


TO: Accountability and Implementation Board

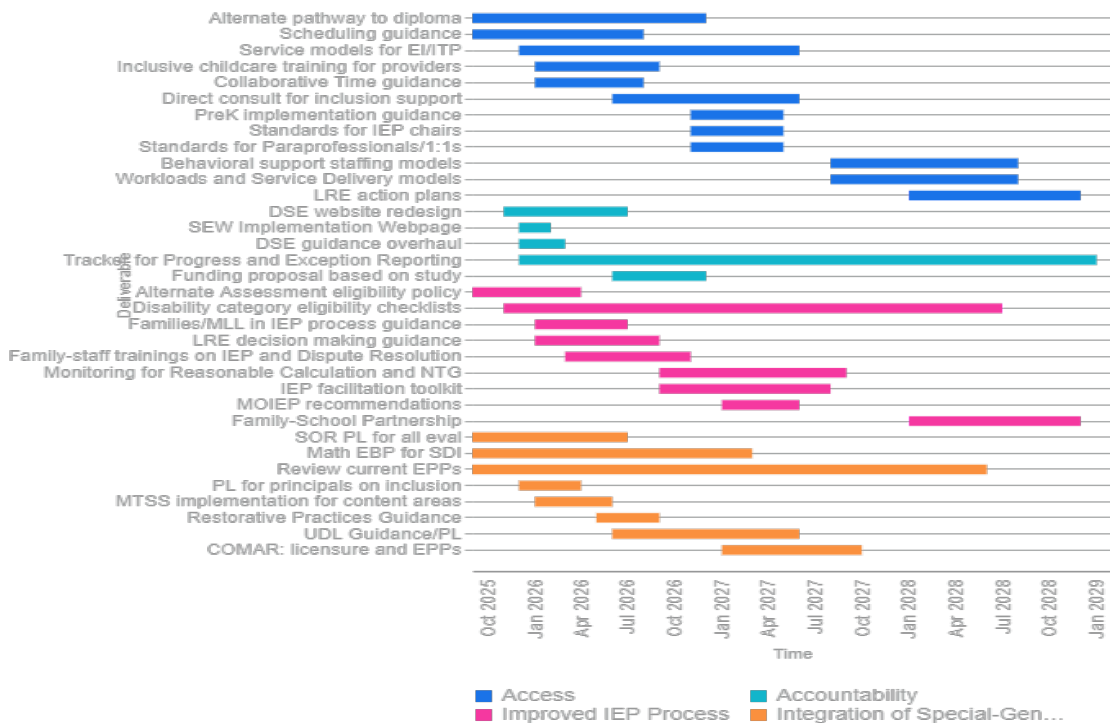
FROM: Carey M. Wright, Ed.D. 
State Superintendent of Schools

DATE: December 1, 2025

SUBJECT: Special Education Workgroup Implementation Timelines

**Special Education Workgroup Recommendations:
Implementation Timeline
December 1, 2025**

Pursuant to Subtask 4.3.5(a) of the Blueprint Comprehensive Plan, the following timeline establishes a set of priority tasks and deliverables to be implemented by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) based on the recommendations of the Blueprint Special Education Workgroup. These priorities have been identified as key drivers of change for improving the educational experiences and outcomes of Maryland’s students with disabilities.



The key tasks and deliverables also presented below by year of completion.

Access	Integration of General/Special Education	Improved IEP Process	Accountability
2026			
Inclusive Childcare Training for Providers	SOR for All Educators and All Students	LRE Decision Making Guidance	Tracker for Progress and Exception Reporting
Scheduling Guidance	Content-Specific MTSS Implementation	Joint Family/Staff Trainings on IEP and Dispute Resolution	SEW Implementation Webpage
Collaborative Time Guidance	School Leadership Training (Principals)	Families/MLL in IEP Process Guidance	Funding Proposal Based on Cost Study Findings
Alternate Pathway to Diploma	Restorative Practices Guidance	Alternate Assessment Eligibility Policy	DSE Website Redesign
			New Templates for Actionable, Accessible DSE Guidance

Access	Integration of General/Special Education	Improved IEP Process	Accountability
2027			
Direct Consult for Inclusion Support	Maryland Effective Mathematics Educator course	Compliance Monitoring of Reasonable Calculation and Narrowing the Gap	Tracker for Implementation Progress and Exception Reporting
Service Models for Early Intervention/ Infants & Toddlers Program	COMAR Revision: Educator Licensure	IEP Facilitation Toolkit	
PreK Implementation Guidance	Universal Design for Learning Guidance	MOIEP Recommendations Based on Study	
Standards for IEP Chairs and 1:1s/ Paraprofessionals			

Access	Integration of General/Special Education	Improved IEP Process	Accountability
2028			
Workloads and Service Delivery Models	Review Educator Prep Programs	Disability Category Eligibility Checklists	Tracker for Implementation Progress and Exception Reporting
Behavioral Support Staffing Models		Authentic Family-School Partnership	
LRE Action Plans			

Background

The Addendum to the Special Education Workgroup Final Report, May 2025, included 27 recommendations approved by the Workgroup to improve the educational experiences and long-term outcomes of Maryland's students with disabilities. The scope of the recommendations spans all five pillars of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Together they encompass an action plan that includes new tasks as well as orientations, emphases, and considerations for current initiatives and ongoing work of the Division of Special Education and across the Department.

The Workgroup also agreed on eight broad priorities:

1. Ensuring grade-level achievement expectations, standards, and related monitoring.
2. Expanding the use of evidence-based practices that enable students with disabilities to achieve grade-level standards, with a significantly larger role for general education, as well as address the root cause of significant disproportionality and the overreliance on more restrictive placements where students with disabilities have little or no access to their nondisabled peers, general education classrooms, curriculum, or teachers.
3. Enhance supply and retention of teachers and develop teacher capacity, ensuring Maryland's schools have enough general and special educators, related service providers, paraprofessionals, and other critical roles, with the knowledge, skills, and expertise to effectively teach students with disabilities. These strategies employed to achieve this priority should also focus on creating more sustainable workloads and schools that better support educators.
4. Address disproportionality in the identification of students with disabilities, achievement outcomes, disciplinary action, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), and eligibility for participation in alternate assessments.
5. Conduct an adequacy study of special education funding and frame legislative proposals.

6. Strengthen family and school partnerships and collaboration with statewide and community-based organizations.
7. Ensure local education agency (LEA) compliance with IDEA's Least Restrictive Environment requirements, including reducing the overuse of LRE-C and separate school placements, while ensuring that a broad continuum of services and supports are available.
8. Review, refine, or replace the Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP)

The Priorities establish several distinct tasks (e.g., conduct a cost study; refine or replace MOIEP) as well as broad, intertwined areas of work (e.g., setting standards for high expectations, expanding the use of evidence-based practices, developing teacher capacity, addressing disproportionality, strengthening family-school partnerships, improving fidelity to the least restrictive environment principle). The overlapping nature of the Priorities makes them ill-suited for organizing the work, but they are embedded within the tasks and deliverables of the implementation timeline.

The timeline above is structured using four Focus Areas that incorporate all eight Priorities: **(I) Access, (II) Integration of General and Special Education, (III) Improved IEP Process, and (IV) Accountability.**

I. Access

Increase student access to instructional and content experts, the same challenging academic standards for all students, and nondisabled peers.

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will set standards, provide guidance and professional learning, and collaborate with LEAs, Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs), administrators, educators, families, and advocates **to build classrooms, schools, and systems where all students can thrive** through tasks and deliverables in the following areas:

- Childcare
- Infants & Toddlers
- Mixed Delivery PreK
- Staffing & Scheduling
- College, Career, and Community Pathways

II. Integration of General/Special Education

Improve the educational experiences of students with disabilities in general education classrooms and their outcomes.

MSDE will set standards, provide guidance and professional learning, and collaborate with LEAs, IHEs, administrators, educators, families, and advocates **to break down silos between general and special education at every level** through tasks and deliverables in the following areas:

- Instructional Practices
- MTSS
- Recruitment & Retention
- Behavior Supports
- School Leadership

III. Improved IEP Process

Create and implement Individualized Education Programs that enable students to reach grade-level standards and narrow or close achievement gaps.

MSDE will set standards, provide guidance and professional learning, and collaborate with LEAs, IHEs, administrators, educators, families, and advocates **to set and enable achievement of high expectations and develop strong partnerships with families** through tasks and deliverables in these areas:

- High Expectations
- Eligibility & Decision Making
- Collaboration & Partnership
- MOIEP

IV. Accountability

Ensure effective implementation of the Special Education Workgroup’s recommendations.

MSDE will:

- Hold itself and LEAs accountable for meeting the detailed tasks and timelines in the implementation plan, using a tracker for progress and exception reporting
- Communicate regularly to state education leaders, educators, and the public about ongoing progress and any barriers that arise preventing progress.

The timeline and tables above identify the tasks and deliverables that are the key drivers of change to be completed over the next three years (2026-2028) in each of the four focus areas. [N.B.: Additional tasks and deliverables from the recommendations are incorporated into a full internal implementation tracker that will serve as an accountability tool by MSDE, including task owners, team members, start and end dates, status and exception reporting, and notes for each deliverable/task.]

Progress made, to date, in implementing the Workgroup recommendations includes completion of the following tasks and deliverables:

- 1) In January 2025, MSDE released the [Standard for Developing IEPs to Close or Narrow Academic Performance Gaps](#). Special Education Directors and Compliance Managers were trained in Spring 2025. More than 1,000 IEP chairs and special educators have received training from MSDE.
- 2) In September 2025, MSDE issued a Request for Proposals for an Independent Special Education Funding Study. The contract is slated to be awarded by January 1, 2026, with a project completion date of December 1, 2026.
- 3) In September 2025, MSDE issued a Request for Proposals for an Independent Study of the Maryland Online Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP) System. The contract is slated to be awarded in December 2025, with a project completion date of December 10, 2026.
- 4) Pursuant to HB1475 (2025), beginning in September 2025, MSDE convened a [PreK Systems Analysis Workgroup](#) to consider all aspects of the mixed delivery publicly funded PreK system to be established under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Workgroup's scope includes "how best to use publicly funded PreK to provide a quality early childhood education for students with and without disabilities together in the same classrooms, including developing methods to:
 - combine federal, state, and local funding sources to maximize support for all;
 - improve teacher and staff training and recruitment to address the needs of all students with and without disabilities; and
 - foster collaboration between private and public PreK providers in delivering specialized transportation and services for students with disabilities."

An interim report is due June 1, 2026, with recommendations for changes to regulations, policies, and procedures to increase the efficacy of the publicly funded prekindergarten program and to make the program more equitable for providers and families. A final report with any additional recommendations by December 31, 2027.