

Garrett County Public Schools



**GCPS STRATEGIC PLAN:
ALIGNED WITH THE BLUEPRINT FOR
MARYLAND'S FUTURE**

2024-2027

WWW.GCPS.NET



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GCPS Mission

The mission of Garrett County Public Schools, in partnership with our community, is to inspire and foster student growth by providing rigorous instruction and real-world learning opportunities, sustaining a culture of excellence, offering research-based supports for diverse learning needs, and preparing our students for life in an ever-changing world.

GCPS Vision

Education is the key to the vitality and sustainability of our community. The Garrett County Public School System maintains an environment in which staff, students, parents, and the community work collectively for a brighter tomorrow. While celebrating the culture and traditions of Garrett County, the schools and community collaboratively create an environment where the needs of the whole child are nurtured to become productive, enthusiastic, and successful members of society.

GCPS Core Values



Excellence

We provide our students and staff with the means to excel above expectations while living with integrity, taking responsibility for their actions, learning from mistakes, and achieving to the best of their ability.



Effectiveness

We are committed to providing a positive school climate where each student is recognized as a valued and unique learner. All students will be engaged in learning that promotes critical thinking and problem solving to cultivate lifelong learning and active, engaged citizenship.



Innovation

We use innovative teaching techniques to nurture enthusiasm and curiosity by encouraging students to explore, investigate, and question the world around them as they work together to solve real-world problems.



Community

We foster community involvement and appreciation of diversity by collaboration among students, staff, parents, businesses, area agencies, and other stakeholders in our community.

Introduction to the Garrett County Strategic Plan

Over the past year, Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) has worked to develop a comprehensive three-year strategic plan in alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, covering the school years from 2024-2025 to 2026-2027. The goal was to create a strategic plan to address the Blueprint's five key areas:

1. Early Childhood Education
2. High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders
3. College and Career Readiness
4. Increased Resources to Ensure Student Success
5. Governance and Accountability

Through extensive collaboration with stakeholders, GCPS has identified three cross-cutting priority areas that will guide our efforts in strengthening the school system. These areas will support our continued commitment to providing rigorous instruction and meaningful learning experiences for all students.

This strategic plan outlines high-level strategies and action steps aimed at achieving our vision and mission, as well as the outcomes outlined in the Blueprint. Each priority area is supported by clear goals, allowing us to track progress and make data-driven decisions to ensure continued growth and success for our students, staff, and community. Unless otherwise indicated, all goals are three-year goals spanning from 2024-2025 through 2026-2027. For more details about the GCPS Blueprint Plan, please visit our website at <https://www.gcps.net/Page/2805>.



Core Priorities of the Garrett County Public Schools Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Priority One: Staffing

Recruit and Retain High-Quality Staff



Priority Two: High-Quality Instruction

Provide all Students with Access to High-Quality Instruction and Support



Priority Three: Partnerships

Foster Collaboration Between Schools, Communities, and Families





Priority #1: Staffing

Recruit and Retain High-Quality Staff

In Garrett County, we have a highly talented staff of 565 full-time benefited employees, including 306 teachers who educate approximately 3,400 students. Of our teaching staff, 5.7% are National Board Certified (NBC), and the average teacher tenure is 14.9 years. Each year, 8.26% of our staff transition out of their roles. As we implement the Maryland Blueprint, a key priority is improving staff retention, particularly in critical areas such as special education.

To address this, we are developing a Career Ladder that offers competitive pay, a balanced school day with dedicated time for teacher planning and collaboration, and an enhanced evaluation system that meets the needs of all teachers. This Career Ladder will reflect our local context and values while clearly outlining role descriptions at each of the four levels as well as the pathway for staff to progress between them. As part of the Career Ladder, we aim to identify talented teacher leaders who will provide job-embedded learning for our staff. Through the Career Ladder, we will also incentivize our teachers to pursue and earn National Board Certification.

Measurable 3 Year Goals

- ✓ Increase the percentage of all teachers retained over the next three years from 90.96% to 94.96%.
- ✓ Increase the percentage of teachers obtaining National Board Certification from 5.7% to 15%.
- ✓ Increase the substitute fill rate from 79.6% to 88% by increasing the active substitute pool.

GCPS will also monitor system-wide metrics to assess progress toward goal attainment and Blueprint outcomes such as:

- Retention rates for new teachers
- Credentials for both new and returning teachers
- The number of teachers on the career ladder with schedules that support a 60/40 split between teaching and other responsibilities
- Critical staff vacancy rates in special education, student services, and early childhood education

Priority #1: Staffing

Key Strategies

Summary Action Steps

1.1

Implement the four levels of the Career Ladder to support high-quality and diverse staffing

- A. Strengthen incentives for teachers, including phasing in a new salary scale
- B. Support staff in attaining necessary credentials and certifications, including National Board Certification

1.2

Develop Blueprint aligned systems that provide teachers with additional time to collaborate, participate in professional development, and work with students in small groups

- A. Work with school-based staff to support increased opportunities for collaboration and job-embedded professional learning anchored in the GCPS Cycle of Continuous Improvement
- B. Study best practices in strategic staffing, such as distributed leadership

1.3

Invest in improving our teacher evaluation system

- A. Develop a peer assistance review (PAR) model
- B. Evaluate and strengthen our systems for supporting new teachers
- C. Use the PLC model to provide job-embedded support for teachers

1.4

Review and strengthen pipelines and incentives in critical staffing areas, such as special education and substitute pool

- A. Provide professional learning to respond to staffing challenges
- B. Strengthen partnerships with higher education



Priority #2: High-Quality Instruction

Provide all Students with Access to High-Quality Instruction and Support

Garrett County Public Schools has made tremendous progress in shifting core classroom instructional practices toward the Science of Reading. We fully trained all Pre-K3 through 2nd-grade teachers as well as intervention, special education teachers, and elementary administrators. This work in literacy has provided a strong foundation for moving toward Science of Learning-aligned practices in other subject areas.

Looking ahead, we are focused on strengthening our core and supplemental instruction. In the summer of 2024, we convened a committee of school staff to develop a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Playbook intended to provide guidance, tools, and resources to schools around identifying and supporting students who are not on track to being college and career ready. Over the next three years, district and school leaders will be working toward full implementation of the playbook and MTSS model by providing professional learning around how to use our Cycle of Continuous Improvement to strengthen core instruction as well as our interventions using evidence-based practices.

Measurable Goals

Note: Goals are 2 year goals due to MSDE Adopting a New State Assessment in School Year 2026-2027

- ✓ Increase the percentage of grade 3 students scoring proficient or higher on the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment from 46.1% to 56.1% by the end of the 2025-2026 school year.
- ✓ Increase the percentage of grade 3-8 students scoring proficient or higher on the ELA assessment from 49% to 59% by the end of the 2025-2026 school year.
- ✓ Increase the percentage of grade 3-8 students scoring proficient or higher on the math assessment from 28.7% to 38.7% by the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

GCPS will also monitor system-wide metrics to assess progress toward goal attainment and Blueprint outcomes such as:

- Percentage of teachers feeling confident in providing evidence-based instruction
- Evidence of teachers using high-quality instructional materials and resources to deliver explicit instruction in math and literacy classrooms and within all tiers of the Multi-Tiered System of Support Model
- Percentage of students with a strong sense of belonging within their school based on the Behavioral Health Screener

Priority #2: High-Quality Instruction

Key Strategies

Summary Action Steps

2.1

Launch our comprehensive English Language Arts and Math plans with a focus on delivering quality instruction

A. Finalize the comprehensive literacy/math plans and provide ongoing professional learning to support implementation

B. Increase emphasis on evidence-based teaching practices that align with high-quality instructional materials

2.2

Review and strengthen our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

A. Develop a detailed plan for implementing MTSS and offer continuous professional learning opportunities to support successful implementation

B. Invest in resources to strengthen MTSS implementation

2.3

Utilize a range of data, including a behavioral health screener to promote students' success

A. Implement behavioral health screener and utilize the data to support student learning

B. Engage community partners to provide students with needed child supports

C. Continue to analyze data and causes of chronic absenteeism to inform appropriate interventions

2.4

Cultivate collaborative learning opportunities that meet a range of teacher needs

A. Refine structures for supporting teachers pursuing National Board Certification

B. Provide targeted professional learning and support for new teachers

C. Offer support to strengthen the effectiveness of current Professional Learning Communities



Priority #3: Partnerships

Foster Collaboration Between Schools, Communities, and Families

Garrett County Public Schools offers a range of quality programming for students from cradle to career. We currently offer universal Pre-K4 to all students who desire to attend and have begun to increase access for eligible three-year-olds by exploring innovative models such as collaborative classrooms with Head Start. At the secondary level, we have worked with local institutions of higher education (Garrett College, Frostburg University, West Virginia University, and Allegany Community College) and local businesses to increase access for our high school students to dual enrollment courses, apprenticeships, and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. We have also redesigned our secondary master schedule to allow for the greater flexibility needed to enable students to benefit from these programs.

Looking ahead, we still want to reach more eligible students. In PreK3 this means offering high-quality private and public programs so that caregivers have access to quality options that are close to home. At the secondary level, we need to continue building our Advanced Placement and Apprenticeship options.

Measurable 3 Year Goals

- ✓ Increase the percentage of GCPS 10th graders meeting the College and Career Readiness (CCR) standard by the end of 10th grade from 56.64% to 66.64%
- ✓ Increase the number of eligible private provider classrooms as part of a mixed delivery system from 0 to 3.
- ✓ Increase the percentage of seniors who complete a post CCR pathway including Career Technical Education (industry certification or Apprenticeship completion), Dual Enrollment, and/or Advanced Placement program from 24% to 29%.

GCPS will also monitor system-wide metrics to assess progress toward goal attainment and Blueprint outcomes such as:

- Percentage of students attaining the CCR standard before high school graduation
- Percentage of students scoring “Ready” for Kindergarten on the new Maryland State Assessment beginning in the school year 2025-26
- Survey feedback and response rates from parents specific to their sense of partnership in their child’s education

Priority #3: Partnerships

Strategies

Summary Action Steps

3.1

Deliver high-quality early childhood programs to all eligible students alongside partner organizations

- A. Provide support for private providers working toward accreditation
- B. Provide professional learning for public and private early childhood providers
- C. Expand and develop innovative and collaborative early childhood models
- D. Inform and educate caregivers to increase enrollment in early childhood programs

3.2

Collaborate meaningfully with our families and caregivers

- A. Define the partnership journey for students as they progress through our system
- B. Foster positive and effective communication by identifying the preferred communication channels of families

3.3

Develop College and Career Ready (CCR) graduates by expanding access to quality programming and leveraging partnerships with higher education

- A. Grow CCR pathway programming
- B. Expand opportunities for students to attain college credit through dual enrollment
- C. Reflect on and enhance Non-CCR pathways to support increased CCR readiness
- D. Implement the CCR Endorsement, CTE Endorsement, and Certificate Endorsement for graduation

Process for Developing the Strategic Plan

The development of the Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) strategic plan was a collaborative and thoughtful process that involved a wide range of stakeholders, including educators, administrators, students, parents, community members, and local partners. Over the past year, we worked closely with these stakeholders to ensure that our plan reflects the needs, priorities, and aspirations of our school community while aligning with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

The process began by establishing the Executive Blueprint Steering Committee, along with pillar-specific committees that included diverse representation. We grounded our work in the system's existing mission and vision, revising them to better align with the outcomes outlined in the Blueprint. From there, we facilitated a series of workgroups, reviewed system-level data, conducted focus groups and interviews, and gathered input through surveys to identify key areas for growth. This comprehensive feedback was crucial in pinpointing the top priority areas with the greatest potential for impact.

Engagement Opportunities Included:

- **Brainstorming and Feedback:** Blueprint Pillar Specific Steering Committees and Workgroups, including representatives from a wide range of stakeholder groups
- **Focus Groups:** Staff, students, families, and the community
- **Stakeholder Data:** Interviews and staff survey data
- **Executive Blueprint Steering Committee**

The final draft of the strategic plan reflects the collective vision of our school system and is designed to guide us over the next three years. It underscores our commitment to achieving the Blueprint's outcomes, while fostering a culture of continuous improvement, collaboration, and accountability. Going forward, we will continue to engage with stakeholders and monitor progress to ensure we remain on track and deliver meaningful results for all students.



Acknowledgements

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The Blueprint Executive Committee extends its deepest gratitude to all stakeholders—including teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, students, and community and partner organizations—for their invaluable contributions to this plan.

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