

UP

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MSEA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES



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Issue 102

THE WEEK THAT WAS IN ANNAPOLIS

- **The 436th Maryland General Assembly Session Gets Started**

The 2016 Maryland General Assembly session kicked off on Wednesday, January 13. The first few days of session are full of excitement as legislators return and confront important issues facing the state. It is no different for education issues, where short and long-term funding discussions will heat up in earnest next week with the unveiling of Governor Hogan's FY17 budget, and the General Assembly will tackle other critical education issues like testing and narrowing opportunity gaps for students. Through all of the debates and discussions, it will be important for educators and education advocates to have their voices heard in the halls and committee rooms of the House and Senate office buildings. Let's get to work!

- **2016 Legislative Priorities**

Each year, MSEA develops targeted legislative priorities that serve as our lead issues for that session. Please review and share our [2016 Legislative Priorities](#) with colleagues, advocates, and legislators and help us achieve our goals around school funding, less testing, and narrowing opportunity gaps for students.

- **Less Testing Initiatives**

Just three days into the legislative session and there is already ample attention on the over-testing of students. Building on our successful back to school ad campaign and launch of www.LessTestingMoreLearning.com, MSEA is committed to making progress on the issue of testing.

We know our students are losing far too much instructional time to mandated testing, preventing them from developing well-rounded skills and a love for school. The average student sits for more than 200 mandated standardized tests throughout their time in school, with some students taking more than 50 hours of testing a year. That level of testing is unnecessary and unhelpful. To address this issue, we will work with the General Assembly to take action. Our Less Testing agenda includes:

- Setting a cap of 2% for how much instructional time can be devoted to mandated standardized testing—as has been proposed by President Obama and implemented successfully in New York.
- Creating transparency in testing through regular reporting to parents about mandated standardized tests in each school district.
- Ensuring that the PARCC test cannot be used in teacher and principal evaluations, which only encourages heightened focus and pressure on standardized testing performance.
- Reducing the months-long disruption caused by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment by changing it to a sampling test rather than a test given to every student.
- Applying to the federal government to seek innovation in testing so districts can experiment with performance-based assessments rather than PARCC.

All of these issues, and more, were included in [MSEA's recommendations](#) to the Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools, the entity created to collect testing data and make recommendations to reduce time on testing. [Click here to view the full presentation](#) MSEA delivered to the Testing Commission earlier this week. The Commission is not expected to make recommendations until later in 2016. Navigating the parallel work of the Commission and the Maryland General Assembly will be an ongoing challenge, but we know how important it is to make progress on this critical issue as soon as possible.

- **News and Notes**

- *Governor Previews Budget Initiatives*

Governor Hogan offered a preview of his FY17 budget that he will unveil next week. Without many details, the governor announced he would fully fund the education mandates established by the Thornton funding formulas and actions of the 2015 General Assembly to require funding the Geographic Cost of Education Index. While it will be impossible to judge the budget until the details are known, the governor's posture for the FY17 budget is much more positive towards education than it was in 2015 when he initially proposed a budget that slashed funding and manipulated formulas.

And while FY17 looks like a solid budget year in terms of revenues and expenditures, Governor Hogan noted a desire to give his office greater ability in future years to reduce mandated spending. The governor said that 83% of all state spending is mandated, with the majority of that being state aid for education. How the Hogan mandate relief is structured and how it will impact education, health care, or public safety will not be known until the details have been received and vetted. Look for further analysis on all budget details in the coming two weeks.

- *Push for Expansion of Community Schools*

When MSEA leads to narrow opportunity gaps for students, one model that helps achieve this goal is the expansion of community schools. This [community schools white paper](#) outlines the program that is providing wraparound services to more students in Maryland and across the country. When students and families have access to tools that make it easier to live and learn, our schools provide a more equitable education and students perform better.

[Delegate Mary Washington](#) hosted [an hour-long webinar](#) last week on the work and success of community schools in Maryland and will be a leading voice this session in advancing this path forward for schools and students.

- *Education Week Rating: Maryland is #4*

When Education Week released its annual rankings comparing states on K-12 results, Maryland's overall B grade didn't change much from last year. But with some improvements in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Vermont, Maryland fell to fourth overall in the country. [Download the highlights of Maryland's report here.](#)

- *Follow the 2016 Session Online*

The General Assembly is easy to follow online. You can track specific bills, listen to floor debate, and get up-to-the-minute updates at <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/>.

CAMPAIGN 2016

Look for updates throughout the session regarding opportunities for MSEA members and other education advocates to engage in key electoral races around the state. The primary is scheduled for Tuesday, April 26 and will decide many important races, particularly in Congressional Districts 4 (portions of Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties) and 8 (portions of Montgomery, Frederick, and Carroll counties). Additionally, the U.S. Senate primary will go a long way in determining who will replace retiring Senator Barbara Mikulski. And in school board races around the state, the April primary will narrow the field in elections to decide the elected officials who will guide education policy and bargaining decisions at the local level.

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