to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. GCPS is currently collaboratively working with various groups to develop career ladders for our teachers. In addition to the salary enhancements outlined in the Blueprint, GCPS is incorporating a local enhancement on Level 2 of the career ladder specifically for teacher leaders in a content specialist role. This enhancement is similar to the Blueprint enhancement for lead teachers on Level 4 of the career ladder but does not require the NBC. We believe this enhancement will provide an opportunity for non-NBC teachers to be recognized for their expertise in their given

field. This is in direct alignment with recommendations from teachers & leaders serving on the career ladder workgroup and advisory team.

### Community Schools

In FY 2024, Yough Glades (YG) Elementary School was identified as a community school due to the high level of economically disadvantaged students it served. As a result, GCPS received a Concentration of Poverty Grant in the amount of \$272,823 to transform it into a Community School. That initial grant was used to fund a Community School Specialist and to provide a licensed healthcare provider onsite. YG is in the process of finalizing its needs assessment and moving toward its implementation plan in FY 2025. For the FY2025 school year, four additional schools in Garrett County are projected to be community schools. As a result, the FY 2025 Preliminary State Aid to GCPS increased to \$1,380,645. The funds are preliminarily earmarked for Yough Glades' per pupil grant and the personnel grants for Friendsville, Grantsville, Broad Ford, and Crellin elementary schools. The goal for all our community schools is to enhance our students' education, encourage parent participation and have a positive impact on our communities. Although the Community School funds are received at the district level, 100% of the funding is allocated to the school level to cover costs associated with community school specialists, healthcare practitioners, and wraparound services. GCPS is excited to be able to address the needs of our students and communities through this funding program.

In conclusion, as stated earlier, GCPS recognizes the importance of the Blueprint initiatives and is committed to implementing them as required by law to create improved outcomes for all of our students. While it is never easy to anticipate budgets over multiple years due to funding changes at the federal, state, and local levels, GCPS is committed to responsibly managing the available resources to ensure the best education for our students. While there are challenges ahead, GCPS is well positioned to meet the needs of our students through that implementation and is committed to following minimum school funding as detailed by law.