

Section I

ORGANIZATION OF WORCESTER COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Article A. The Board of Education

I-A-1 Membership

The Worcester County Board of Education is composed of seven members, elected by district by the citizens of the county, for terms of four years. Members may be removed from office for specific causes by the State Board of Education.

I-A-2 Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of the county Board of Education are set forth in the Maryland Public School Laws. The Board is also bound by bylaws of the state Board of Education.

The county Board of Education shall to the best of its ability cause the provisions of the Education Article, bylaws, and the policies of the state Board of Education to be carried into effect. Subject to this Article, and to the bylaws, and the policies of the state Board of Education, the county Board of Education shall determine, with and on the advice of the county superintendent, the educational policies of the county and shall prescribe rules and regulations for the conduct and management of the schools.

The county Board of Education shall exercise, through its executive officers, the county superintendent, and his professional assistants, control and supervision over the public school system of the county. The Board shall consult and advise, through its executive officer and his professional assistants, with school advisory committees, principals, teachers and interested citizens, and shall seek in every way to promote the interests of the schools under its jurisdiction.

The following specific duties and powers are enumerated in the Public School Laws of Maryland:

- Appoint a county superintendent of schools who serves as chief executive, secretary, and treasurer of the Board.
- Maintain a uniform and effective system of public schools throughout the county.
- Determine the educational policies for the county.
- Approve rules and regulations for conduct and management of schools.
- Promote interest of schools and conduct business relative to their operation.
- Appoint certificated and non-certificated personnel and fix salaries.
- Suspend or dismiss teachers.
- Approve and distribute county courses of study.
- Purchase and distribute textbooks, visual and auditory aids, and other supplies and equipment.
- Provide legal counsel.
- Carry minimum liability insurance of \$100,000.
- Hold title of school property.
- Divide county into school districts.
- Maintain a program for education of handicapped children.
- Establish and maintain day and evening schools for adults.
- Prepare and adopt the county school budget.

All legal references, unless otherwise noted, are to "The Public School Laws of Maryland."

Have accounts audited and made public.
Have annual report prepared and published.
Consent to community use of school plant for certain purposes.

Practically all of the above duties and responsibilities are exercised on the recommendation of the county superintendent of schools.

I-A-3 Organization and Meetings

1. The Board of Education shall hold an annual meeting each year on the third Tuesday of January or as near as possible thereto in January. At this meeting, the Board shall elect one of its members as president and one as vice president and shall appoint an attorney.
2. The Board of Education shall meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 12:30 p.m. unless otherwise specified.
3. Special meetings may be called by the president.
4. The president shall preside at all meetings, sign authorized or approved contracts and other documents on behalf of the Board, and perform such other duties as are prescribed by law or by the Board. In the absence of the president, the vice president shall perform these duties.
5. The Superintendent shall be the executive officer, the secretary and treasurer of the Board. The Superintendent shall attend all meetings of the Board and of its committees, except when the Superintendent's own tenure, salary, or the administration of the office is under consideration, and shall have the right to advise on any question; but the Superintendent shall have no right to vote.
6. The treasurer shall be the custodian of and shall deposit all funds. All checks shall be signed by the treasurer and the Supervisor of Business Operations.
7. All formal action of the Board, including individual votes taken in open session, shall be a matter of public record. No motion or resolution shall be declared adopted without the concurrence of the majority of members present. A quorum shall consist of four members.
8. The Superintendent shall keep a record of the proceedings of each meeting of the Board and of all action taken.
9. The Board shall observe ***Robert's Rules of Order, Revised***, except as otherwise provided by these rules and regulations or by statute.
10. All meetings of the Board shall be held at its office unless conditions make it advisable to meet elsewhere. In case of change, adequate notice shall be given to all concerned.
11. Except for closed meetings permitted by law, all meetings of the Board of Education shall be open to the public, and the formal record of open meetings shall likewise be public.
12. Individuals or organizations desiring a formal hearing before the Board shall make their request to the secretary on or before Thursday noon preceding the meeting. This request shall be confirmed in writing stating the purpose. Individuals or groups may address the Board during the public participation segment of open Board meetings; otherwise, no member of the public attending may participate in the open session unless invited by the Board.
13. A member of the public, including any representative of the news media, may photograph, videotape, or record discussions at an open session if the equipment does not create excessive lighting or noise that disturbs Board of Education members or other persons attending the session. However, a recording of an open session made by a member of the public or any transcript derived from such a recording may not be deemed a part of the record of any proceeding of the Board of Education.

I-A-4 Order of Business

The agenda for Board meetings shall be jointly prepared by the Superintendent and the Board president and shall be formally adopted by the members of the Board.

I-A-6 Authority of Members

Board members have authority only through action by the Board legally in session. The Board shall be bound in no way by any statement or action on the part of an individual Board member, except when such statement or action is in pursuance of specific instructions of the Board.

I-A-7 Amendment to or Suspension of Rules

These rules and regulations, except those required by statute, may be amended by a majority vote of the Board or suspended if all members present are in unanimous agreement.

I-A-8 Board of Education Members Handling of Problems or Complaints

Board of Education members are highly visible in the community and are often contacted by the public. In many cases, they are expected to handle personally any problems or complaints brought to their attention. In addition, because Board members are encouraged to visit the schools, they may from time-to-time observe potential, actual or perceived problems.

In either of these cases, the Board of Education member will contact the Superintendent of Schools, or in the absence of the Superintendent, the Superintendent's designee, who will investigate the matter and make a full report to the Board of Education. Board of Education members are strongly encouraged not to address problems or complaints to school system staff members but to work directly through the Superintendent.

I-A-9 Philosophy & Mission

- I. We believe that every student can learn and must have equal access to a public education which promotes optimal individual growth. Education should motivate and enable students to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. Students must be prepared for a lifetime of learning as responsible and productive participants in a democratic society and a diverse and changing world.

We believe that every child is unique and different from every other child. Each child's pattern of growth is right for that child and can be compared with no other.

We believe that the public school program must be based on the needs, characteristics, interests, and capacities of the children it serves. Educators have an obligation to provide every child with appropriate and challenging opportunities to learn.

We believe that the student, family, educators, and community must be involved in the educational process.

- II. The mission of the Worcester County Public Schools is to enable all students to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially to become responsible citizens and enjoy productive lives.

In fulfilling this mission, the Worcester County Public Schools will....

affirm individual worth and dignity, recognize cultural diversities, and encourage students to make a personal commitment to their own education;

enable students to build character, commit to a healthy lifestyle, learn to assume civic responsibility and participate effectively in our democratic society;

enable students to acquire knowledge, skills, and ability to enter into the world of work and/or postsecondary educational experiences;

prepare students to successfully meet the challenges of an ever-changing and technologically demanding world;

provide a relevant and challenging curriculum that fosters the development of skills in communication, decision making, problem solving and thinking; as well as encourage involvement in creative arts and recreational activities;

maintain a safe and healthy environment that is conducive to effective learning;

maintain a staff of competent, culturally diverse, and highly motivated professionals;

provide the necessary human, fiscal, and material resources to assure a quality education.

I-A-10 Student Representation to the Board of Education

The Worcester County Board of Education is an advocate for students and realizes the importance of the student point of view. The Board desires the attendance and participation of student representatives at its regular meetings.

- I. The student government association of Pocomoke High School, Snow Hill High School, and Stephen Decatur High School will annually select a student and an alternate to serve as representative to the Board. The term of a student representative will run from July 1 through June 30.
 - A. The student must be a senior in good standing academically with no significant disciplinary or attendance problems.
 - B. The student must have attended high school in Worcester County for at least two years.
 - C. The student must have the support of administrators and the staff of the school attended.
- II. The regular agenda and related information will be provided to each representative prior to Board meetings.
- III. Student representatives will be encouraged to meet monthly to review agenda items before the Board meetings.
- IV. The student representative from each school will attend and participate in each Board meeting.

Articles B. Administrative and Instructional Staff

I-B-1 Duties of Personnel

The Worcester County Board of Education shall exercise through its executive officer, the county superintendent, and professional assistants, control and supervision over the public school system of the county. The major duties of school personnel shall be determined by the superintendent of schools and shall be written in the Procedures Manual.

I-C-1 School Improvement Advisory Committees

The Worcester county Board of Education recognizes that the public schools are an essential part of the communities which they serve. In order to facilitate better communication between the schools and these communities, the Board of Education shall establish school improvement advisory committees for each public school within its jurisdiction. The function of the school improvement advisory committees will be:

1. To work with the school staff to cooperatively develop school goals.
2. To establish and maintain methods of improving the total school climate by promoting equity and positive human relations activities.
3. To provide broader recognition of the historical and cultural contributions of all ethnic groups, while placing special emphasis on multicultural activities.
4. To make recommendations to the school principals as to the need for equipment, repairs, materials of instruction, and other improvements.
5. To promote the schools and its educational activities within the community.
6. To foster and promote parent organizations within the school.

School improvement advisory committees shall meet in the school at least five (5) times each school year. All members of the committee should be advised of each meeting ten days in advance of the date when the scheduled meetings is to be conducted. The principal and/or representative must be present at all meetings of the committee for that school.

The school improvement advisory committee shall consist of a minimum of eight parents or community members but no more than one parent or community member for each fifty students or major fraction thereof, based on the September 30 enrollment, who reside within the attendance area of that school at the time of appointment. The school staff shall be represented by the building principal, two teachers, a guidance counselor (if available), and a support staff member. High school committees shall also include two student members.

Appointments to school improvement advisory committees shall be for a one-year period. The principal's appointment shall be ex-officio. Unless an exception is made by the Superintendent, a SIAC member may serve for no more than three consecutive years.

It shall be the responsibility of the school improvement advisory committee to elect a chairman, secretary, and school board liaison member at the first meeting held during the school year. The secretary of the group shall file a report of its activities with the Board of Education after the final meeting of the school year. The annual report should be signed by the chairman of the committee and distributed to all committee members.

The requirements outlined below shall govern appointment to and continued membership on school improvement advisory committees.

1. Barring extenuating circumstances;
 - a. members missing the first two scheduled meetings shall be replaced, and
 - b. members missing half of the scheduled meetings for the year shall not be eligible for reappointment.

2. During June of each year, the school principal shall submit a list of recommended members for the school improvement advisory committee membership for the upcoming school year. The Board of Education will review these recommendations during its regular meeting in July.

I-C-2 Local Advisory Council for Vocational Education

The Worcester County Board of Education will appoint an Advisory Council for Vocational Education in accordance with the following:

Membership

1. The Council shall consist of no fewer than ten members, but in no event more than one member per fifty students enrolled.
2. Nonstudent members shall be drawn from business, industry and labor and selected in accordance with the recommended bylaws.
3. The membership shall include one senior student selected on a rotating basis from each of the high schools, with an alternate from each of the other two high schools. One alternate shall be a junior and the other alternate shall be a sophomore.
4. The principal of the Vocational Center shall serve in an ex officio capacity. Other school administrators and educators may serve as ex officio members.

Meetings

Meetings of the Advisory Council shall be held no fewer than six times each school year.

Term of Office for Members

The term of office for members shall be for one year, beginning September 1, and ending August 31.

Purpose and Function

1. In general the Council shall foster and support the aims and purposes of Vocational Education and engender awareness and support of the same on the part of the general public and students.
2. Specifically it shall lend its counsel and wisdom to the solution of problems and needs of vocational education which are peculiar to Worcester County, and participate in the suggested Council activities which are appropriate and meaningful for Worcester County.

I-C-3 Plan to Implement Equity in the Worcester County Public Schools

The Worcester County Board of Education endeavors to provide students equal access to program offerings and equity in all programs and services provided by the public schools. Written procedures are developed to accomplish this goal.

I-C-4 Parent/Community Involvement

The Worcester County Board of Education recognizes that a child's education is a responsibility shared by the school, family, and community during the entire period the child participates in school. A mutually supportive relationship among home, school, and community contributes to the development of both the child and the community. Through such sharing, partnerships result. To accomplish the mission of the Worcester County schools to successfully educate all students, the community, the schools, the parents, and the students must work as cooperating and knowledgeable partners.

The Worcester County Board of Education will support schools in their efforts to increase student achievement by helping them interpret the results of all assessments and to develop school improvement plans that incorporate parent/community involvement as a means for improving school performance. Specifically, the school system will:

- A. publicize its commitment to parent/community involvement in the schools;
- B. recognize exemplary programs and practices related to parent and community involvement;
- C. create an environment that is conducive to learning and supports strong comprehensive family involvement programs;
- D. seek funding sources for the development, implementation and evaluation of programs;
- E. disseminate information and research on parent and community involvement;
- F. inform and involve parents in a variety of types and degrees while recognizing the diverse needs of families in the community;
- G. provide programs that train parents in parenting skills and in assisting their children academically;
- H. make parent involvement an integral part of the school improvement process;
- I. encourage parents to become involved in their children's academic progress;
- J. assist parents in learning techniques designed to assist their children in learning at home;
- K. seek partnerships with interested businesses and service organizations.

Schools must develop innovative ways to involve and serve parents and other community members. Educators, parents, students, businesses, and other members of the community must assume joint responsibility for contributing to the fulfillment of the educational aspirations of children and adults. A community's investment in education is an investment in itself.

I-C-5 Public Charter Schools

I. During the 2003 legislative session, the State of Maryland passed enabling legislation (9-101) to create public charter schools. The legislation authorizes local Boards of Educations under certain conditions to grant charters.

II.

In keeping with the Board of Education's interest in providing varied innovative and instructional programs and recognizing that, under certain conditions, a non-traditional program may provide alternative educational opportunities for students, a charter school may be established in Worcester County. By allowing charter schools, the Board of Education intends to provide parents and students an alternative means within the existing public school system for additional innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve the education of students.

III. Definitions

“Public Charter School” means a public school that:

- A. Is nonsectarian in all its programs, policies, and operations.
- B. Is a school to which parents choose to send their children.
- C. Is open to all students on a space-available basis and admits students on a lottery basis if more students apply than can be accommodated.
- D. Is a new public school or a conversion of an existing public school.
- E. Provides a program of elementary or secondary education or both.
- F. Operates in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives.
- G. Is tuition-free for all students who are eligible to attend any other Worcester County school tuition-free.
- H. Is subject to federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination.
- I. Is in compliance with all applicable health and safety laws.
- J. Requires students to be physically present on school premises for a period of time substantially similar to that which other Worcester County Public School students spend on school premises.
- K. Is created in accordance with state law and regulations, and under the control of the Board of Education.

IV. General Guidelines

Any public charter school created under this policy operates under the authority of the Board of Education. The public charter school must abide by the provisions of all laws, policies, and regulations governing other public schools in Worcester County, except as otherwise provided in policy or state law.

The primary public chartering authority for the granting of a charter in Worcester County is the Board of Education. The secondary public chartering authority for the granting of a charter is the Maryland State Board of Education. The Maryland State Board of Education may assume chartering authority for a restructured school in accordance with state law.

An application to establish a public charter school may be submitted to the Board of Education by:

- A. The staff of a public school.
- B. A parent or guardian of a student who attends a public school in Worcester County.
- C. A nonsectarian, nonprofit entity.
- D. A nonsectarian institution of higher education in the state.
- E. Any combination of persons specified above.

Under state law, the Board of Education may not grant a charter to:

- A. A private school.
- B. A parochial school.
- C. A home school.

V. Employees Assigned to a Public Charter School

A member of the professional staff assigned to a public charter school shall hold the appropriate Maryland certification.

Employees assigned to a public charter school are Worcester County Public Schools employees and shall have the same rights and responsibilities that all other Worcester County Public Schools employees have.

Existing employee organizations and the public charter school may mutually agree to negotiate amendments to an existing agreement to address the needs of the particular public charter school. Proposed amendments to existing agreements are subject to Board of Education approval.

Employees assigned to a public charter school shall be evaluated in a manner that is consistent with state law and applicable Board of Education policies and regulations.

VI. Public Charter School Facilities

If the public charter school wishes to use existing Worcester County Public Schools buildings, such use must be negotiated with the Board of Education.

Policies and regulations related to facilities and the health and safety of students and staff will not be waived.

VII. Student Tuition

Students domiciled in Worcester County will be eligible for admittance without tuition charge. Students not domiciled in Worcester County will be eligible for admittance without tuition charge only as allowed by the school system for other non-domiciled students attending other schools in the school system.

The amount of any tuition charged will be calculated as if the student is attending any other public school in Worcester County. The tuition will be paid to the Worcester County Public Schools. However, the funding provided by the school system to the charter school for that student will be calculated in the same manner as for all other students attending the charter school.

No eligible non-tuition-paying student may be denied admittance in the charter school in order to accept a tuition-paying student.

VIII. Student Admission

The public charter school may not discriminate and must be in compliance with all federal and state anti-discrimination laws. A random selection process must be used if the number of qualified applicants exceeds the predetermined student capacity in the public charter school.

IX. Compliance with Laws, Policies, and Regulations

A public charter school shall comply with the provisions of state law and regulations governing other public schools unless a waiver is granted by the Maryland State Board of Education. The Maryland State Board of Education is prohibited from granting a waiver from provisions of law or regulations relating to:

- A. Audit requirements.
- B. The measurement of student academic achievement, including all assessments required for other public schools and other assessments mutually agreed upon by the public chartering authority and the school.
- C. The health, safety, or civil rights of a student or an employee of the public charter school.

A public charter school shall comply with all policies and regulations of the Board of Education unless the Board of Education grants a waiver of a specific policy or regulation.

Students with special education identification will adhere to the normal IEP process. Specific additional resources allocated to a student, via the approved IEP, will remain with the student going to the public charter school.

Criminal background checks shall be required as dictated by other Board of Education policies and regulations, and applicable state law.

A charter may not be granted to a school whose operation would be inconsistent with any public policy initiative, court order, or federal improvement plan governing special education that is applicable to Maryland.

Prior to opening a public charter school, the operators of the public charter school must certify to the Superintendent of Schools that the human, fiscal, and organizational capacity needed to fulfill the school's responsibilities related to children with disabilities exists.

The Maryland State Board of Education shall provide technical assistance to the operators of a public charter school to help the school meet the requirements of federal and state laws, including 20 U.S.C. §1400, et. seq. 6 and §504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §794.

X. Evaluation of a Public Charter School

The public charter school shall be evaluated based on student achievement, fiscal management, and other criteria pursuant to its approved application and the terms and conditions of the charter.

XI. Revocation of a Charter

The Board of Education may place a public charter school on probationary status to allow the implementation of a remedial plan, pending a decision to revoke the school's charter.

The Board of Education may revoke a public charter school's charter for the following reasons:

- A. The school has not fulfilled a condition imposed by the Board of Education in connection with the granting of the charter.
- B. The school has failed to comply with the charter or provisions of federal, state, or local law.

- D. The fiscal condition of the school is substantially deficient.
- E. The academic condition of the school is substantially deficient.
- F. The facility can no longer support the needs of the educational program.
- G. The charter applicants made a material and substantial false statement on the charter application.
- H. The continuation of the operation of the public charter school is not in the best interests of the public, or of the students of Worcester County Public Schools.

Upon revocation, personnel and students shall be reassigned pursuant to Board of Education policy and procedures.

Upon revocation, resources provided by the school system shall remain under the control of the Board of Education.

XII. Reporting Requirements

An annual report on each public charter school will be presented to the Board of Education by the operators of the charter school, including:

- A. Fiscal accountability.
- B. Student performance.
- C. Any other matter required pursuant to the charter. Public charter schools shall comply with all federal, state, and local reporting requirements, unless waived.

XIII. Audits

The Board of Education may require financial, programmatic, or compliance audits consistent with federal, state, and local law and procedures.

XIV. Funding, Materials, and Grants

The Board of Education will annually determine a funding allocation that includes the per pupil allocation for public charter schools that is commensurate with the per pupil amount disbursed to other schools in the county.

The Board of Education or the Maryland State Board of Education may give surplus educational materials, supplies, furniture, and other equipment to a public charter school.

An approved public charter school may seek and receive other grants through local, state, or federal government sources or private sources without a reduction in its fair share allocation, unless other provisions are included in the charter.

XV. Insurance

The operators of the charter school shall provide evidence of appropriate property and casualty insurance.

XVI. Public Charter School Application Process

An applicant to operate a public charter school shall submit an application to the Board of Education in accordance with the procedures established by the Board of Education.

Prior to the submission of a completed application, the applicant shall confer with the Superintendent or designee. The applicant, at a minimum, shall provide plans for addressing each of the components required for the formal application. The Superintendent or designee may provide advice and technical assistance as the formal application is finalized.

All applications for a charter school must be completed on a form provided by the Superintendent.

Applications shall include, but not be limited to, the following components:

- A. A statement of intent to comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations and this policy.
- B. The applicant's vision of public charter school expectations and mission. The primary mission must remain focused on student academic achievement.
- C. Specific plans and strategies for developing and delivering educational programs, including curriculum, staffing patterns and grade levels.
- D. Specific educational results including student academic outcomes and how they will be measured.
- E. Specific plans for meeting or exceeding current accountability provisions of Worcester County Public Schools and state law and regulations.
- F. Student admission procedures.
- G. A facilities plan that specifies cost, location, available space and its use, and the terms and conditions of the facility acquisition and necessary utilities. The plan should also include assurance of accessibility consistent with the Americans With Disabilities Act.
- H. A defined management and administrative structure that will be in place for the public charter school.
- I. The proposed duration of the charter and a plan which provides legal accountability for the operation of the public charter school.
- J. A plan which will include assurances of financial solvency for the duration of the charter and accountability for the use of funds and resources.
- K. A plan which provides programmatic accountability for the length of the charter.
- L. A plan for providing needed support services such as transportation, custodial and maintenance services, health services and food services.
- M. A description of the type and extent to which there is sufficient community support for the proposed public charter school.
- N. A description of any special or unique educational emphasis on specific criteria, such as reclaiming dropouts.

XVII. Timeline for Non-Restructured School Applications

For non-restructured schools, within 120 days of the receipt of a completed and required application for a public charter school, the Board of Education shall render a decision whether or not to grant the charter.

XVIII. Timeline for Restructured School Applications

Within 30 days of receipt of a completed and required application for creating a charter for a school that has been identified as meeting the conditions of restructuring, the Board of Education shall render a decision whether or not to grant the charter. The Board of Education may apply to the Maryland State Board of Education for an extension of up to 15 days from this 30-day time limit. If an extension is not granted, and 30 days have elapsed, the Maryland State Board of Education may become a chartering authority. If an extension has been granted, and 45 days have elapsed, the Maryland State Board of Education may become a chartering authority.

XIX. Appeal Process for Charter Denials

If the Board of Education denies an application to establish a public charter school, the applicant may appeal the decision to the Maryland State Board of Education in accordance with §4-205(c) of the Education Article, Annotated Code, of Maryland. By law, the Maryland State Board of Education shall render a decision within 120 days of the filing of an appeal under this section.

If the Board of Education denies an application to establish a public charter school and the Maryland State Board of Education reverses that decision, the Maryland State Board of Education may direct the Board of Education to grant a charter and shall mediate with the Board of Education and the applicant to implement the charter.

XX. Procedures

The Superintendent may adopt procedures to implement this policy.

XXI. Effective Date

This policy shall become effective on November 1, 2003.

XXII. Legal Authority

Title 9 of The Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, known as the "Maryland Public Charter School Program."