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Blueprint for Maryland's Future Special Education Workgroup

Workgroup Meeting #12

**Division of Early Intervention and Special
Education Services**

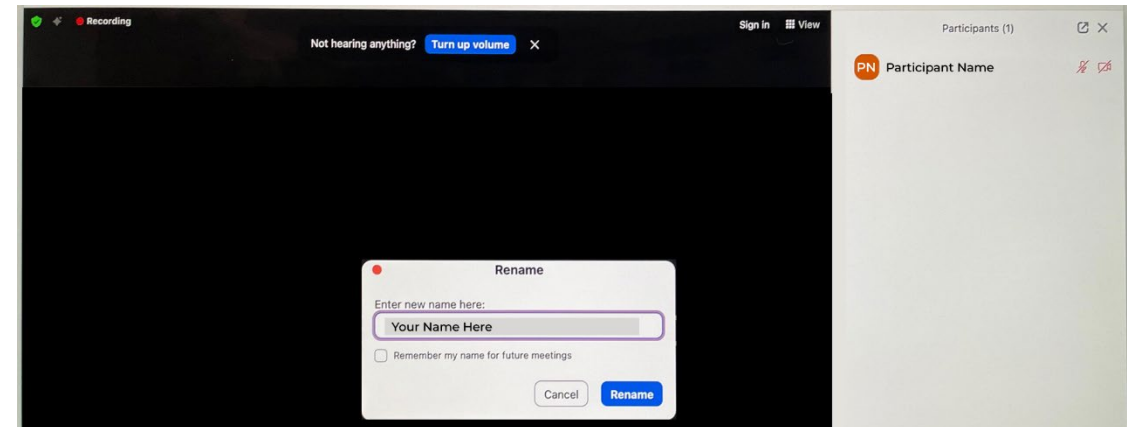
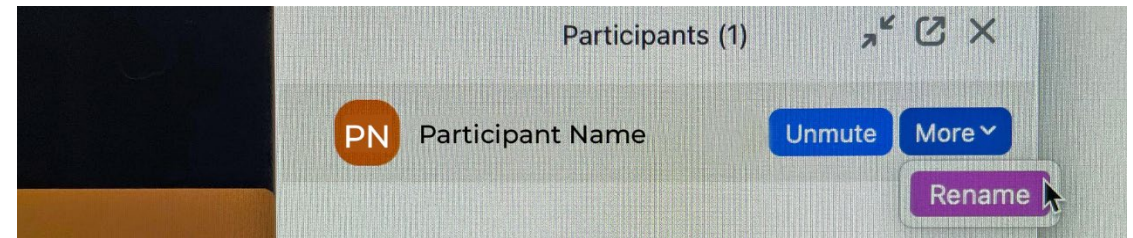
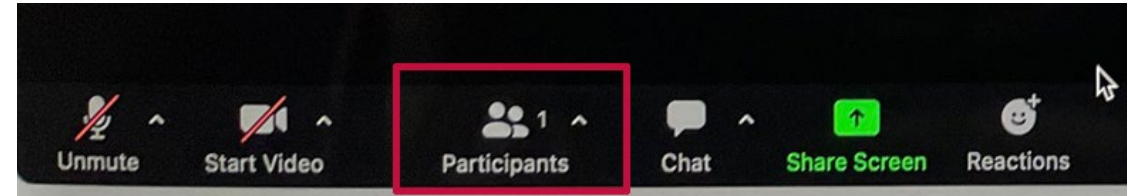
September 25, 2024

CO-CHAIRS

Dr. Carey Wright, Interim State Superintendent of Schools
Liz Zogby, Special Education Policy & Advocacy

Please Ensure Your Name Appears Correctly

1. Select Participants, located in the bottom toolbar of the meeting window
2. Hover over your name and select More (desktop) or tap your name (mobile)
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4. Enter your desired name and click Rename (desktop) or Done (mobile)

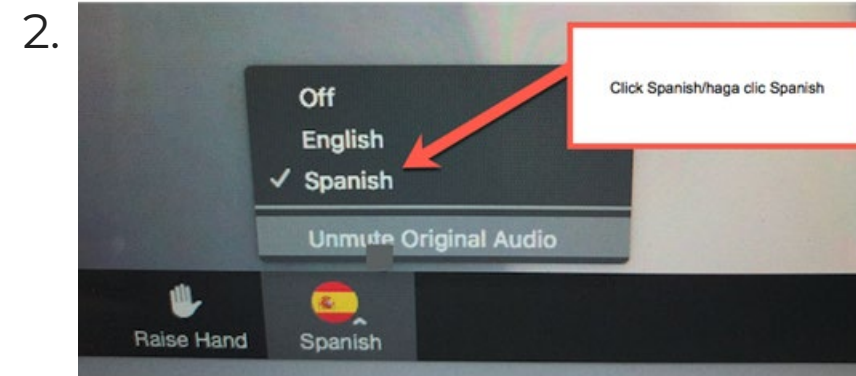
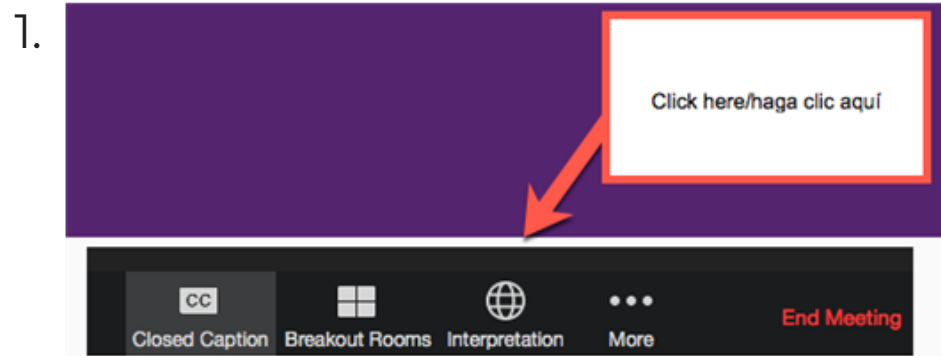


Note to Attendees

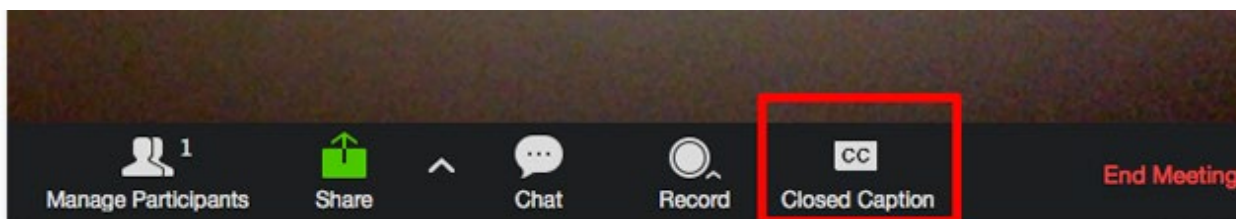
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Presentation Outline

1. Welcome/Introductions
2. Public Comment
3. Review of Recommendations
4. Prioritization Plan
5. Early Childhood Special Education
6. Discussion
7. Update from MSDE
8. Wrap-Up/Closing

Blueprint Special Education Workgroup

Meeting #12

Guiding Question(s)

How can statewide policies, practices, standards, and funding ensure young children with disabilities are prepared for kindergarten, have meaningful access and opportunities to learn and play alongside their peers without disabilities in their natural environment?



Public Comment

Public Comment

Hear from Registered Guests – Public Comment Period



Least Restrictive Environment & Significant Disproportionality

Least Restrictive Environment (revised)

Many of the standards, policies, and procedures suggested in the Workgroup's previous recommendations are also essential for increasing placements of students with disabilities in general education classrooms and decreasing the variability of Maryland's LRE placements (across LEAs, disability categories, race, and assessment type). These previous recommendations include:

- *Achievement of grade-level standards by all students with disabilities, establishing the legal requirements of the IEP process, and holding LEAs accountable for implementation (Rec 1, 2, and 8)*
- *Increased resources (Rec 10–12)*
- *Standards related to: evidence-based specially designed instruction (Rec 4), staffing plans and service delivery models allocations (Rec 9), and positions like paraprofessionals and IEP chairs (Rec 9)*
- *Direct support and coaching of IEP teams and LEAs from MSDE (Rec 5)*
- *Ensuring educators and administrators have the requisite knowledge, skills, and expertise through EPPs, professional learning, and licensure requirements (Rec7)*
- Students who are eligible for participation in the alternate assessment must have meaningful access to and make progress in grade-level content standards and meet alternate academic achievement standards.

MSDE should develop a plan for a plan with specific tasks and timelines within 60 days to decrease variability of LRE data by LEA, race, disability category, and assessment type, and increase placements in general education classrooms (decreasing placements in LRE C and separate schools). The plan should include:

- Standards, guidance, technical assistance, and monitoring focused on:
 - the use of supplementary aids and services,
 - implementation of evidence-based specially designed instruction;
 - eligibility determinations for disability categories;
 - MTSS implementation; and
 - master schedules.
- LEA action plans on LRE, reviewed and approved by MSDE, with mechanisms for accountability;
- Support from MSDE to increase the capacity of schools to meet the needs of all students including:
 - Guidance on seeking out and providing additional resources and support for students, schools, and LEAs needed throughout the year;
 - Direct consultation with inclusion experts where staff can bring questions, issues, and particular student situations for practical advice;
 - Formal mechanisms for sharing expertise and connecting schools/LEAs to outside experts, professional learning, and mental/behavioral health experts.
 - **Enhanced standards and guidance for documenting, justifying, and monitoring students being recommended for more restrictive environments, particularly the most restrictive environments. (*Changed from "Additional requirements for documentation, justification, and review for moving students to more restrictive environments, particularly the most restrictive environments."*)**

Significant Disproportionality

Many of the standards, policies, and procedures suggested in the Workgroup's previous recommendations are also essential for addressing, reducing, and ultimately eliminating significant disproportionality in identification/eligibility, placement, and discipline. These previous recommendations include:

- Achievement of grade-level standards by all students with disabilities, establishing the legal requirements of the IEP process, and holding LEAs accountable for implementation (Rec 1, 2, and 8)
- Increased resources (Rec 10–12)
- Standards related to: evidence-based specially designed instruction (Rec 4), staffing plans and service delivery models allocations (Rec 9), and positions like paraprofessionals and IEP chairs (Rec 9)
- Direct support and coaching of IEP teams and LEAs from MSDE (Rec 5)
- Ensuring educators and administrators have the requisite knowledge, skills, and expertise through EPPs, professional learning, and licensure requirements (Rec7)

MSDE should develop a plan for a plan with specific tasks and timelines within 60 days for reducing and eliminating significant disproportionality in identification/eligibility, placement, and discipline. The plan should involve the development of a statewide approach with standards and guidance, stakeholder feedback, TA and professional development, and monitoring, and should include:

- Review of Maryland's methodology for determining significant disproportionality with attention to data timeliness, flexibility currently afforded to LEAs with decreasing risk ratios, and the different standards for general and special education.
- Development of standardized eligibility determination checklists for all disability categories.
- Models for innovative uses of CCEIS funds.
- Identification of root causes including structural causes and explicit and implicit bias in tools and staff.
- Development of standards and guidance about responding to behavior in ways that address underlying student needs, review local codes of conduct, and consider alternative approaches including Restorative Practices.



Feedback from Small Group Sessions and Prioritized Plan

MSDE's Prioritized Plan to Improve Outcomes for Students with Disabilities in Maryland

Foundational Priorities

1. Ensure grade-level achievement expectations, standards, and related monitoring
2. Expand 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 some of the root causes of significant disproportionality and the overreliance on more restrictive placements for students with disabilities
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, LRE, and eligibility for participation in alternate assessments
5. Conduct an adequacy study of special education funding and frame legislative proposals

MSDE's Prioritized Plan to Improve Outcomes for Students with Disabilities in Maryland

Other Near-Term Priorities

1. Ensure LEA compliance with the 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
2. Revise or replace MOIEP to facilitate staff and family-friendly development of IEPs that incorporate all appropriate standards and guidance, as well as enable data collection, reporting capabilities, and accessibility for families including those who do not speak English

Future Areas of Focus

- Early childhood/infants & toddlers
- Parent and family partnerships
- Transition planning
- Exclusionary discipline/emotional disability
- Students who take alternate assessments



Overview of Early Childhood Special Education in Maryland

The Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (MITP)

- Enrolls children from birth up to the 3rd birthday who exhibit developmental delays or have conditions likely to cause delays in the future
- Administered through 24 local, interagency programs
- Funded through a combination of federal (IDEA) funds, Blueprint funds, state general funds, Medical Assistance reimbursement and local funds
 - ~70% of funding is from local governments
- Provided services to 21, 283 children over the course of SFY 2024

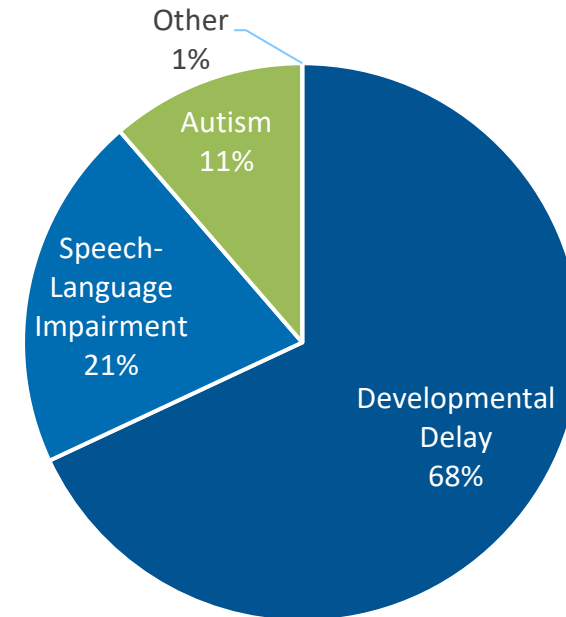
The Extended IFSP Option
Maryland allows families receiving early intervention services whose children are eligible for preschool special education to choose to remain in Part C until the child is PreK age. They may also choose to transition to an IEP at any time.

Infants and Toddlers Services

- Driven by an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) grounded in the family's concerns and priorities
- Embedded in routine activities and contexts
- Grounded in evidence-based practices designed to strengthen caregiver's capacity to support the child's development
- Delivered in "natural environments," primarily homes (89%) and community settings like childcares and playgroups (10%)
 - Less than 1% of services are provided in clinical or separate special education settings
 - Children on the Extended IFSP option received approximately 30% of their services in the community

Early Childhood Special Education

- Services for children from age three to kindergarten entry
- Governed by Part B of the IDEA and administered by LEAs (and MSB and MSD)
- 10,916 children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in the October 2023 child count (plus 1,384 with extended IFSPs)

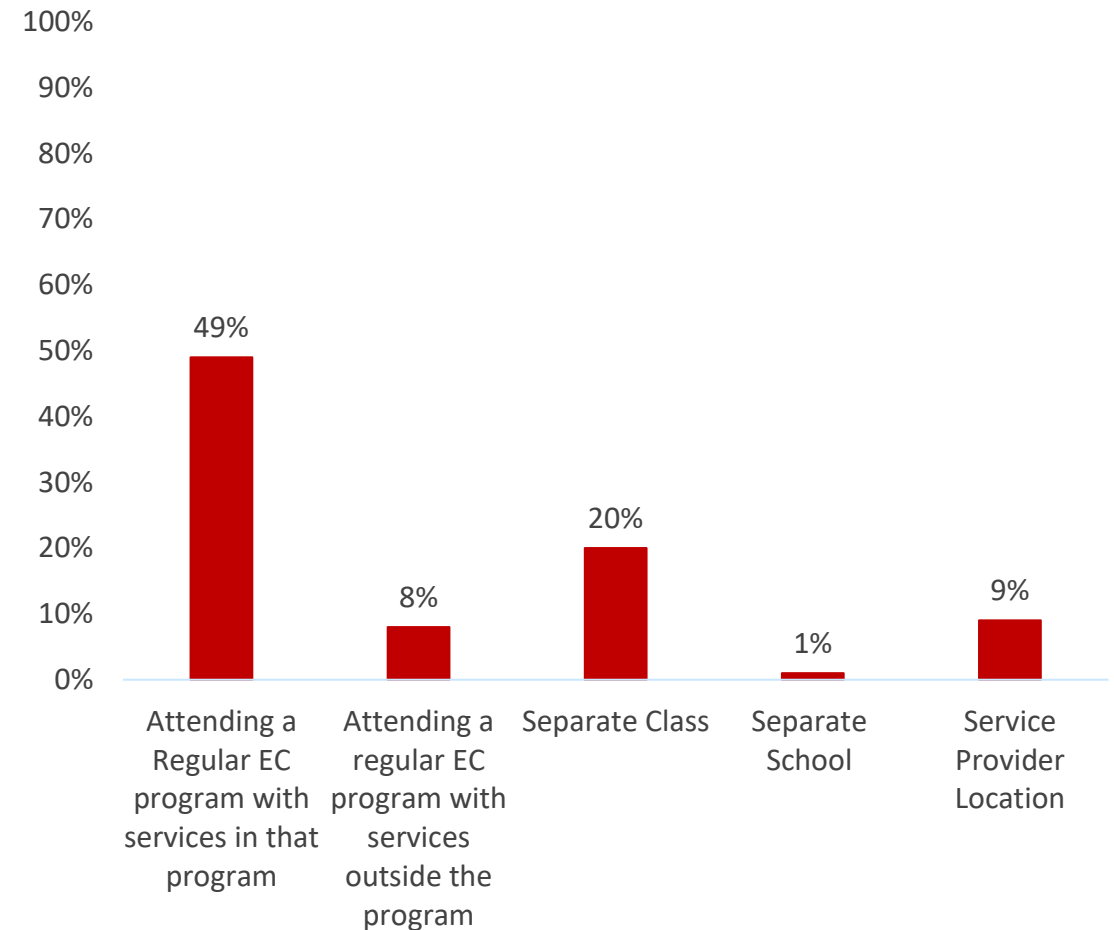


Inclusion in Early Childhood

- “All young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support so they can fully participate alongside their peers without disabilities, meet high expectations, and achieve their full potential. The responsibility to ensure that young children with disabilities and their families are included in high-quality early childhood programs is shared by federal, state, and local governments, early childhood systems, early childhood programs and providers, local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools.”

US DoE and HHS Joint Policy Statement, 2023

Preschool Service Delivery



Early Childhood Demographics

	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian	Black/African American	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	White	Hispanic/Latino	Two or More Races
Maryland K - 12 Enrollment	0.30%	6.70%	33.20%	0.10%	33.90%	20.70%	5.10%
Student with Disabilities	0.30%	3.80%	39.00%	0.10%	33.10%	18.70%	5.10%
Children 0 - 3 on IFSPs	0.12%	5.02%	32.44%	0.15%	33.57%	20.65%	8.07%

Preschool Service Locations by Race	Regular EC program at least 10 hours	Separate Class	Service Provider Location
All	46.26%	22.80	11.14
American Indian/ Alaska Native	50.00	12.50	8.33
Asian	56.15	24.59	6.81
Black/African American	43.96	27.79	5.42
Native Hawaiian/PI	53.33	20.00	20.00
White	47.80	11.28	19.22
Hispanic/Latino	43.23	32.97	9.01
Two or More Races	52.34	18.88	13.31

Pre-K Expansion

Full-day, mixed-delivery PreK under Blueprint is an opportunity to strengthen access to regular early childhood programs for children with disabilities, but implementation questions remain:

- Children with disabilities are a “priority” but not included in Tier 1 (unless also income eligible) after next year. How will that impact access?
- How should LEAs prioritize limited seats (income, disability, etc.)?
- How can children who enroll later in the year be accommodated?
- How will services for children with extended IFSPs and IEPs in private-provider programs be funded and delivered?

Childcare and Children with Disabilities

- Many families report difficulty accessing and maintaining care for children with disabilities
- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), most childcare and preschool programs are required to provide “reasonable accommodations” to allow children with disabilities equitable participation
- MSDE’s Division of Early Childhood (DEC) supports inclusion in childcare through:
 - Required ADA training as part of licensing
 - Including adaptations for children with disabilities as an indicators in EXCELS quality rating system
 - Providing technical assistance through Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health grants
 - Funding “therapeutic childcare programs” for children with behavioral or medical needs
 - Providing enhanced childcare scholarship rates (when funding is available)

Kindergarten Readiness

On the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), children with disabilities were less likely to demonstrate readiness than non-disabled peers

Population:	2022-2023	2023-2024
All Kindergarten Students	42	44
SWD	17	18
Students w/o disabilities	44	47
Direct-certified - SWD	0	12
Direct-certified - w/o disabilities	0	35
Not direct-certified - SWD	0	23
Not direct-certified - w/o disabilities	0	55



Breakout Groups

Small Group Breakout Sessions

- We have altered the breakout groups to Random Grouping to ensure everyone has an equal chance to participate, **ensure like-sized groups with diverse perspectives**, and to save time by automating the grouping process.
 - You will **automatically be assigned a group to move to (Except Room 1 – which will not move)**
 - When you receive a notification asking if you would like to move to a breakout group – please click **“move to breakout.”**
- Please **use the chat** if you have additional comments so that your feedback can be recorded.
- Breakout Group #1 will be live streamed and all will be recorded and posted on the MSDE website.
 - NOTE: Sign language** interpreters will remain in **breakout room #1** and will be live streamed.
- Each breakout group is assigned an **MSDE staff** as a **notetaker**.
- Each breakout group is asked to please **identify** a:
 - Facilitator
 - Timekeeper
 - Reporter to share out 2 – 3 minute highlights of the discussion
- There are six (6) total questions this evening – as there is limited time, do not feel you need to respond in order.

Small Group Breakout Sessions: Group Norms

Group Norms:

- **Speak with care:**
 - Speak from your own experience and be mindful of how your comments may impact others.
 - Use “I” statements and avoid speaking for or generalizing whole groups.
- **Listen respectfully:**
 - Avoid interrupting the person speaking and talk that evaluates/judges their comments.
 - Limit your comments to 1 – 2 minutes.
 - Understand that there are no right or wrong answers.
- **Lean in/Lean back:**
 - Give your input and make space for others to do the same.
 - Be aware of your talk time and try to stay on topic.

Small Group Breakout Questions

1. How can the State support local infants and toddlers programs (LITPs) to implement evidence-based practices in early intervention that meet the individual needs of children in their natural environments and their families?
2. How can the State improve access to high-quality inclusive childcare for families with children with disabilities?
3. How can the state's implementation of Pillar 1 of the Blueprint ensure that the expansion of preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds through both private and public providers increases access to inclusive high-quality preschool for all young children with disabilities?
4. What does MD need to do to comply with federal and state law, including FAPE, and meet the intent of the Blueprint to include children with disabilities in Tier 1 for prioritization and funding?
5. How can or should previous recommendations and implementation plans of the Workgroup be expanded to address related challenges raised in the area of Early Childhood (e.g., staff shortages, disproportional identification and placement of young children with disabilities)?
6. What additional questions, comments, or suggestions do you have about the implementation of early intervention services and preschool special education for students with disabilities in Maryland?

Future Meeting Dates

Date	Time
Wednesday, September 25, 2024	4:00 – 6:00 pm
Wednesday, October 16, 2024	4:00 – 6:00 pm
Thursday, November 21, 2024	4:00 – 6:00 pm
Wednesday, December 18, 2024	4:00 – 6:00 pm
Wednesday, January 29, 2025	4:00 – 6:00 pm

Final Report

Final Report Timeline	Anticipated Date
Draft Report to Exec Committee	October 7, 2024
Draft Report to Workgroup	October 17, 2024
Address Comments	October 24-28, 2024
Final Report to Exec Committee	October 28, 2024
Final Report to MSDE Leadership	November 1, 2024
Final Report to Workgroup and AIB	December 1, 2024

MSDE Blueprint Special Education Workgroup Webpage:
Blueprint.MarylandPublicSchools.org/Special-Education-Workgroup

BLUEPRINT

FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE

More information can be found on MSDE's Blueprint webpage:

Blueprint.MarylandPublicSchools.org