



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Prince George's County Board of Education Task Force Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

Angela D. Alsobrooks
County Executive



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

James E. Proctor Jr. Building, Suite 224
14000 Jericho Park Rd, Bowie, MD 20715
P 301-860-3230
F 301-860-3242
bowiestate.edu

Dear Prince Georgians,

It was an honor and a privilege to serve as the Chair of the Prince George's County Board of Education Task Force. I am from Prince George's County, also attended public school from PreK-12 through my undergraduate education. I am thankful to County Executive Angela Alsobrooks for entrusting in me this important task and allowing me to serve our community in such a meaningful way.

The Prince George's County Executive Order 24-2021 called for the development of a workgroup to study and review the duties, responsibilities, powers, and composition of the Prince George's County Board of Education. The Task Force included community members representing leadership stakeholder positions in Prince George's County. The Task Force members were divided into three sub-committees that honed in on specific Executive Order components. Our approach functioned to engage in evidence-based best practices from board of educations in the state of Maryland, the local region, and nationally. To this end, we relied on document review, expert presentation and discussion, and community voice through public listening sessions and written comments.

From the triangulation of information, the Task Force was able to forward solid recommendations to answer the call of the Executive Order. Through collaborative efforts, the Task Force strategically landed on recommendations focused on Board Composition, Leadership, and Structure; Board Compensation, Terms, and Professional Development; and Board Duties, Responsibilities, Powers, and School System Collaboration. Additional recommendations served as context to important connected matters.

Thank you to the Prince George's County community for weighing in on this initiative. Your voice was essential to developing informed recommendations. This work was so much more robust and authentic with your voice as a pillar or resource as we analyzed information and considered the various Task Force recommendations.

The Task Force members brought their professional expertise and lived experience to this effort, as well as their respective high standards, work ethic, and genuine care for the objective. It was clear that we collaborated in earnest, and the workings of the Task Force were infused with collegial deep discourse. I thank my Task Force colleagues. Thank you to the County Executive



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staff for helping to provide the necessary resources, documents, and assistance in managing Task Force logistics and the report.

Lastly, thank you again to County Executive Angela Alsobrooks for establishing the Task Force with multiple community stakeholders and for allowing the process to unfold as we worked toward final recommendations for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sean T. Coleman

Dr. Sean T. Coleman
Associate Dean, College of Education
Bowie State University



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Board Composition, Leadership, and Structure

Recommendation 1: The Prince George's County Board of Education should consist of nine elected members and one student member.

- A. The Board of Education should change from its current hybrid structure of both elected and appointed members to one consisting solely of elected members. This can be achieved by removing the four appointed members to the board. This requires no change to the current staggered electoral structure for elected board members.
- B. The Board of Education is currently composed of nine elected members, four appointed members, and one student member. Three of the appointed members are selected by the County Executive and one is selected by the County Council. The board has experienced multiple iterations of either all-appointed or all-elected members. The current hybrid structure dates to the passage of HB 1107 in the Maryland General Assembly in 2013. The hybrid structure was implemented at the behest of then-County Executive Rushern Baker in response to the turnover in superintendents (the fifth superintendent in ten years having recently departed); dissatisfaction with student performance, which hovered near the bottom of state rankings; and negative news stories that undercut the credibility of the board (including stories highlighting one board member serving on the board illegally and only two board members having college degrees). An all-appointed board was implemented via HB 949 (2002) from June 1, 2002, through December 3, 2006, which reverted to an all-elected board December 4, 2006. This was in response to an attempt by the board to fire the then-superintendent.

Recommendation 2: The Prince George's County Board of Education members should be elected from single-member districts.

Currently, Board of Education members are elected from single-member districts. Having members represent single-member districts allows board members to familiarize themselves with their districts and respond to the specific needs of the community.

Recommendation 3: The Prince George's County Board of Education should elect its own Chair and Vice Chair for one-year terms.

Currently, the County Executive selects the Chair and Vice Chair from among Board of Education members for two-year terms, with the caveat that the Chair may be an appointed member, but the Vice Chair must be an elected member. This framework has stoked conflict among board members, as its leader is chosen from outside the body, potentially creating resentment among elected board members. Allowing board members to select their own Chair and Vice Chair from among themselves should create a more cohesive board. Additionally, the terms should be set for one year (similar to that of the Prince George's County Council) to help ensure the Chair and Vice Chair maintain the confidence of the body they have been selected to lead.



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Recommendation 4: Candidates for the Prince George's County Board of Education should be prohibited from appearing on political slates and sample ballots.

Slates are collections of candidates that cooperate during elections, usually producing electioneering materials in support of member candidates. Sample ballots refer to materials created by candidates or advocacy groups, highlighting preferred candidates in an election. Slates and sample ballots are common features in elections in Prince George's County. Prohibiting Board of Education candidates from being part of slates or sample ballots ensures that board candidates remain nonpartisan during the electoral process.

Recommendation 5: Candidates for the Prince George's County Board of Education should be allowed to use public financing to fund their campaigns.

Allowing Board of Education candidates to finance their campaigns with public funds can help reduce the politicization of board campaigns in the County. Under Maryland Election Law, § 13-505, counties may establish their own system of public campaign financing for the executive and legislative branches of the county government. Prince George's County is scheduled to begin its public financing system for County Executive and County Council positions in 2026. However, state law currently excludes Board of Education candidates from public financing systems.

Recommendation 6: The powers and responsibilities of the Chair of the Prince George's County Board of Education should be codified.

Codifying language outlining the Chair's duties and responsibilities should include (1) leading public meetings, (2) making subcommittee appointments, (3) handling communications with the Chief Executive Officer, and (4) overseeing proper execution of the bylaws.

Recommendation 7: The Prince George's County Board of Education should update its bylaws at least every four years.

Currently there is no requirement for the Board of Education to update its bylaws with any regularity. Requiring a review of the bylaws to occur at least once every four years will ensure board members not only review the bylaws at least once per term, but that the bylaws will be updated and maintained as needed.

Recommendation 8: The position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the Prince George's County Public School System should be changed to that of a Superintendent.

The Prince George's County Public School System (PGCPS) is currently administered by a CEO as opposed to a superintendent. PGCPS switched from having a superintendent to a CEO via HB 1107 in 2013. Prince George's County and Baltimore City are the only jurisdictions in the state with CEOs as opposed to superintendents. Prince George's County should align with the rest of the state as it pertains to the management of its public school system by replacing the CEO position with a superintendent.



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**Board Duties, Responsibilities, Powers, and
School System Collaboration**

Recommendation 1: Redefine the purpose of the Prince George's County Board of Education, as outlined in Md. Code, ED § 4-401, to ensure the highest level of academic achievement and engagement.

Current law requires the Board of Education to simply “raise the level” of academic achievement and engagement. The purpose of the Board of Education should be to use best management practices to ensure the standard for academic achievement of the County's students be elevated to the highest possible standards.

Recommendation 2: The limits of power of the Prince George's County Board of Education, as it pertains to day-to-day management of the County School System, should be redefined in accordance with Md. Code, ED § 4-403.

Current law prohibits the Board of Education from implementing certain policies that contradict the day-to-day management and certain fiscal affairs of the Prince George's County Public School System by the Chief Executive Officer. However, these terms are overly broad and allow undue opportunities for conflict. These limits should be clarified with language referencing specific codified definitions.¹

Recommendation 3: Redefine the General Duties of the County Board of Education, as outlined in Md. Code, ED § 4-108, to replace instances of “equal” or “equality” with “equitable” and “equity.”

Current law charges the Board of Education with maintaining a reasonably uniform and equal system of public schools throughout the County for all children. This language should be updated to align with education trends focused on equity in education—not simply equal—thereby allowing all students and their academic resources to be raised to the same level of achievement and access.

Recommendation 4: Redefine the power of the County Board of Education to establish Advisory Committees, as outlined in Md. Code, ED § 4-112, to require that Advisory Committees are representative of demographic categories and geographic areas of the County.

¹ Current Code: (a)... the county board may not implement a policy or take any action that contradicts the day-to-day management and oversight of the fiscal affairs of the Prince George's County public school system by the Chief Executive Officer under this subtitle.

Recommendation: (a)... the county board may not implement a policy or take any action that contradicts the actions or interferes with the Chief Executive Officer's ability to perform their powers and duties as imposed under Md. Code, ED § 4-102, Md. Code, ED § 4-120, Md. Code, ED § 4-204, Md. Code, ED § 4-205, and Md. Code, ED § 4-402.



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Recommendation 5: Redefine the Removal Authority, as defined in Md. Code, ED § 3-1002, to remove the clause that requires the approval of the Governor to permit the State Board of Education to remove a member of the County Board of Education for immorality, misconduct in office, incompetency, or willful neglect of duty.

Recommendation 6: Maintain the current roles and responsibilities of the student board member as defined in Md. Code, ED § 3-1002, and clarify the ability of the student member to participate in executive sessions.

Maintaining current standards protects student board members from undue political entanglement and from defined sensitive items, while still providing students with a voice. However, clear definitions regarding when student members are permitted in executive sessions further remove student members from conflict with the public, other board members, and influence.

Recommendation 7: Codify and redefine the approval process of the Ethics Panel findings.

- A. Redefine various portions of the Ethics Panel, as established in Prince George's County Board of Education Board Policy No. 0107, in instances where an Ethics Panel investigation includes one or more members of the board.
- B. Remove the Board of Education's ability to vote to dismiss violations, require settlements made by the Ethics Panel not be subject to determination or concurrence by the board, remove the requirement that the board concur with a finding for a violation to become public information, and require that any Ethics Panel decision regarding a member of the board be sent directly to the State Board of Education.



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Board Compensation, Terms, and Professional Development

Recommendation 1: Prince George's County Board of Education members' compensation should be increased to \$27,000 and adjusted every four years by the calculated regional cost of living adjustments (COLA). Board Chair compensation should be \$32,000 and adjusted accordingly.

Recommendation 2: Prince George's County Board of Education members should be limited to two terms. The terms need not be consecutive.²

Recommendation 3: Prince George's County Board of Education members should avail themselves of all professional development opportunities including conferences sponsored by the National School Boards Association, the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, and the Council of Urban Boards of Education. In addition, board members should report publicly their professional development activities.

Recommendation 4: The Prince George's County Board of Education should participate in an annual retreat during which the board members conduct a self-evaluation. The evaluation's findings and identified opportunities for improvement should be made public.

² Currently, Prince George's County Board of Education members are not term limited. In order to align with other locally elected county officials, board members should have term limits.