

## Testimony to the Maryland State Board of Education

Virtual Public Hearing on College & Career Readiness Standards

<https://www.youtube.com/live/n5TzqOYtW10?si=osf6RW2T7LieVPK1&t=5923>

**November 9, 2023**

Good evening to all of you on the State Board and Superintendent Wright. I am Sean Bulson, Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools. I'll start by sharing that I am speaking this evening as superintendent of Harford County rather than as a representative of PSSAM.

I endorse the proposed college and career readiness standard before the board this evening and I believe it is particularly appropriate as a measure for students in Grade 10, so you can record this as an endorsement from at least one superintendent.

That said, I'd like to use the remainder of my time to plant a seed about what comes next in our CCR discussions. At some point soon, we will want to know how successful we have been with those who didn't meet the standard by 10th grade.



In 2019, in anticipation of the Commission's work that would later become law, Harford County introduced the North Star Initiative in conjunction with our local community college to ensure our students *demonstrate* success in college level work or at least one career prior to graduation. I consider this distinction unique in our approach, so I'll repeat it. We focus on students *demonstrating* success in college level work or in careers rather than attempting merely to measure readiness. An important consideration is that our summative measure is based on a cohort which equates to a graduating class.



Specifically, we aim for each student to achieve at least one of the following defined goals before they graduate: completing high school with successful college-level work, earning college credits via dual enrollment, or obtaining a career credential, whether through certifications, licensures, apprenticeships or technical skills assessments.



We now have five years of summative data related to those outcomes and we are learning a great deal about what we need to do to continue to shape our students' futures. This summative measure can capture the diverse accomplishments stemming from support pathways, apprenticeships, and advanced coursework. We commissioned a comprehensive research and evaluation report about our North Star outcomes, which we are happy to share.

The adoption of the proposed CCR standard provides a milestone in our statewide Blueprint efforts. It also provides an opportunity to extend the foundational work laid by 10th-grade CCR standards into what comes next for our students, which I believe will translate the Blueprint's vision into reality – a vision where every student is equipped for a changing, global economy and a life beyond high school.

Thank you for your support and consideration as we work together to serve Maryland's students.

Thank you.



Sean Bulson  
*Superintendent*  
*Harford County Public Schools*



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Blueprint web information: <https://www.hcps.org/superintendent/blueprint.aspx>

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**November 9, 2023**

Good evening,

I'm Katie Ridgway, Harford County Public Schools Director of Strategic Initiatives, and the Blueprint Coordinator. Tonight, I'd like to discuss the career portion of the work surrounding college and career readiness. I appreciate the extensive effort put into developing the proposed CCR standard and support the research and findings, although it seems heavy on college success indicators. I do believe there's an opportunity to deliberate more on career readiness. I offer two considerations.



First, please explore an alternative measure for students on support pathways who might not excel on standardized tests or have the means to enhance their GPA. These students may, however, possess talents that align well with particular career paths. At HCPS, our approach involves supporting students through apprenticeships, technical skills assessments, certifications, and non-credit career coursework. We must ensure that every student's unique career paths are recognized and supported, and that their achievements in career readiness are valued and funded appropriately. An alternative CCR measure focused on career could help support this effort and perhaps provide valuable funding and recognition for the pathways specific to career.



Second, we see a critical need for the state to support our aforementioned efforts surrounding non-credit career coursework with our local community college. We have made a significant investment in the apprenticeship model, as we believe it is the most rigorous measure of career readiness, but the apprenticeship model requires relevant educational experience. Such educational experience does not always align with credit-bearing coursework. Thus, we have invested in non-credit courses for our students, which are aligned more closely with the apprenticeship requirements, leading to a considerable expansion in student apprenticeship opportunities. With added benefit, these non-credit career courses also support students in obtaining career certifications outside of the apprenticeship model.

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I ask the Maryland State Board of Education to take this moment to solidify the importance of career readiness. Consider alternative measures for career readiness and support alternative opportunities through non-credit college coursework and career certifications. These intentional efforts will enhance the Blueprint's investment and serve many students well.

Thank you.



Katie Ridgway  
*Director of Strategic Initiatives*  
*Harford County Public Schools Blueprint Coordinator*



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