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MSDE and Five Local Education Agencies Receive \$1M in Federal Funding to Enhance Diverse and Inclusive Educational Opportunities

Two-year grant will expand access to selective admissions programs, improve dual language immersion offerings, and diversify early childhood education.

BALTIMORE (October 3, 2023) – Today, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) celebrates the award of \$1 million for the [Fostering Diverse Schools Demonstration program](#) from the U.S. Department of Education. This two-year grant will support the *Pathways to Progress* initiative, designed to foster inclusive and diverse educational opportunities across five local education agencies (LEAs): Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Charles County Public Schools, Frederick County Public Schools, Howard County Public School System, and Montgomery County Public Schools.

The program aims to address socioeconomic diversity through a phased approach over the next two years. The initiative intends to benefit over 365,000 students, accounting for 43% of Maryland’s student enrollment, by enhancing socioeconomic diversity, promoting integration, and elevating the quality of instruction.

Maryland State Board of Education President Clarence C. Crawford said, “This grant is a testament to Maryland’s commitment to fostering a richly diverse and inclusive educational environment. As we endeavor to equip every student in Maryland for success, this project brings us one step closer to a future where every child, regardless of background, is given an equal chance to thrive.”

“For public education to work for every student, we must expand access to advanced academic pathways across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. These grant funds will help to disrupt policies that have systemically excluded too many children who are fully capable of thriving in such programs,” said State Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury. “Decades of research make it clear that all students thrive in socioeconomically, racially diverse and integrated learning environments. The *Pathways to Progress* initiative will reform processes that served as little more than gatekeeping as we continue moving Maryland towards excellence and equity in education.”

Within the *Pathways to Progress* initiative, three primary programs will be phased in: the Access to Excellence Initiative, focusing on diversifying selective admissions, schools, and pathways; the Shared Voices Initiative, which seeks to establish high-quality Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs; and the

Unified Access to Early Excellence Initiative, aiming to create diverse early learning environments and broaden access to high-quality Pre-K programs. Each of these targeted programs has been crafted to address unique challenges, from enhancing the quality of instructional opportunities for English learners to revising admissions processes for greater inclusivity.

“In Montgomery County, we believe in the power of diverse learning environments to shape world-class citizens,” said Montgomery County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Monifa McKnight. “The *Pathways to Progress* initiative will not only strengthen our educational framework but will also inspire our students to value and celebrate diversity in every facet of their lives.”

Updates on the *Pathways to Progress* initiative will be available on the MSDE website in the coming months.

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