

Good Schools MD

Strategy Overview: June 2017

By December 31, 2017 the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan) will submit recommendations detailing a new formula to fund Maryland schools. The recommendations of Kirwan will shape legislation for overhauling the way public education is funded. The last time Maryland visited its education funding formula was 15 years ago. This gives us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to set a higher standard for public education in Maryland.

Campaign and Policy Goals

Achieve passage of a fully funded statewide education plan that achieves the following policy objectives for all children in Maryland's public schools:

- A. The knowledge and skills to succeed in postsecondary education without the need for remediation.
- B. The knowledge and skills to succeed in a career in which one can find satisfaction and earn enough to support a family.
- C. The knowledge and skills to be an effective citizen.

Key facts underlying the policy objectives:

1. 822 of Maryland's 1412 schools (59%) serve a population of more than 40% eligible for free and reduced priced meals.
2. Every school district in Maryland has at least three schools meeting the 40% concentrated poverty standard. Half of Maryland school districts (12) have one or more schools with 90% or more of the students eligible for free and reduced priced meals.
3. 96% of the Baltimore City and 81% Prince George's County schools meet the 40% standard; the proportion in Baltimore County is 65%; the proportion in Montgomery County is 43%; and in Anne Arundel County, it is 42%. 100% of Caroline and Kent County schools meet the standard; in Wicomico County, the proportion of their 24 schools is 96%. Allegheny's proportion is 92%. The challenges of concentrated poverty are deep and broad across Maryland; they affect children and families in every county and the city.

Why these policy objectives:

1. The knowledge and skill levels of Maryland's citizens drive our economic engine.
2. The knowledge and skill levels of Maryland's citizens determine the quality of our life together as it is reflected in our neighborhoods and in our cities and towns, in the vibrancy of where we live and work and our day-to-day safety.
3. The knowledge and skill levels of each individual determines to a large degree the satisfaction we find as participants in our democracy, the way we raise and support our families and how we relate to and engage in discourse with our neighbors and fellow workers.

4. It's the right and just thing to care for all children as we care for our own and ensure that all have a quality education.

Examples of the comprehensive, fully funded change needed to achieve the objectives:

1. Strong early childhood support including at least universal prekindergarten at age 4 and need based prekindergarten at age 3;
2. Community Schools to develop the partnerships and provide the supports children need to meet the challenges of poverty;
3. Respectful and safe schools through a strategy such as Restorative Practices;
4. A reliable and adequate supply of great teachers and principals; and
5. Adequate funds, equitably distributed that ensure opportunity regardless of where a child lives or challenges they may face such as poverty, language and/or disability.

Communications Strategy

We have secured a polling firm to create a statewide model of voters on education issues and will receive data in July. Based on the data, we will create a district-level messaging strategy. We will use the creation of “groups of 10” in congregations and schools, secure partnerships with advocacy and organizing institutions, and engage individuals through online digital advocacy and re-targeting of social media engagements to direct actions.

We will remain in communication with monthly organizing meetings, regular social media engagement, Tele-Town Hall events, prayer vigils, delivering testimony for commission and committee hearings, and large-scale actions. We will use all of these tools to gain earned media to supplement and grow our paid digital advertising.

Grassroots Organizing Strategy

Background – Former Maryland State Superintendent of Schools (1976-88) David Hornbeck, stepping down after six years as Philadelphia’s Superintendent of Schools (1994-2000), concluded that our education challenges arise primarily out of insufficient public will and political resolve, not the absence of education know-how. He raised \$4.5 million and hired an outstanding Executive Director, establishing Good Schools Pennsylvania, where the two primary constituencies were faith communities and young people. Good Schools hired 19 staff, opened seven offices across Pennsylvania, built a network of 3,500 people who met in small groups monthly and helped create the conditions to elect a pro-education Governor and pass legislation to create a new funding formula for schools that targeted \$4 billion toward low-wealth school districts.

In Maryland, we propose to replicate the Pennsylvania playbook within a Maryland context:

1. We will build a statewide organization that has the capacity to turn out large numbers of people in Annapolis and in local jurisdictions on a persistent and regular basis for such activities as:

- A. Monthly house meetings and letter writing to state officials.
- B. Monthly prayer vigils and rallies on the steps of the capitol.
- C. Education sessions with state lawmakers and other decision-makers.

2. On a non-partisan basis, educate members of the legislature and the Kirwan Commission to make meeting the needs of ALL Maryland's children, including children with low socio-economic circumstances, English as a second language and children with disabilities their paramount priority.

3. On a non-partisan basis, make education the #1 issue in the 2018 governor's race, creating the conditions that will result in the election of a pro-education Governor.

Digital Infrastructure

- Website linked with constituent management software to track fundraising, field, and digital engagement;
- Social media accounts through Facebook, Twitter, and other targeted key channels;
- Regular blog posts educating public about education agenda;
- Paid online advertising utilizing video and photo advertisements;
- Text to Action strategy to turn out voters to events and online actions;
- Online video events for attendees across the state; and
- Targeted email list-building strategy for fundraising and event attendance.

Staffing and Organization Structure

Total Staff: 11

- *Executive Director: Pat Murray*
 - Pat served as Chris Van Hollen's Senate Campaign Manager, Executive Director of the Maryland State Democratic Committee; senior staff to both Senate President Miller and House Speaker Busch as well as chief legislative aide in Annapolis to the President of Johns Hopkins University.
- *Partnerships Director: Joe Francaviglia*
- *Communications Director: To be hired*
- *Organizers (8): To be hired*

Contact

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