

Office of the Superintendent of Schools  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Rockville, Maryland

April 27, 2022

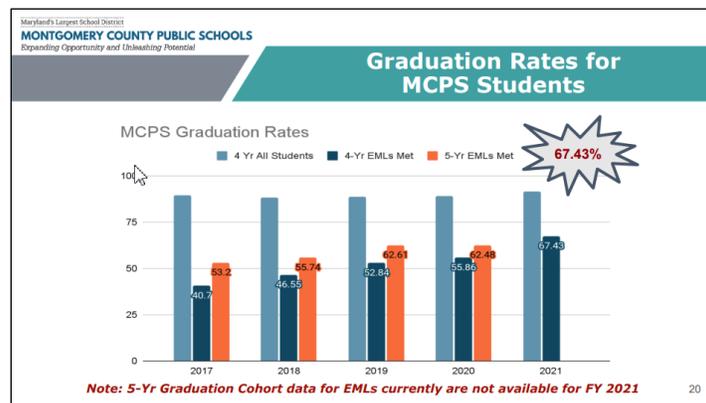
MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education  
From: Monifa B. McKnight, Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Subject: Graduation Rate and Impact from the Pandemic (03-24-2022-02-B)

During the *International Admissions and Enrollment Update* discussion, Board members requested the following information:

**Question B**

Dr. Joftus suggested that staff “dig a little deeper” into the data presented to the Board on slide 20 of the presentation. How is it that the graduation rate is going up as reported if students are struggling from the pandemic closures and beyond?



**Response**

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) calculates the official 4-year and 5-year graduation rates for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) each year that we report to the Board and the Montgomery County community. Table 1 illustrates a comparison of the Montgomery County Public Schools’ graduation rate to the State of Maryland’s graduation rate during the past four years.

**Table 1: A Yearly Comparison of the Maryland State Graduation Rate and the Montgomery County Public Schools Graduation Rates**

<b>Class of...</b>	<b>State Graduation Rate</b>	<b>MCPS Graduation Rate</b>	<b>N</b> (change from previous school year)	<b>Emergent Multilingual Learner Graduation Rate</b>	<b>N</b> <b>Emergent Multilingual Learner</b>
<b>2018</b>	88.4	<b>87.7</b>	11,970 <b>(+539)</b>	46.6	1,132 <b>(+444)</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>87.7</b>	<b>88.7</b>	12,156 <b>(+186)</b>	<b>52.8</b>	1,425 <b>(+293)</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>86.8</b>	<b>89.3</b>	12,646 <b>(+490)</b>	<b>55.9</b>	1,663 <b>(+238)</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>87.2</b>	<b>91.4</b>	12,278 <b>(-368)</b>	<b>67.4</b>	1,274 <b>(-389)</b>

**Notes:**

- Green text indicates an increase in the graduation rate or cohort population
- Red text indicates a decrease in the graduation rate or cohort population

During the pandemic, adjustments were made to graduation requirements that may have influenced the Class of 2020 and Class of 2021 graduation rates in MCPS:

### **Enrollment and Course Credits**

MCPS requires more credits than is required by the Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR). MCPS requires 4.0 math credits versus 3.0 math credits per COMAR and 1.0 physical education credit versus 0.5 physical education credit per COMAR. During School Year (SY) 2020 and SY 2021, the Montgomery County Board of Education approved the reduction of MCPS credits to match the minimum MSDE requirements due to the impact of the pandemic on students. Thus, students in the Class of 2021 needed fewer credits in these areas.

### **Student Service Learning Hours**

COMAR requires graduating seniors to volunteer for at least 75 hours throughout the course of their middle and high school careers. The Maryland State Board of Education approved a waiver for SY 2020 and SY 2021. Due to the impact of the pandemic on the ability of students to volunteer during the school year and community shutdown at the end of SY 2020 and during all of SY 2021, graduating seniors did not need to meet this requirement.

### **Maryland High School Assessments**

To be awarded the Maryland High School Diploma, all students, including elementary and middle school students who take high school level courses, shall take the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment for algebra, science, English, and government after the student completes the required course or courses (COMAR 13A.03.02.05.b). The Maryland State Board of Education approved

a waiver for seniors from participating in the Algebra 1, English 10, and the Maryland Integrated Science assessments in SY 2021.

### **Graduation Validation Team Work**

Beginning in the 2019–2020 school year, a central office Graduation Validation Team was established to collaborate with the school-based graduation teams throughout the school year to support the monitoring and validation of each potential graduate. Quarterly meetings are held to review student pre-graduation status to ensure students are enrolled in required coursework. Their course grades, student service learning hours, and high school assessments are monitored to ensure students are on track for graduation in June. These intentional meetings, and a comprehensive student graduation database actively monitored by school staff, have helped the high schools identify students who are missing graduation requirements so appropriate interventions can be put implemented in a timely manner to ensure the student graduates on time.

The combination of the aforementioned modified graduation requirements and the work of the Graduation Validation Team with each high school may have positively impacted the districtwide graduation rates.

If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Donna M. Blaney, supervisor, Testing and Reporting Unit, Office of Shared Accountability, via e-mail.

MBM:KLA:dmb

Copy to:

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