

Ending the Crisis of Opportunity

**A Plan to Better Educate
Maryland's Children**

ben
jealous
FOR GOVERNOR



Dear Marylanders,

As a parent of two young children attending Maryland's public schools, I know there is no greater obligation than ensuring every child has the resources they need to grow and thrive. For generations we have witnessed many great strides in public education, but sadly, for every advancement, we also saw many more broken promises to fully fund our schools, and treat educators with the dignity and respect they deserve.

I come from a family of educators. Over generations, my family has founded a university, taught in public schools, and helped lead efforts for educational equality. I'm proud to continue this tradition as a professor at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University and as President of the NAACP. I sat on President Obama's Equity and Excellence Commission working to address the disparities in meaningful educational opportunities that give rise to the achievement gap.

I've been endorsed by the Maryland State Educators Association (MSEA) because of all the candidates who have promised to finally fully fund our schools, I'm the one they trust to ensure that in this moment, we don't make another broken promise to the next generation of children. As governor, I'll ensure our schools are fully funded and help to finish the work for educational equality people like my mother started a generation ago.

When my mother was 12 years old, she sued Baltimore's Western High School for Girls so she could desegregate it when she was 15. She was part of the wave of *Brown v. Board of Education* litigants fighting for equal access to the classroom alongside legal giants like Thurgood Marshall. We've known since at least then, that no theory of education really works unless we fully fund our schools.

It's been 63 years since my mom was met with virulent racism as she walked into high school for the first time. Today, the realities are just as stark for far too many Marylanders. Our schools, in many ways, remain racially segregated, and as was the case a generation ago, we have one school system for the wealthy and a very different system for the poor. Racial and economic inequalities have been baked into our educational system, and our generation must be the first to finally end this vicious cycle and provide every child with a high quality education.

For far too long, we have allowed ourselves to believe Maryland cannot afford to fully fund our schools. As a civil rights leader and community organizer, I believe the opposite is true - we in fact can no longer afford to not fully fund our schools. Already, in just a few short years, our state has fallen from 1st place to 6th nationally, while our educators remain underpaid and undervalued, and many children freeze in their classrooms during the winter and lack air conditioners in the spring and fall. These are not funding problems; they are priority problems.

As governor, I'll finally set Maryland on a pathway where fully funding our schools becomes our state's top priority. Along the way, we will ensure universal pre-K, expand community schools and pay our educators more. For me it's simple: when we invest in our kids' education, we're investing in the future of our state. Let's be the generation that finally fully funds our schools.

Ben Jealous

Ending the Crisis of Opportunity

A Plan to Better Educate Maryland's Children

From Cradle to Career: Ensuring Our Schools Are Pipelines to Growing Our Economy

As governor, Ben Jealous will ensure Maryland's public schools are pipelines into every industry in our state through expanded career and technical education programs that will reorient Maryland from K-12 Public Education to K-14 Public Education

Every child should be college or career ready when they graduate from a Maryland High School. A core benefit of fully funding our schools, is ensuring more career and technical education programs are available to every young person. These programs can prepare our teens for jobs right after high school while building key skills for college should they choose to pursue higher education. In Maryland, we have far too many jobs that either go unfilled or employers are forced to recruit outside of the state to build their workforce. We can reverse these trends, but it starts by reorienting our approach to education and ensuring our public schools are pipelines into the industries that fuel our state currently and into the future. There was once a time when public education only went to 8th grade, but as we re-assessed our economic needs we expanded it to 12th. We need to do that again and make sure public education goes from K-14.

Ben Jealous has already released a comprehensive plan for higher education which outlines his vision to expand career and technical education into high schools, and provide tuition assistance to those who go on to study in needed fields. The goal is to make public education the fattest pipeline into every industry in the state. We know there is no shortage of good jobs for our kids, there's simply a shortage of our kids who have been prepared for the good jobs we have. As governor, Ben Jealous will ensure Maryland's public schools are pipelines into every industry in our state through expanded career and technical education programs.

Implementing The Kirwan Commission In Real Time

As governor, Ben Jealous will build the political will and courage to fully implement—and if necessary, strengthen—the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission by passing a truly comprehensive funding formula and policy plan in the 2019 General Assembly session

More than 15 years after the state's historic Thornton Commission helped create the Bridge to Excellence funding formula, Maryland schools are once again badly underfunded. Higher academic standards coupled with rising child poverty¹—not to mention budget cuts by Gov. Hogan in every year of his term in office²—have created an annual \$2.9 billion funding shortage in our public education system, according to a state-commissioned study.³

Even as Marylanders continue to strongly value the role of public education in our state, there have been lines of educational and economic inequality drawn between us based on geography, income, and race. It's no wonder that as our public schools fall short of the funding they need by billions of dollars, our communities have become less connected—and many neighborhoods are completely shut out of a shot at the middle class. We must give schools the funding they need to be the center of our communities, counties, and state again.

That's why the General Assembly passed legislation in 2016 to create the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education—commonly referred to as the Kirwan Commission—to find out how the state can model strategies in the best-performing school systems around the world and increase funding for these new ideas and close the multi-billion funding gap. The Commission is expected to issue a final report by the end of 2018.

This makes the Kirwan Commission a once-in-a-generation opportunity to revamp and improve the state's school funding formula. We must use it to make a new Maryland Promise to our families that your kids have a great public school—and an equal opportunity for success—no matter what neighborhood you live in. As governor, Ben Jealous will build the political will and courage to fully implement—and if necessary, strengthen—the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission by passing a truly comprehensive funding formula and policy plan in the 2019 General Assembly session.

Making Maryland a Place Where Educators Are Respected and Paid More

As governor, Ben Jealous will raise teacher pay by 29% to be more competitive with surrounding states, and end the era of educators earning less than a living wage

From West Virginia to Oklahoma to Arizona, we have seen educator walkouts to protest underfunded schools and stagnant salaries. They joined the teaching profession to make a difference for their students, but without the needed resources, their jobs have become more and more challenging. Using outdated textbooks, working in crumbling school buildings, working two or more jobs just to make a living—these are not the conditions we should ask educators to endure in return for public service.

While these conditions are more common in some other states, Maryland educators are frustrated, too. Teachers are the single-largest in-school factor in a child’s academic success, yet Maryland has stalled its investment in our teaching workforce. After increasing the average teacher salary by 29% between 2002 to 2009, it’s only increased by 9% since—about 1% a year.⁴ Teachers now make just 87% of median household income—ranked last among Mid-Atlantic states.⁵ That makes it hard for Maryland to recruit and retain great educators, especially because Maryland has to hire a majority of its teachers from out of state.⁶

Maryland teachers aren’t the only educators underpaid in our public schools. About one-third of Maryland’s educators are education support professionals—building service workers, food service workers, clerical workers, bus drivers, nurses and health assistants, paraprofessionals, technicians, and many other positions—who make our schools function but get very little recognition. But according to the Department of Legislative Services, more than 24,000 of these educators make less than a living wage.⁷ That’s an outrage.

Raise Average Teacher Salary

In the Kirwan Commission’s preliminary report, there’s a recommendation⁸ to bring Maryland’s average teacher salary to the average of Massachusetts and New Jersey’s—two of the country’s top performing states—by the 2024-2025 school year. Ben Jealous is committed to raising teacher pay by 29% between now and the 2024-2025 school year—the exact same percent increase as was accomplished in the seven years following the Thornton Commission.

To determine the cost of this salary increase plan, we need to find the difference between the natural cost of increasing salaries under the current Thornton funding formula and a new salary plan. We can assume that teacher salaries will increase by about 1.9% for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years based on growth under the Thornton funding formula for the last four years. Here’s how it would change starting in FY2020.

PLANS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Thornton	251.9	339.1	428.0	518.6	610.9
Jealous	368.0	578.7	798.8	1,028.9	1,269.4
Difference	116.1	239.6	370.8	510.3	658.5

The numbers are the increasing cost from FY2017 in millions of dollars. FY18 and 19 are not included in the chart because those budgets are already done and not impacted by this plan.



The first four years can be paid for with the phase-in of the Fix the Fund Act that ensures \$125 million in FY2020, \$250 million in FY2021, \$375 million in FY2022, and \$500 million in FY2023 will be added to school funding through casino gaming revenues. The fifth year can be covered by \$500 million from the Fix the Fund Act and revenue generated by requiring combined reporting for Maryland taxable income.⁹

Guarantee All Educators a Living Wage

In the 2018 legislative session, two former educators in the General Assembly proposed legislation to guarantee all education support professionals a living wage: at least \$31,500 a year in lower cost of living counties and at least \$36,000 a year in higher cost of living counties. It would be phased in starting in FY2020 and fully funded from FY2024 onward.

Education support professionals are integral parts of our school systems and without them our kids wouldn't have the tools to succeed. From paraeducators to transportation professionals, every day these hardworking Marylanders strive to ensure that our students are taken care of and prepared for academic success. They deserve a living wage and as governor, Jealous will fight to ensure they get it.

Pre-K for Every Young Marylander

As governor, Ben Jealous will provide the funding necessary for full-day universal pre-k through taxing and regulating marijuana for adult use

A quality pre-kindergarten program's positive impact on a child's development is virtually beyond dispute, as evidenced by broad academic consensus in support of accredited pre-kindergarten programs. In 2017, a coalition of leading researchers in the field released a seminal study titled *The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten*,¹⁰ providing policy makers with several important conclusions:

- “Children attending a diverse array of... pre-k programs are more ready for school at the end of their pre-k year than children who do not attend pre-k. Improvements in academic areas such as literacy and numeracy are most common...”¹¹
- Research shows “uniformly positive evidence of impact on kindergarten readiness.”¹²
- Pre-kindergarten's positive impacts are even more pronounced for children who face socio-economic barriers. “Researchers who study pre-K education often find that children who have had early experiences of economic scarcity and insecurity gain more from these programs than their more advantaged peers.”¹³
- Pre-kindergarten's positive impacts are also especially pronounced for children who speak English as a second language. “Studies of different groups of preschoolers often find greater improvement in learning at the end of the pre-k year for.... dual language learners than for English-proficient children.”¹⁴

Though pre-kindergarten programs are an extremely important tool with which public education can advance equity and opportunity, diverse classrooms also benefit students who might otherwise still have access to opportunity. Research demonstrates that “part of what may render a pre-K classroom advantageous is the value of being immersed among a diverse array of classmates.”¹⁵

At this point, the question is not whether every child in Maryland could benefit from a pre-kindergarten program. The question is how can the State of Maryland pay for an expansion of its pre-kindergarten programs that will allow every child to access to the programs. No other justification but substantial cost can possibly exist for failing to implement universal pre-kindergarten in Maryland. As governor, Ben Jealous will provide the funding necessary for full-day, universal pre-kindergarten and he will pay for it through the tax revenue generated by legalizing and taxing marijuana for adult use.

Ending Poverty and Expanding Opportunity in Our Schools

As governor, Ben Jealous will prioritize funding for Maryland's most impoverished districts and fight concentrated poverty through community schools

No matter how much focus we put on getting academics right, it won't matter if we don't address the non-academic barriers to student success. Instead of books and backpacks, many of our students bring hunger, illness, and emotional trauma to school—making it impossible to learn. Our schools are currently ill-equipped to handle the challenges that poverty presents, whether it's a lack of mental health staff or adequate after-school programming.

Community Schools

We need to reimagine what schools provide in our low-income neighborhoods by making the school building the central hub for community services—counseling, job training, meals, mentoring programs, and health clinics. As part of the new funding formula, the state should add a concentrated wealth factor that drives more funding to schools with 40% or more of their student population coming from low-income families. That funding should go to expanding the use of the Community School Model,¹⁶ building on the success of the Family League and Baltimore City Public Schools.¹⁷

Improving Equity

The state could improve equity in school funding by meeting two key objectives:

1. Start phase-in with low-income schools. The Kirwan Commission has discussed the possibility of a ten-year phase-in of its funding and policy plan. When the General Assembly passes a new funding formula and phase-in plan, it should start by directing funding to low-income schools first and then gradually sending resources to more affluent schools as the phase-in continues.
2. Restore equity in state and local funding. If funding were distributed equitably, school districts with the most students living in poverty would get more funding than districts with fewer low-income students. But according to The Education Trust,¹⁸ Maryland districts in the second-highest poverty quartile get less funding per student than more affluent districts. While Thornton made equity a priority, we're still failing to give all kids a fair chance to succeed. The new state funding formula should reflect the value of equity by providing more funding to districts as rates of poverty increase.

Expanding Support for Special Needs Children and Educators

As governor, Ben Jealous will convene subject matter experts to better support special education teachers and ensure every special education student has a unique plan for academic success

Our schools should be centers of inclusion that seek to integrate children of all intellectual abilities with one another, in order to promote a culture of tolerance and support that ultimately fuels academic success. As explained by the Brookings Institute, “evidence suggests that inclusive school environments benefit both special and general education students, reducing bullying and social isolation while increasing health and agency.”¹⁹ This data is based, in part, on a recognition that social and emotional learning (SEL) “is crucial to school success and can be taught.”²⁰ Thus, achieving an inclusive school culture becomes an important part of the classroom environment that allows special and general education children the grounding they need to maintain “academic achievement” in the short term, and “positive health and employment outcomes” in the long term.²¹

Beyond the social and emotional learning component outlined above, more direct measures of academic achievement are also significantly impacted by segregated curriculums in our schools. Data from across the United States demonstrates the:

“deleterious impacts of segregation for affluent segregated students as well as low-income students. Qualitative research on segregated special education classes may reveal why these placements are associated with much poorer outcomes. For example, these classes often have relatively low curriculum standards and rely on teachers to cover curriculum they are not prepared to teach. Further, many students do not experience successful role modeling from peers.”²²

The approach to inclusion requires nuanced application on a student-by-student basis though. Even though “research has consistently found that more time in general education is associated with better results for students with disabilities,” “research does not support the view that all children with disabilities should be educated in general education classes all the time (full inclusion). Some students may need intensive interventions outside the classroom.” For instance, a student with dyslexia “who has not learned word attack skills may be self-conscious about being singled out to his peers.”

Understanding where a child is developmentally, and the best approach to facilitating their further emotional, social, and intellectual growth, requires methods of assessment that help teachers make the right decisions for their students. After rigorous studies at the University of Melbourne helped hone the teaching model, Australia implemented a very successful approach to profiling the development of students with additional needs.²³ The country’s Students with Additional Needs (SWANs) Program:

“identifies a suite of learning progressions in a range of foundational or enabling skills (i.e., communication, literacy, numeracy, social and emotional skills, learning and thinking skills, movement, and digital literacy) that can facilitate instructional planning. This enables teachers to adapt and adjust learning opportunities that provide a differentiated, flexible, and personalized approach for students with disabilities. The progressions have been empirically validated for use by teachers of students with additional learning needs in almost 1700 Australian schools.”²⁴



Put a bit more simply, the country has developed learning profiles relative to a student with additional needs' specific challenges, that allow teachers to accurately assess the student's level of progress, and map out the next steps on that path to progress both in terms of curriculum and in terms of broader questions of social and emotional inclusion. In so doing, the teacher is able to tailor a more nuanced learning program to that student's needs that allows them to flourish at a rate that makes sense for him or her.

As governor, Ben Jealous will convene subject matter experts to develop a program in Maryland aimed specifically at better supporting special education teachers, and ensuring that staffing levels are appropriate and that every student's individualized education program is met.

Ensuring Every School Has Mental Health Professionals

As governor, Ben Jealous will work with key stakeholders like the MSEA to increase staffing levels for social workers and school psychologists to identify mental health issues at their earliest stages

Up to 1-in-5 children in the United States show signs or symptoms of a mental health disorder in a given year.²⁵ Yet in spite of so many children in our schools needing mental health services, nearly 80% won't receive them.²⁶ This is unacceptable and undermines our children's opportunities to thrive. As governor, Ben Jealous will give this oft-discussed but under-addressed crisis the attention and urgency it deserves.

Providing children with a critical mass of mental health services requires an investment in personnel like in-school social workers and psychologists, but it also requires fully incorporating these service providers into the broader academic ecosystem, and providing other key members of that ecosystem with the training they need to help our mental health service providers. National Public Radio interviewed a host of academic service providers, in order to map how a thriving academic ecosystem would address mental health issues.

Family

Adults at home, whether parents or other relatives, are often the first to spot changes in behavior that can indicate a larger issue. It is incumbent on our schools to equip a student's family with the information they need to identify this behavior, and to coordinate with a trained professional on addressing it. Whether "angry outbursts, declining grades, changes in sleeping or eating,"²⁷ social workers and school psychologists can provide families with the tools they need to begin addressing a student's mental health needs at an early stage.²⁸

Teachers

Like family members, teachers spend a tremendous amount of time with children, and often witness their social interactions with other students. Even when a teacher may want to help, however, an overwhelming job and a lack of training can become barriers to doing so. If the teacher is able to identify potential issues and coordinate with a trained professional who can focus on addressing the issue full-time, they are much better positioned to serve the student's mental health needs.

Social Workers

Beyond providing subject matter expertise and a full-time focus on a student's academic-adjacent needs, social workers are often the personnel best positioned to see the full picture of a student's needs and challenges, and to serve as a connector for them. By providing the child with case-management, the social worker can ensure a student is connected with an in-school counselor, has up-to-date treatment from an in-school psychologist, is not falling behind in the classroom, and that all of this information is being successfully relayed to the child's family.

Counselors

Though akin to social workers in some ways, a counselor generally offers the student service in a more focused area, such as transitioning to the job market or preparing for college. In order to provide that service properly though, it is important that enough counselors be hired to maintain a low student-to-counselor ratio.



School Psychologists

Every school should have at least one on-site psychologist, who is focused fully on addressing the mental health needs of the student body. The psychologist's role can range from crisis intervention to off-site psychiatric referrals.

School Nurse

Mental and physical health are closely linked, and physical ailments like persistent headaches or a distressed stomach can be indicators of underlying issues like anxiety or bullying. On-site nurses who are in constant contact with social workers and school psychologists helps ensure these symptoms are quickly and ably addressed.

Principals

Beyond being responsible for facilitating the ecosystem outlined above, principals are crucial when it comes to helping mold a school's identity and introducing programming that can both normalize and support healthy conversations around mental health.

As governor, Ben Jealous will work with key stakeholders like the MSEA to increase staffing levels for service providers like social workers and school psychologists, and to develop programming that equips all education professionals with the tools they need to identify mental health issues at their earliest stages.

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