



## Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
HOUSE EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE  
CHAIRPERSON, DELEGATE STEPHANIE SMITH**

**January 23, 2025**

**&**

**SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE  
SENATE EDUCATION, BUSINESS & ADMINISTRATION  
SUBCOMMITTEE**

**CHAIRPERSON, SENATOR NANCY KING**

**January 24, 2025**



### Class of 2024

The Maryland School for the Deaf, a diverse, bilingual community, in partnership with families provides an equitable and exemplary education in a nurturing, engaging, and challenging environment to ensure our students achieve personal excellence and become responsible lifelong learners.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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The Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) provides educational and developmental services for the State's deaf and hard-of-hearing children and youth. The School, founded in 1867, serves this population through its two campuses located in Frederick and Columbia.

MSD is an independent State agency governed by its 19-member Board of Trustees, which is appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate. 87% of the School's operating budget is provided from State general funds, while the remaining 13% is provided through federal grants, various special funds (e.g. employee food sales, out of state tuition and County Participation fees) and reimbursable funds (Enhanced Program of Services) from the Maryland State Department of Education. Students who are residents of Maryland attend MSD at no cost. Students from outside Maryland may be admitted on a tuition basis.

MSD utilizes the Maryland State Curriculum and the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards offering its graduating high school seniors the Maryland State High School diploma. In 2018, MSD went through the accreditation process for the Middle States Association- Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CES) and received a recommendation for full accreditation through May 2026.

The School's instructional programs operate on a 180-day school year, from the end of August through mid-June. Extended School Year (ESY) programs and enrichment camps are offered at MSD during the summer months. Approximately 22% of the Frederick campus students and 30% of the Columbia Campus students reside at the School during the week, returning to their homes on weekends and during school breaks.

MSD's Frederick Campus provides a comprehensive elementary/secondary school program, with separate departments for Elementary (pre-K through Grade 5), Middle (Grades 6-8), and High School (Grades 9-12). The Frederick Campus also offers a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, which provides students with career skills, including computer and technical courses. In addition to providing instruction to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, the campus provides additional supports and services for students with additional learning and behavioral disabilities. In FY 2023, MSD launched the Oriole's Career Academy for students aged 18-21 who have not received a high school diploma, but can benefit from additional life skills training, employment training, problem-solving skills, and self-advocacy skills.

The Columbia Campus provides a comprehensive elementary/secondary school program for Elementary and Middle School-age students. In addition to providing instruction to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, the campus provides additional supports and services

for students with additional learning and behavioral disabilities. MSD's Family Education and Early Childhood Department (FEECD) works with families of deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and toddlers to develop early language skills for their children. Because the optimum time for language development is from birth to age three, children given early communication training have a much greater opportunity for social and academic development in later years. MSD's FEECD teachers work with approximately 75 children and their families throughout Maryland, through in-home and group sessions, to help ensure that these children will be prepared to learn at grade-level when they enter school.

The Enhanced Services serves deaf students with other moderate to severe disabilities. Generally, students in this program require educational and developmental services of a more extensive and individualized nature. There are currently 60 students receiving enhanced services in the current school year.

Current student enrollment (representing 21 of 23 counties, and Baltimore City) reached 465 students.

## THE SCHOOL'S MISSION

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The Maryland School for the Deaf, a diverse, bilingual community, in partnership with families provides an equitable and exemplary education in a nurturing, engaging, and challenging environment to ensure our students achieve personal excellence and become responsible lifelong learners.

### ***MSD BELIEF STATEMENTS***

We believe that .....

- Our students learn best in a bilingual environment in which American Sign Language and English are used.
- Each student is a valued individual with unique physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs.
- Students have a right to a safe, caring, and engaging learning environment.
- Early and ongoing language acquisition is vital.
- Students are challenged to achieve their highest academic and career potential.
- Quality education and open communication is a shared responsibility between the school, its students, their families, and the community.
- Ongoing parent education and access to resources and services are essential to student success.
- Students learn in a variety of ways and have opportunities to grow and access services that support their learning styles.
- Diversity is valued and increases students' understanding and respect of different people and cultures.
- Cross-curricular literacy instruction is essential to student success.
- Our students develop academic and social behaviors through systematic application of evidence-based strategies.
- Access to and competency with current technology is essential for student learning.
- Student life and extracurricular activities promote wellness and personal growth.

## GOALS

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### ***I. Students achieve their developmental potential.***

Maryland School for the Deaf provides an unsurpassed level of experience, expertise, and dedication in the education and personal development of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and youth. And while MSD already serves almost 6 out of 10 deaf students in the State, it is our goal to continue to develop programs and services that will best serve the needs of all deaf and hard-of-hearing students in Maryland. The School has already implemented its Program of Enhanced Services for deaf students with additional moderate to severe disabilities. MSD, in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education, has expanded services to further support students with autism spectrum disorder. MSD had also implemented Spoken English (as a language of instruction) classes for children who have cochlear implants as well as children who are hard of hearing. A Work-to-Learn program serves high school students who meet specific requirements for vocational rehabilitation services. Through this successful partnership between MSD and the MSDE Division of Rehabilitation Services, participating MSD Students receive training and support as they gain work experience.

With its convenient, centrally located two-campus configuration, MSD is well-positioned to pursue and achieve this goal by providing deaf students and their families with the best of both worlds—a progressive, enriching, state-of-the-art program dedicated to and focused on their special educational and developmental needs, and the proximity to allow most students to live at home and participate as members of their local community.

MSD offers two types of curriculum to its students. The first follows the Maryland State Curriculum and the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. Students following this program are eligible to receive the Maryland State High School diploma. The second is a Life-Based Education Curriculum, which allows options for students to receive the Maryland State Certificate of Program Completion. Students receiving Enhanced Program services may follow a High School diploma or a Life-Based Education path. Students with severe developmental disabilities receive services based on their individual needs.

### ***II. Establish communication for parents and their children in the Family Education and Early Childhood Department.***

The Family Education and Early Childhood Department (FEECD) serves deaf and hard of hearing students from birth until their fifth birthday. Family educators who have skills necessary to deal effectively with the linguistic, social-emotional, and academic needs of this population provide services to parents of deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers. Emphasis is placed on establishing communication between children and

their parents using a bilingual approach. This means that the languages of instruction are American Sign Language (ASL) and English. Concepts and language are taught as early as possible since the prime time for language acquisition is between birth and three years of age. Children and their families are encouraged to consider the use of amplification as appropriate as well as speech therapy in order to develop all communication opportunities for the child.

In addition to providing individual home visits on a regular basis throughout the state, the department also sponsors regional parent meetings. In order to facilitate communication between parent and child, ASL instruction is offered during home visits, virtually and on campus at no cost to the parent during the school year. FEECD offers weekly parent meetings at both Frederick and Columbia during the school year. While the parent meeting occurs, the youngest children (birth to 24 months) may participate in infant/toddler playgroups with FEECD staff. Two-year-old and three-year-old classes are offered at both campuses throughout the week. Speech teachers work with children in individual and group sessions as appropriate for the child's age and developmental level.

The three-year-old classes have been expanded to a full day for children with an MSD Individualized Education Program (IEP). The children are immersed in language rich environments to ensure important gains in language acquisition are achieved. The program expansion allows for deeper daily instruction to provide these young learners with solid school readiness skills in the areas of language, literacy, mathematical thinking, early science and social studies. These young learners will enter Pre-kindergarten and then Kindergarten ready for the rigors of the College and Career Ready Standards.

Family engagement is a key factor in student achievement. The full day program for three-year-old students includes many opportunities for families to engage and support their child's early learning via parent support meetings, home visits, conferences with teachers and daily communication.

### ***III. Provide quality educational and developmental services.***

MSD is licensed by the Department of Human Services for residential services. The license requires that all student life staff receive training in CPR/First Aid, blood-borne pathogens, child development, identifying and reporting child neglect and abuse and other courses for a total of 40 hours each year. The School will continue to provide training to staff to enable a safe and nurturing environment for its students. All residential staff must be certified by the Maryland Department of Health (COMAR 10.57.03). Residential Child and Youth Care Practitioners (RCYCP) must take a training program and pass an examination to obtain initial certification. They are then required to complete 20 Continuing Education Units every two years to renew their certification.

MSD offers a tuition reimbursement program to assist teachers and staff in obtaining their educational requirements for certification and to obtain highly qualified teachers. This program is being utilized to provide education to staff to fill administrative positions for forecasted vacancies. The School is being proactive in succession planning to meet the future needs as senior staff begins to retire.

MSD's Master Plan identifies capital projects needed to provide MSD's future students with state-of-the-art program facilities. The Frederick Campus Veditz Building Renovation project has begun the construction phase of the project. The project provides an updated, state-of-the-art Career Technology Education Program at MSD. The construction stage of the Emergency Mass Notification System for the Columbia Campus has begun. This Emergency Mass Notification System will provide life safety improvements to the MSD Columbia Campus. The design contract for the Frederick Campus dormitory construction project has been awarded and the project kick off meeting was held in January 2025. This project will provide updated Americans with Disabilities Act compliant dormitories, a health center and a student center.

MSD recognizes that the world is changing and to prepare students for the future, the MSD curriculum includes innovative computer technology and media equipment. By becoming literate with computers, students leave MSD with skills that are valued in today's job market. MSD uses laptop computers, iPads and Chromebooks in order to provide quality technology for staff and students.

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### **Deficiency Appropriation for Chiller Replacement**

The Maryland School for the Deaf is using general funds to cover the costs of a rental chiller for the air conditioning in the Ely Academic Building. MSD has these funds due to higher than budgeted personnel vacancies. The Department of General Services will begin the procurement of a replacement chiller when the budget is signed, and MSD can transfer the funds for the chiller to DGS. It should be noted that MSD has offered general funds to cover approximately \$300,000 of the cost of the replacement chiller in addition to paying for a rental chiller.

### **Personnel Data**

MSD has not realized a large savings in personnel vacancies for two reasons. First, in FY 2025 MSD used a number of the contractual conversion PINs to convert long term teacher aides who were funded by reimbursable funds. These conversions did not generate a savings in general funds, but increased employee morale as these employees had been waiting for numerous years to receive a PIN. This means that MSD's contractual employee spending for FY 2025 is more than double the amount budgeted.

The second reason MSD is not realizing a savings from vacancies is the failure of the Ely Building chiller. For FY 2025 MSD expects to spend at least \$300,000 on rental of a temporary chiller.

MSD has determined that the school can offset approximately \$300,000 of the replacement cost of the new chiller.

### **Legislative Audit**

MSD continues to work diligently to correct all Office of Legislative Audit Findings. The solicitation for the sign language interpreting services is currently posted on eMMA. MSD is working closely with the Office of State Procurement to present this contract to the Board of Public Works as soon as the bids are evaluated and MSD can complete the required paperwork to present the contract to the Board of Public Works.

The revised Memorandum of Agreement with the MSD Foundation has been completed. MSD is working with the Foundation to ensure the missing reports are received.



## **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment**

Since the submission of MSD's Joint Chairmen's Report in November 2024, the Family Education and Early Education teachers and staff have participated in weekly training sessions focused on the Child Outcomes Survey (COS). These sessions are designed to build proficiency in administering the COS and utilizing the associated assessment tools, ensuring ongoing support and fidelity in implementation. Teachers are actively conducting child outcome surveys using the selected assessment tools.

Furthermore, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has announced plans to host professional development sessions for the new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) beginning this month and continuing thereafter. Selected MSD administrators and staff are scheduled to register and participate in these sessions over the coming months. They will also attend subsequent training opportunities offered by MSDE. The information gained from these MSDE training sessions will enable MSD administrators to proactively train teachers and staff in preparation for the administration of the new KRA during the upcoming school year.

## **MFR Graduation Targets**

In June 2024, MSD had 16 students who graduated with a high school diploma. Ten students who graduated are attending college. The remaining six students chose to enter the workforce. MSD is proud to report that while not all of our graduates went straight to college, the graduates who chose not to attend college are contributing members of society.

## **Recommended Actions**

MSD concurs with the Governor's allowance.