

Summary of MSDE Priorities feedback sessions

The feedback sessions were productive, yielding both strong support for the draft priorities as well as constructive suggestions for improvement.

Five sessions were held, and 17 workgroup members attended. There was an even mix of LEA representation and non-LEA participants.

Key areas of agreement and support

1. Virtually 100% of participants saw the importance of prioritizing the efforts as we advance and valued MSDE's commitment to implement well with the goal of achieving meaningful change in the schools rather than moving quickly but superficially.
2. Nearly all participants felt the priorities reflected the discussion and recommendations of the workgroup. People felt their voices and ideas were incorporated into the priorities.
3. The priorities seemed reasonable and appropriate. Some noted that many of the priorities have been long-standing challenges.
4. There was broad support for the implementation cycle outlined, including the research, feedback, dissemination, technical assistance/PD, and monitoring. Many had questions related to the stakeholder feedback process and wanted more details. Some confused the feedback step with formal public comment, which typically happens after materials are 99% complete, whereas the stakeholder engagement step is intended to gather input much earlier in the process. Some also noted that there were few past examples of early-stage, impactful stakeholder input. Most appreciated MSDE's commitment to stakeholder feedback and wanted more details in the document.

Areas of agreement and support, but warranting greater clarification.

5. Several participants wanted greater clarity that these priorities impacted general education as much as special education at both the LEA and MSDE levels. The concept that effective general education core instruction and greater capacity by general educators to address and prevent behavior challenges should be made more explicit in the document.
6. Many LEA staff wanted greater clarification that if the staffing, recruitment, and retention efforts aren't successful, then implementing the other changes will be very challenging.
7. Many participants noted the interconnectedness of the priorities and felt that this should be stated in the document.
8. A suggestion was made that if the legislature takes up Blueprint funding sooner than the special education funding study is scheduled, then it would be important to accelerate the study to keep pace with any Blueprint funding conversations.

Possible other modifications to the priorities

9. Some believed that the funding study should also include a review of how well current spending is being utilized, especially its alignment with evidence-based practices. They felt that failure to assess the use of current spending would undermine legislative support for increased future spending.

10. A few participants, while agreeing on the importance of the continuum of services, objected to the use of the word segregation in the document. They believed that it would undermine support for the priority and distract from the effort to increase LRE.

11. Some suggested adding or highlighting quick wins across several priorities. This might include efforts already underway. Some wondered if there are quick wins related to MOIEP that can be achieved, given that it is highly visible to families and teachers.

12. A few suggested adding a step to the implementation plan of determining from the field what is effective and useful technical assistance and PD. This reflects a concern that some past support has not been effective or well received.

13. Some participants wanted to see an ongoing role for the workgroup to monitor the implementation of the priorities.

Areas of differing opinion

14. The primary area of differing feedback was related to the overall timelines. While nearly all saw the proposed timelines as aggressive, some, mostly LEA staff, felt they were a bit too aggressive while others appreciated the aggressive nature of the timeline, given the urgency of the need. LEA staff worried that there was insufficient bandwidth and capacity to move as quickly as suggested and to implement well.

Also

15. Some asked that the timeline be more visual and thus easier to see and understand.