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TO: Members of the Maryland State Board of Education

FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick 

DATE: February 24, 2009

SUBJECT: Labeling of Persistently Dangerous Schools

PURPOSE:

To engage in a discussion of the persistently dangerous portion of Maryland's Unsafe School Choice Policy.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* requires all states receiving funding under the Act to establish and implement a statewide policy requiring that a student attending a persistently dangerous school or who becomes a victim of a violent criminal offense while in or on the grounds of the school he/she attends be allowed to transfer to a safe school within that local public school system (20 USC 7912).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In order to develop Maryland's policy, a workgroup was convened consisting of principals, teachers, central office personnel, the Maryland State Police, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, the Maryland PTA, and the Maryland Associations of Elementary and Secondary School Principals representing geographic areas of the State. Their recommendations were taken to the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE).



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In 2003, the MSBE adopted Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.08.01.18-20 (attached) which fulfills the requirements of an Unsafe School Choice Policy. In this policy, a 'persistently dangerous school' means a school in which each year for three consecutive years, the total number of student suspensions for more than 10 school days or expulsions equals 2 ½ percent or more of the total number of students enrolled in the school for these offenses: arson or fire; drugs; explosives; firearms; other guns, other weapons, physical attack on a student; physical attack on a school system employee or other adult; and sexual assault. A school is placed on probationary status if they meet these criteria for two consecutive years.

It is significant to note the serious nature of the aforementioned offenses and their occurrence over a long period of time.

ACTION:

For discussion purposes:

NSG:CJB:kw

Attachment

.18 Definitions for Regulations .19—.20.

A. In Regulations .19 and .20 of this chapter, the following terms have the meanings indicated.

B. Terms Defined.

(1) "Conviction of or adjudication of" means that the perpetrator has been convicted of, adjudicated delinquent of, pleads guilty or nolo contendere with respect to, or receives probation before judgment with respect to, a violent criminal offense.

(2) "Corrective action plan" means a plan that includes information concerning conditions in the school that may have contributed to the commission of the offenses set forth in §B(4) of this regulation. A corrective action plan shall describe any behavioral interventions that will be used to address problems in the school.

(3) "Local school system" means any of the 24 local public school systems in the State.

(4) "Persistently dangerous school" means a school in which each year for 3 consecutive school years, the total number of student suspensions for more than 10 days or expulsions for any of the following offenses equals 2-1/2 percent or more of the total number of students enrolled in the school:

- (a) Arson or fire;
- (b) Drugs;
- (c) Explosives;
- (d) Firearms;
- (e) Other guns;
- (f) Other weapons;
- (g) Physical attack on a student;
- (h) Physical attack on a school system employee or other adult; and
- (i) Sexual assault.

(5) "Safe school" means a school that has not been placed on probationary status or designated as persistently dangerous pursuant to Regulation .19 of this chapter.

(6) "School grounds" means a local school system owned or leased building and land that surrounds a school building and also includes school vehicles.

(7) "Violent criminal offense" means a crime of violence as defined in Criminal Law Article, §14-101, Annotated Code of Maryland.

.19 Probationary and Persistently Dangerous School Designation.

A. Probationary Status.

(1) The State Board of Education shall place on probationary status any school having each year for a period of 2 consecutive school years, the total number of student suspensions for more than 10 days or expulsions for any of the offenses set forth in Regulation .18B(4) of this chapter equal to 2-1/2 percent or more of the total number of students enrolled in the school.

(2) The local school system shall notify in a timely manner the parents of each student attending the school that the State has placed the school on probationary status.

(3) The local superintendent shall submit a corrective action plan to the State Superintendent of Schools within 30 days of being notified by the State Board of Education that a school in the jurisdiction of the school system is on probationary status.

(4) During the probationary status the school shall implement in a timely manner strategies to reduce the commission of offenses set forth in Regulation .18B(4) of this chapter.

B. Persistently Dangerous Designation.

(1) After placing a school on probationary status, the State Board of Education shall designate that school as persistently dangerous if during the next consecutive school year the total number of student suspensions for more than 10 days or expulsions for any of the offenses set forth in Regulation .18B(4) of this chapter equals 2-1/2 percent or more of the total number of students enrolled in the school.

(2) The local school system shall notify in a timely manner the parents of each student attending the school:

(a) That the State has identified the school as persistently dangerous; and

(b) Of the opportunity for school transfer as set forth in Regulation .20A(1) of this chapter.

(3) If a school has been designated a persistently dangerous school, the school shall retain that designation for at least 1 full school year.

(4) Each year that a school remains identified as persistently dangerous, the local school superintendent shall submit a corrective action plan to the State Superintendent of Schools within

30 days of being notified by the State that the status of the school as persistently dangerous has not changed.

(5) The State Board of Education shall remove a school's designation as a persistently dangerous school if the school no longer meets the requirements set forth in Regulation .18B(4) of this chapter.

.20 Unsafe School Transfer Policy.

A. Each local school system shall allow a student attending a public elementary or secondary school to attend a safe public elementary or secondary school within the school system if the student:

(1) Attends a persistently dangerous public elementary or secondary school; or

(2) Is a victim of a violent criminal offense as defined in Criminal Law Article, §14-101, Annotated Code of Maryland:

(a) During the regular school day; or

(b) While attending a school sponsored event in or on the grounds of a public elementary or secondary school that the student attends.

B. The local school system shall effectuate a transfer pursuant to §A of this regulation in a timely manner following either the:

(1) Designation of a school as persistently dangerous; or

(2) Conviction of or adjudication of delinquency of the perpetrator of a violent criminal offense.

C. To the extent possible, the local school system shall allow a student to transfer to a school that is making adequate yearly progress and has not been identified as being in school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

D. Each local superintendent of schools shall certify annually in writing to the State Superintendent of Schools that Regulations .18—.20 of this chapter are implemented.

E. The State Department of Education shall:

(1) Maintain a list of schools determined to be persistently dangerous; and

(2) Revise the list annually.