

Calvert County Public Schools – Blueprint Implementation Plan - Systemwide Response

Introduction

Calvert County Public Schools is pleased to provide our Blueprint Systemwide Response as part one of our 2024 Blueprint Implementation Plan. This response is intended to provide the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) and Calvert’s broader community with information on how our current work aligns with and leverages the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future to achieve our goals and ensure that all students are prepared for success in college and career.

Our response is organized in three parts. Part 1 provides an update on our strategic planning process, which provides context for our response. Part 2 provides an integrated response that addresses each of the required points, focusing on how our work is aligned with and leverages the Blueprint, how we are making systemic changes, and key challenges to Blueprint implementation. Part 3 summarizes our communication efforts and progress monitoring.

Part 1. Strategic Plan Update

Calvert County is in the final stages of developing its 2024 Strategic Plan, which will replace our 2017 Strategic Plan. Engaging in strategic planning within the context of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future (The Blueprint) has provided an opportunity to align district goals and priorities to Blueprint outcomes and consider how we will utilize the policy instruments provided by the Blueprint. How Blueprint strategies and expected outcomes intersect with current (and anticipated) district programming is provided throughout. We anticipate that the 2024 Strategic Plan will address priorities focused on transforming our education system so that all students are college and career ready and excelling in academics, athletics, and the arts.

CCPS began a process in the fall to update our Strategic Plan, which will allow us to create a shared vision that defines where our schools are headed and what our priorities should be. We sought out bids from a consulting firm and through that partnership, received a high level of input from various stakeholders, including students, teachers, school staff, parents, and community members.

In order to understand the views of CCPS, our partner in the strategic planning process held stakeholder focus groups, where participants were asked their thoughts regarding community values, district strengths and challenges, significant issues for the District to address in the next three to five years, and their vision for the future of our schools aligned with Blueprint priorities. All CCPS stakeholders also had the opportunity to provide input through community forums and a district-wide survey.

CCPS formed a Strategic Planning committee, consisting of various school district staff as well as Calvert County Board of Education members to develop a draft plan with the stakeholder data collected that aligns with our core values and holds the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future at its core. The final plan will be presented to the Calvert County Board of Education at a future meeting for adoption in the upcoming school year.

Part 2. Systemwide Response: Priorities, Systemic Changes, and Challenges

Since 2017, Calvert County has taken action to address the priorities in our 2017 strategic plan, which included a focus on: (1) equity; (2) student outcomes; (3) improving climate and culture; (4) workforce; and (5) community engagement. Our priorities and related district programming are now more focused and will be described in our 2024 Strategic Plan. With this as context, we outline our current district priorities and alignment with Blueprint Pillars and strategies, in Display 1.

Our response is organized by each priority. Within each priority, we: (1) briefly describe departmental and district-wide initiatives intended to achieve our goals and how these initiatives are aligned with the Blueprint; (2) describe key **systemic changes** that we feel are foundational to our work; and (3) highlight key **challenges** to Blueprint implementation and how we anticipate addressing these challenges so that we can fully implement the Blueprint and achieve district goals.

Display 1. District Priorities, Systemic Changes, and Challenges

	Systemic Change	Challenge	Alignment
Priority #1: Maintaining and continually improving core instruction, including the use of high-quality instructional materials.	Yes		Pillar 1 and 3
Priority #2: Continuing to build strong leaders and teachers, including diversifying, and ensuring a high-quality workforce.	Yes		Pillar 2
Challenge: Strategically and meaningfully changing the structure of the school day to leverage the career ladder		Yes	Pillar 2 and 3
Priority #3: Developing a robust multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) focusing on student-specific supports.			Pillar 3 and 4
Challenge: Shifting mindsets and providing teachers with skills and resources to meet all students’ needs.		Yes	All
Priority #4: Expanding and ensuring students’ access to high quality pre-k education.	Yes		Pillar 1
Priority #5: Continuing and expanding college and career pathways.			Pillar 3
Challenge: Financial Challenges		Yes	All

Priority #1: Maintaining and continually improving core instruction, including the use of high-quality instructional materials.

CCPS leadership has been working on maintaining and improving Tier 1 universal instruction, so that all students have access to and are provided high-quality instruction. Three initiatives are described here, which align with Blueprint strategies and are intended to ensure that students attain CCR standards by 10th grade and are prepared to engage in a successful pathway.

Initiatives and Systemic Changes

Tier 1 Universal Instruction
High Quality Instructional Materials
Equity and Inclusion

Systemic Change: Science of Reading

Tier 1 Universal Instruction. Led by the Department of Instruction, we are focused on shared understanding and consistent delivery of strong tier-one universal instruction; this is the heart of our work Calvert County Public Schools. Embedded in professional learning and the school improvement process the following components have been and continue to be emphasized with administrators and staff: lesson components, Culturally Responsive Instruction, Ready for Rigor Framework, Academic Mindsets, Research-based learning strategies, scaffolding and differentiation, Universal Design for Learning, and Specially Designed Instruction.

HQIM. The Department of Instruction continues to review instructional materials to align with the standard set by MSDE for High-Quality Instructional Materials. The following core content areas have instructional materials that meet the identified standard through EdReports: K – 12 mathematics. As MSDE refines the process for identifying High-Quality Instructional Materials, CCPS will review the requirements against our current materials.

Equity and Inclusion. Working with the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, CCPS continues to support our schools in programming that supports including students in the general education setting. Professional learning focuses on meeting the needs of all students in the general education setting, providing support and interventions to those who need it, and collaborative planning between the general and special education teachers.

Systemic Change: Science of Reading

As part of our work to improve Tier 1 instruction and ensure the use of HQIM, the Science of Reading represents systemic change that will have lasting impact. CCPS provides comprehensive and effective Science of Reading professional learning (LETRS, 3rd edition) for all K-3 general education teachers and all K-5 special education, ESOL, and Title I teachers. At least one administrator from each elementary school and five administrators from central office are participating in LETRS for Administrators professional learning. All PreK teachers who do not hold a LETRS for Early Childhood Educators certification are currently participating in the CCPS LETRS for Early Childhood Educators professional learning cohort. It is imperative that educators understand the Science of Reading research to implement best practices that support all students in acquiring critical literacy skills. In addition, CCPS utilized Maryland Leads grant funding to implement High-Quality Instructional Materials for reading foundational skills standards in grades 2 and 3. CCPS expanded the use of HQIM the following year to include grades 1, 4, and 5.

In school 2022-2023, 284 teachers completed LETRS Year 1. Currently CCPS has 284 total participants; 233 teachers are participating in LETRS Volume 2, and 51 teachers are participating in LETRS Volume 1. CCPS had a 100% completion rate for teachers in Year 1 of the LETRS professional learning course and is on track for 100% completion in Year 2. Teachers have noted the benefits of receiving this training whether it was new learning or an enhancement to what they already knew. A third-grade teacher who is new to CCPS stated, “I am loving this training. It is so helpful when implementing our reading lessons because I now know how to teach phonics!” A first-grade teacher shared, “LETRS has really been amazing and eye-opening. I didn’t know what I didn’t know!” One special educator noted how much she has benefited from the professional learning: “I wish I could go back to my previous students and teach them now that I know all of this!”

The use of high-quality instructional materials has benefited CCPS students who now have a consistent lesson plan structure and materials from year to year. Over the last three years, CCPS has reduced the number of students identified as being at-risk for reading difficulties:

Percent of Students At-Risk of Reading Difficulties

Grade	2001-02			2002-03			2003-04		
	Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter	Spring
K	28.7	11.8	7.7	26.6	13.2	7.2	28.2	6.3	
1	45.8	28.7	19.3	28.8	17.2	12.9	8.2	2.8	
2	54.3	38.2	27.3	42.4	25.9	15.6	22.7	10.3	
3	37.9	23.4	15.9	28.1	17.4	13.5	26.5	12.4	

Priority #2: Continuing to build strong leaders and teachers, including diversifying and ensuring a high-quality workforce.

CCPS is committed to building and maintaining a high-quality and diverse teacher and leader workforce. Over recent years, we have accomplished an increase in hiring minority candidates, instituted Employee Resource Groups with a specific focus on minority teaching staff, and revised professional development for new administrators to include alignment with the Blueprint. Over the coming year, CCPS will further define teacher leadership to align with the career ladder specifications and redesigned professional development.

The following initiatives, all connected to Blueprint goals and outcomes, are presented as systemic changes – the “how” we are making changes to support Blueprint implementation. We also share a key Challenge that we are facing and describe strategies that we are taking to address this challenge.

<p style="text-align: center;">Systemic Changes and Challenges</p> <p>Systemic Changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Next Level Leadership• National Board Certification• Grow Your Own Program <p>Challenge: Changing the structure of the school day to leverage the career ladder.</p>
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Systemic Change: Next Level Leadership Academy

CCPS staff realized that we were not developing a pipeline for current assistant principals and other teacher leaders to ensure the readiness of our teacher leaders to take their next career leadership steps and for assistant principals to fulfill the role of principal. In 2022, we partnered with the Region 4 Comprehensive Center and launched a ten-month, accelerated professional learning experience designed to build strong leaders aligned with the Blueprint’s Career Ladder Level 3 positions in a grow your own model.

Systemic Change: National Board Teacher Certification Support

CCPS has developed annual cohorts and support for NBC certification over the last two years. We have initiated recruitment strategies that aim to not only increase the number of NBC teachers in Calvert County, but also aim to increase to match our student population with the diversity of our NBC candidates and ultimately those who achieve NBC. Throughout the course of the school year, the National Board Certification Coordinator conducts two information sessions for recruiting, and support sessions led by National Board Facilitators; veteran NBC teachers who can work individually and in small groups with teachers and support them on their journey. As a result of these efforts, CCPs has increased our total number of NBC teachers from 13 in 2022 to 38 in 2024.

Systemic Change: Grow Your Own Program

Our district has partnered with Bowie State University to provide scholarship money to current CCPS instructional assistants who desire to become teachers. The program allows employees to benefit from working full time and still being able to pursue their teacher degree. Candidates can take coursework toward a dual certification in Early Childhood Education and Special Education, while also completing their student practicum experience at their school of employment, to avoid creating a hardship for the staff member.

Challenge: Strategically and meaningfully changing the schedule and structure of the school day to leverage the career ladder.

Description and rationale.The Blueprint calls upon districts to develop a career ladder that supports the re-organization of schools, so that educators may engage in professional learning and peer collaboration and provide student-specific support to all students. The re-organization incorporates new roles for leaders and teachers, and a new system of professional development. The challenge is how to design this system, given multiple challenges (e.g., fiscal concerns, shifting mindsets that value traditional school structures and ways of working). However, figuring out a solution to this problem of practice—how can we best organize our schools to leverage the career ladder—must be addressed if we are to accomplish our ambitious district goals, as well as Blueprint outcomes. Pragmatically, addressing this challenge involves multiple issues such as: instructional time requirements; course requirements; collective bargaining agreements, staffing and human resource capacity and availability. A technical solution to this challenge is not likely. As a result, we plan to use internal expertise and external research to explore and then design options for strategically changing the structure of the school day.

Strategies to address this challenge.

1. During our February 2024 Administrator and Supervisor professional development session, we invited school leaders to develop exploratory option (e.g., models and examples of the school schedule and teacher and leadership roles) that they may explore or begin to implement (based on resources) during the 2024-25 school year. As school leaders design options that they may begin to use in their schools, we will document and learn from their work.
2. Paralleling the school-level exploration of options, the Pillar 2 steering committee team will convene a working group to research and explore options for school schedules, teacher and leadership roles, and professional development. This work will be informed by the Career Ladder specifications and aligned Blueprint initiatives (which involve leadership from the Department of Instruction, Department of Special Education, and Department of Student Services).
3. Executive leadership will continue to monitor budget constraints linked to staffing and how potential changes to class size could impact our ability to meaningfully implement intended strategies in the upcoming year.

How we will monitor progress in addressing this challenge.

This challenge is a key component of Pillar 2. The challenge directly impacts our efforts to improve core and tiered instruction for all students and to continue to expand college and career pathways. As this work will occur over multiple years, we share several short-term questions and measures that we will use to monitor progress. These questions and measures are **in addition to** the outcomes in Pillar 2 related to career ladder implementation and expanding national board certification, that we will progress monitor as part of our implementation work.

- To what extent do principals and schools design and explore teaming and scheduling options?
 - The number of schools and school leaders that develop exploratory options (for collaboration, teacher leadership, or student-support) that are implemented in the 2024-25 SY.
- The development of exploratory options (e.g., models and examples of the school schedule and teacher and leadership roles); to be developed by a Pillar Two work group during the 2024-25 SY.

Priority #3: Developing a robust multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) focusing on student-specific supports.

CCPS leadership, including the Department of Instruction, Special Education, and Department of Student Services, are working collaboratively to improve how students are supported.

MTSS. The development of an integrated Multi-Tiered System of Support is a key feature of this work, which includes academic and non-academic supports for students for students in grades K through 10, and the development of a Support Pathway for students not meeting CCR standards by 10th Grade.

Integration of SEL and Tier 1 Instruction. Several strategies that we have implemented in recent years include: (1) school implementation of inclusive practices to include collaborative planning opportunities for teachers; (2) identification of an SEL screener; and (3) improving our students support team (SST) process by ensuring collaboration among SST members. However, specific strategies focused on recruiting and retaining mental health professionals (i.e., school psychologist and school social workers) have been unsuccessful. CCPS has several vacancies that limit the available supports for students, specifically in providing MTSS. Available staff continue to work with school teams to develop strong Tier 1 instructional practices, and Tier 1 equitable and inclusive environments. District leadership is prioritizing strategic training that helps school teams make intentional connections between Tier 1 Academics, Behavior, and Social-Emotional supports. Our goal is that all students will increase their sense of belonging and develop positive academic mindsets.

Initiatives and Systemic Changes
<p>MTSS Integration of SEL and Tier 1 Instruction Restorative Practices</p> <p>Challenge: Shifting Mindsets and providing teachers with skills and resources.</p>

Restorative Practices. Additionally, CCPS has a goal to have all staff trained in Restorative Practices (RP) by 2026 which will include ongoing support and consultation to schools. This will include developing a system-wide Restorative Practices plan that provides schools with guidance and recommendations on consistent implementation of RP. Further MTSS success goals include:

- Prioritizing culturally responsive instructional practices.
- Supporting schools in their development of Behavioral Health Teams and use of research based, and data driven practices to increase the capacity of staff to respond to social, emotional, and behavioral concerns in a way that is culturally responsive, and addresses students’ unique learning needs.

Challenge: Shifting Mindsets and providing teachers with skills and resources to meet all students’ needs.

Description and rationale. A shift in mindsets is required if leaders and teachers are going to be able to fully implement key strategies in the Blueprint, specifically around how we provide effective supports and interventions for all students in grades K through 10, and in the Support Pathway for students not meeting the CCR standard by grade 10. Over the past decade, our district has progressively implemented heterogeneous classrooms, including the use of natural proportions to guide classroom composition. Implementing this approach requires that all teachers have the requisite pedagogical skills, that research-based interventions are available and appropriately used, and that schools have processes in place to support classroom teachers and students. We have learned that ongoing professional learning is essential to ensure that teachers have the full complement of skills and knowledge of interventions to support all students in classrooms. And in some cases, students are provided Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions outside of the general education classroom, which results in marginalized populations of students not having access to rigorous and culturally responsive instruction and educators may unconsciously reinforce biases that certain groups of students do not belong in certain courses or accelerated pathways. Our goal is to ensure that all students are included and have a sense of belonging in general education settings; and to ensure that educators have the skills and mindset to ensure high-quality education for all students.

Strategies to address this challenge.

The Departments of Student Services and Special Education are working together to improve behavioral and academic support, including the development of an integrated MTSS, in collaboration with the Department of Instruction leadership and Supervisors. Under the umbrella of MTSS, we are using multiple strategies to tackle the challenge of shifting mindsets, by designing and implementing instructional programming that attends to shifts in mindsets and practice, including training, professional development, and instructional support and feedback.

- 1. Behavior and Social-Emotional Learning.** Many educators require additional training in supporting students who have lagging skills that may result in challenging behaviors and emotional dysregulation. This plan and related actions include a focus on “shifting the lens” of staff by using Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS). District trainers will provide CPS training and ongoing consultation in implementing the CPS model with school teams. Additionally, there will be a focus on training behavioral health team members and special education staff on the TEACCH Autism Program, a research-based practices to support students with autism and other educational disabilities in the least restrictive environment.
- 2. Instruction.** Building upon cross-department training and professional development provided during the 2023-24, special education and instructional supervisors and specialists (district staff) will continue to provide training and support to teachers, focused on incorporating scaffolding and differentiation into Tier 1 instruction (e.g., to ensure equitable and inclusive learning environments). This strategy works to shift mindsets by giving teachers the skills needed to support all learners, and to clarify effective use of the Student Services Team and available academic and non-academic support.
- 3. The Science of Reading initiative,** as described earlier, provides teachers with research-based practices and has resulted in a significant reduction in the percentage of students at-risk for reading difficulties, annually and during each school year. This initiative shifts mindsets by demonstrating that all students can succeed, when given appropriate support.
- 4. Project-Based Learning.** Over two years, CCPS has implemented a pilot Project-Based Learning (PBL) initiative, to reimagine the use of time, the content of instruction, and to move away from the industrial model of public education. The PBL program has trained over 50 educators and impacted thousands of students. We have evidence that teachers and students have willingly embraced a shift in mindset from traditional theoretical learning to taking informed action through PBL. Due to budget constraints, the program will likely end at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 school year. Here, we see that the challenge of

shifting mindset may not be about leaders or teachers; rather, we need to confront systemic inertia and the sometimes-unwitting desire to maintain the status quo. This dynamic is exacerbated during times of tightening budgets, when the competing interest for innovation is ensuring continued funding for existing programming. Our strategy for the coming year, based on our experience with PBL and the partial implementation of similar initiatives in the past, is to strategically envision an alternative to traditional instructional practice, and what this means with respect to budgets, staffing and roles, professional development and the “traditional” school day.

How we will monitor progress in addressing this challenge. Shifting mindsets is a system-wide challenge that bridges multiple pillars, multiple grade spans, and leaders and teachers. Measuring changes in mindsets and assessing whether teachers increase their capacity to meet all students’ needs in core Tier 1 classrooms/instruction is not simple. The following are several implementation questions and measures that the Steering Committee and Pillar 5 will use to monitor progress:

- To what extent is the CPS process used in schools?
 - Tracking of CPS training participation and use, including outcomes of use.
- To what extent are Student Service Teams used effectively and as intended?
 - Provision of systemwide expectations and training [# of teachers participating in training].
 - Inclusion of teachers in the process at the school-level.
 - Reduction in number of students referred to SST.
- To what extent do classrooms/teachers increase their use of differentiated instruction and scaffolded strategies?
 - Formal implementation and training on MTSS inclusive of Instruction, Special Education, Student Support, and English Learners [# of teachers participating in training].
 - School-level walkthrough data.
- Does collaboration and teaming among Core and Special Educators regarding implementation and use of tiered interventions and supports (a) increase and (b) lead to targeted support to students in core classrooms?
 - Perceived effectiveness of collaboration and co-planning [staff survey]
 - Improved academic growth among target population.

Priority #4: Expanding and ensuring students’ access to high quality pre-k education.

CCPS is actively working to accomplish Blueprint milestones and goals so that all students are ready to learn when entering kindergarten. Our work over the past few years, combined with the Blueprint’s emphasis on expanding pre-k to 3- and 4-year-olds, represents systemic changes to our approach to public education.

Shift to full day Pre-K. During the FY24 school year, CCPS moved all half-day 4-year-old prekindergarten programs to full day. Partnering with Head Start and one private provider supports our efforts in ensuring access to full day prekindergarten to four-year olds that meet income eligibility requirements of Tier 1, IEP services, or English Language Learner. This work has not been without challenges. Feedback from principals and our monitoring of the expansion shows that additional space is needed, and that some pre-K teachers are struggling to adapt to the shift in student population (and related needs, academically and behaviorally). Our work in the coming year will be to provide additional support to Pre-K teachers, through training and developing shared expectations for students’ pre-K experience. We are addressing this challenge by using a high-quality curriculum and reinforcing the importance of an inclusive learning environment.

Initiatives and Systemic Changes

Shift to full day Pre-K
Pre-K curriculum and professional learning

Systemic Change: Pre-K Expansion and CDA Certification

Pre-K Curriculum and Professional Learning. To ensure high-quality prekindergarten programming, CCPS provides professional learning throughout the school year to teachers and paraprofessionals in understanding curriculum, playful learning, planning and delivery of strong tier 1 universal instruction, and creating equitable and inclusive learning environments. All private providers and Head Start partners are invited to all professional learning opportunities. During the FY24 school year, collaborative planning time was provided for the general and special education teachers to meet once a month.

Systemic Change: Pre-K Expansion and CDA Certification

Moving into the FY25 school year, the focus will be to maintain our current four-year old program while supporting Head Start in providing two full-day three-year old prekindergarten classrooms as well as supporting private providers in meeting the eligibility requirements for partnering with the school system. Expanding pre-K to more students requires building the capacity (numbers and quality) of educators.

Expanding CDA certification is crucial and is a specific Blueprint Milestone. In CCPS, our Prekindergarten Program Specialist supports staff in obtaining their CDA certification. The Prekindergarten Specialist serves as a coach, coaching and supporting potential candidates through the CDA process. Voluntary CDA support sessions are offered monthly afterschool to assist teaching assistants who are working towards achieving their CDA. CDA support sessions are also offered during Professional Learning days. During support sessions, teaching assistants receive individual support from the Prekindergarten Specialist and can work on completing training hours and portfolio resources. Additionally, the Prekindergarten Specialist conducts training and documentation review and verification in advance of the teaching assistant's verification visit with a CDA Professional Development Specialist. Digital training logs have been designed for teaching assistants to document the training hours needed to apply for the CDA. Digital folders have been created for teaching assistants to store certification resources and materials as they go through the CDA process. A standardized CDA portfolio binder has been created for staff to use in collecting and documenting required portfolio resources.

CCPS has partnered with Maryland Family Network to support teaching assistants in accessing vouchers to the CDA Competency Book and CDA application to meet certification requirements. ProSolutions offers CDA training course curriculum for teaching assistants who need initial training certification or renewal hours. ProSolutions is a vendor with CCPS. CCPS' Early Childhood Team also offers training through professional development and professional learning communities that can be used toward CDA training hours for staff.

Priority #5: Continuing and expanding college and career pathways. Expanding College and Career Pathways – early college, career advising

In accordance with the Blueprint, CCPS has fully implemented a comprehensive Career Counseling program for grades 6-12. Career Advisors have been placed in each middle and high school. By partnering with our local workforce development board, we have had the opportunity to work with the consulting firm "Educators Cooperative;" through this, we have trained advisors, instructional

supervisors, administrators, district teachers, students, and parents in the RIASEC framework to create a common language for talking about careers. This year, we were able to implement a complete CTE offering fair to all 8th grade students where students were able to preview the 24 CTE programs that are available to them during high school. In addition, middle and high school advisors have supported the addition of numerous field trips (to locations such as the JATC, Constellation Energy Nuclear Plant, and a Tech Careers Fair among other opportunities). Finally, in addition to hosting whole class, small group, and 1:1 counseling sessions with students, our career advisors have helped to facilitate numerous opportunities with guest speakers. This has broadened our ability to partner with our local community and engage them in the career development process.

Initiative and Systemic Changes

Career Counseling Program
CTE Expansion and Sharing with Students
Early College Program

CCPS has also implemented an early college program. Sixteen seniors from the four CCPS high schools are attending instruction full-time on campus at the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) Prince Frederick campus. Students who successfully complete the program will earn a general studies certification which can then be applied after graduation towards an associate degree or transferred to a four-year degree granting program. Over 1300 students have been able to receive on-campus support opportunities to ensure their success in this full dual-enrollment program. Through thoughtful scheduling and partnership with CSM, we have also maintained the students' ability to participate in "senior high school life," including extracurricular and athletic activities. This had been a barrier to implementation of similar programs in the past. The nature of the partnership ensures that our dually enrolled students are available for the "normal activities" they desire as high school seniors while providing a true college experience simultaneously. In the coming school year, the hope is to double the enrollment for the program. The CCPS Pillar 3 committee is also exploring possibilities to expand the program to a two-year program

which may allow students to either earn a full associate degree or complete the general studies certification simultaneous with a career and technical education program while still earning all COMAR-required graduation credits.

Financial Challenges

Teacher Salary Increase of at Least 10%

This was selected as one of the biggest financial challenges for several reasons. First, the cost for teachers alone was estimated at over \$5.3 million for FY 24 alone, and this amount will increase each year. For internal equity reasons, the District opted to provide a comparable pay increase for other employees, and this cost was estimated at \$2.4 million for FY 24. This amount, too, will increase each year, so it will have a perpetual impact on district finances. This presented a big fiscal challenge because it necessitated an unusually steep increase in the District's funding request from the county government, which ultimately, the county government agreed to a funding increase that was significantly less than what the District requested.

Career Ladder

This is another of the District's biggest financial challenges, and there are several reasons that this presents a significant challenge. First, and foremost, the career ladder must be collectively bargained with our teachers' association. Given that, there is much uncertainty about what the cost impact will be on CCPS. With only about 50% of the career ladder costs coming from State funding, the county government will need to fund approximately half of the costs, and county officials have already expressed their intent to less than fully fund CCPS' FY 25 budget support request. This cost pressure from the to-be-negotiated career ladder will cascade to future years as well, and salary increases that go with the career ladder will be accompanied by increased FICA, retirement, life insurance (tied to salaries), accidental life and dismemberment insurance (tied to salaries), and workers' compensation costs (also tied to salaries).

\$60,000 Teacher Salary Minimum

This is a financial challenge for CCPS for multiple reasons. First, it will require that salary increases be offered (and collectively bargained) for the vast majority of teachers (provisional teachers excepted). Second, for teachers whose current salary is slightly more than \$60,000, they will expect salary increases, too. Third, teachers who have a salary near \$60,000 and who work 11 months per year will expect a salary increase as well. These salary increases also carry other cost increases including FICA, retirement, life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and workers' comp insurance. All these cost increases cascade into future years and reduces the amount of funds available for other expenditures, programs, and services.

Strategies to Address these Challenges

One strategy employed to address the 10% teacher salary increase requirement was to request additional funding from the local county government. While the county provided a bigger funding increase than in recent years, the increased funding was insufficient to fund the District's full funding request for FY 24. Further, county officials appear unlikely to fully fund CCPS initial FY 25 funding request. Another strategy employed to address the challenges, a strategy employed for the FY 25 budget, is (and was) to very conservatively, limit the number of additional staff positions for FY 25. Requests were received to add over 50 positions to the unrestricted fund budget for FY 25, and only one new position was approved by administration.

Part 3. Communication and Progress Monitoring

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

CCPS continues to communicate Blueprint strategies to our stakeholders through staff and administrator professional development sessions, public stakeholder forums by Pillar, regular presentations at CCPS Board of Education meetings, along with quarterly Blueprint newsletters and presentations to the Calvert County Board of Commissioners. For instance, we used our November 2024 and February 2024 Administrator and Supervisor professional development sessions to collect detailed information from all school administrators regarding challenges and implementation ideas, focusing on each Blueprint Pillar. This information was subsequently analyzed by our

Strategic Facilitator and shared with the Steering Committee and with school leaders, to inform next steps. Similarly, we have organized multiple opportunities for teachers to learn about the Blueprint and provide specific feedback to CCPS leadership. Attendance at teacher forums was not as large as hoped, and we plan to revisit how we encourage teachers to provide input.

We formed the Calvert County Blueprint Committee, a stakeholder group consisting of CCPS staff, Calvert County Government representatives, and community members who share thoughts regarding Blueprint implementation and alignment to District and community goals. We have utilized that partnership to develop videos for each Pillar that communicate Blueprint requirements, as well as a web page that serves as a community resource to all our Blueprint work.

Blueprint Progress Monitoring

Accountability and continuous improvement processes have been implemented and are being refined to progress monitor the implementation of Blueprint strategies and outcomes, as they align with CCPS goals and outcomes. The Pillar 5 (Accountability) team includes members who serve on each Pillar (1, 2, 3, and 4) and who are tasked with working with each Pillar chair to articulate strategies, actions, and short- and long-term outcomes that align with Pillar tasks and subtasks. Monthly Steering Committee meetings are then used to report and share progress on key activities. Within each Pillar team, Pillar 5 team members facilitate the development of indicators and measurement tools needed to supplement traditional outcome measures (e.g., raw numbers, student assessment data). This process, supported by our local accountability coordinator, is how we monitor progress towards meeting all Blueprint goals. We will use this progress monitoring system to monitor the strategies we are using to address implementation challenges, beginning in spring 2024 through June 2025.